

OUTSTART



CRS Extends Learning to Help Save the World

Promoting peace and justice around the globe takes passion, faith and learning. For almost 70 years, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has been building the capacity of its staff around the world in order to serve the poor and vulnerable overseas. Founded in 1943 by the Catholic bishops of the United States, CRS is today an international relief and development organization with nearly 5,000 staff members who reach approximately 80 million people in more than 100 countries on five continents.

THE CHALLENGE

According to Gretchen Regehr, learning manager at Catholic Relief Services, CRS builds the capacity and skills of CRS staff in order to provide support in agriculture, education programs, maternal and child health, caring for those with HIV/AIDS, building civil society and peace, promoting microfinance projects and responding to emergencies. It's a daunting task. And CRS has for decades relied on its staff to provide workshops, training and self-study materials to build capacity and develop thousands of staff both in the United States and abroad.

For example, CRS taught its finance course – which showed each country's overseas financial staff how to use the agency's financial system for accounting of projects and funding for its programs – via face-to-face instruction and self-study on the system. Relying on this approach restricted the CRS learning and development team's agility in quickly responding to the needs of staffers around the globe.

"Using face-to-face instruction alone makes it harder to control the consistency of what's being taught, and it also slows down the pace of learning because you're waiting for people to synchronize schedules for classes," said Regehr. "With staff across the globe, sometimes working in difficult and complex

environments, we were looking for a way to improve the availability of our learning and development programs."

As learning and development professionals, Regehr and her colleagues knew that content development software on the market could turn virtually anyone's PC into a publishing tool. But neither Regehr's nor her team's background was technical.

"Our training group consists of four people; we're instructional designers. We're not staffed with Flash developers who have computer programming skills," Regehr added. "So we wanted to find a technology that was straightforward for us to use, yet capable of creating compelling content for our staff."

INDUSTRY

Humanitarian Relief and Development

SOLUTION

OutStart Trainer

RESULTS

- The CRS learning and development team has boosted its ability to reach staff in remote parts of the world who haven't had the opportunity to take advantage of some of the learning CRS can provide. The team can now develop courses quickly online for broad dissemination via CD-ROMs, workbooks or manuals.
- CRS can now monitor how well its learners are grasping information and picking up know-how about the organization.
- Staffers now take CRS courses and quizzes via OutStart Trainer-created CD-ROMs at any time they want. CDs lead learners to online assessments, which CRS can track.

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Gretchen Regehr,
Learning Manager at Catholic Relief Services

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THE SOLUTION

In 2006, CRS began using a desktop authoring tool for creating learning content. CRS received access to the authoring tool because of its membership in LINGOs, which is a consortium of humanitarian relief and development groups that assists non-governmental organizations (NGOs) around the globe with learning and training.

According to Regehr, CRS put the desktop authoring tool, which is called OutStart Trainer, to work immediately to give the CRS financial course a makeover. With the authoring tool, Regehr created online pre-assessments that allowed the training team to assess needs and gear the face-to-face and CD-based training to specific requests. The result was a CD-ROM with all the resources the financial officers might need, including a set of exercises and real-time surveys. So, now the financial officers get a nicely organized CD-ROM with the training that enables all of them to be the best stewards of the donated dollars coming to CRS.

Regehr and her coworkers also used OutStart Trainer to build an online orientation program to reach the organization's worldwide staff. The courses Regehr and her team began developing would be sent via LINGOs' learning management system (LMS), which is software for delivering and tracking online training over the internet.

"Many of our staffers are functional with English, so we used the online course to quickly bring our new staff a shared foundational understanding of Catholic Relief Services through an online orientation program," remarked Regehr. "A desktop authoring tool enabled us, in a consistent way, to tell new hires about CRS history, where CRS works and how we work in partnership with local organizations and local NGOs."

Regehr's coworkers were able to use the authoring tool's pre-packaged course outlines and navigation templates "to create the course content without any programming." Once they created the orientation course, Regehr used OutStart Trainer's Course Distribution Wizard to put the class into both an HTML format for online distribution as well as on a CD-ROM. This gave the CRS learning team the agility to deliver instruction in the way best suited to staff overseas with or without internet access. Regehr used the Course Distribution Wizard for the CRS finance training, too.

"OutStart Trainer is more sophisticated than many of the quick-and-easy authoring tools on the market, but it's flexible to your needs," added Regehr. "You can build a course that's visually compelling and engaging without having to know a programming language."

The desktop authoring tool also gave CRS a way to imbed assessments into its online courses, so learners could test their know-how once they finished an online course.

THE RESULTS

According to Regehr, tapping a desktop authoring tool has increased her team's productivity significantly. For instance, once Regehr's team creates a course with the authoring tool, they can reuse certain parts to build updated or entirely new online courses. In the past, this was a time-consuming project that required updating printed manuals and binders for instructors and students.

The authoring tool's tracking features enable CRS to monitor how well its learners are grasping information and picking up know-how about the organization. "We can use OutStart Trainer when we want to track who's been learning what," said Regehr. "We can track who's accessed something as well as their scores."

For the CRS orientation course, Regehr and her learning and development coworkers developed eight courses within a "single navigational umbrella, which helps designers and learners pick and choose what they need." For the revamped finance course, Regehr's team created 15 courses.

"Everyone was very pleased with the new financial courses because in the past it was typical to get big, bulky binders of information," Regehr commented. "Folks now get the course and quizzes via Trainer-created CD-ROMs. People are taking the assessments, and the numbers are showing learners are scoring well."

ABOUT OUTSTART

At OutStart, we're out to solve a big problem.

Most organizations possess a wealth of underutilized collective intelligence around their products, services, and processes. This underutilization negatively impacts employees, customers, and partners, costing precious time and money while hindering performance. Said simply, "what your people don't know will hurt you."

OutStart's social business software and learning systems act like a lifeline: connecting people to the know-how, creativity, and learning they require to be efficient, effective, and agile.

Since its inception in 1999, and backed by leading venture capital firms, OutStart has matured into a profitable and rapidly growing company with an impressive range of customers, who are surpassing their expectations and delivering exceptional business results. The company is honored to have customers like Autodesk, BB&T, Boeing Company, BT, CVS Caremark, DIRECTV, EDS, Internal Revenue Service, Lufthansa, McDonald's, MetLife, Prudential, TiVo, Australian Defence Force, U.S. Navy, UK Ministry of Defence, Verizon Wireless, and Yum! Brands.

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CASE STUDY



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