



## Case Study

Virtual instructor-led training was the key to training a geographically dispersed IT department

**Client:**

A large national financial services corporation

**Industry:**

Financial Services

**Service Offering:**

**Global Services**

Education Services

- Virtual Instructor-Led Training



**The Situation:** A large national company employs one hundred sixty thousand employees to provide banking, insurance, investments, mortgage and consumer financial services through six thousand branch locations, the internet, and other distribution channels. Each branch location provides to consumers the company's entire complement of services.

To provide up-to-the-minute information to consumers, the company relies significantly on IT and related services. As technology changed and evolved, the company's geographically dispersed IT employees would attend IT education courses at one of four training locations.

**The Challenge:** Off-site training incurred travel costs and travel time, and the loss of productivity while traveling caused a high percentage of last-minute class cancellations. Employee expertise in IT trends was a valuable component to its competitive edge, and for technical topics the company felt the benefits of instructor-led training were superior to self-paced web-based training. However, the company's management was concerned about the "soft costs" of training its employees and wanted to reduce travel expenses and cancellations. The client asked vendors offer alternative options that would provide high quality training results, reduced student travel, and reduced class cancellations.

**The Response:** TEKsystems® worked with the company to refine the training goals and requirements, and then developed a virtual instructor-led training program as a cost-effective alternative to traditional instructor-led training. Three components would drive the success of each course: the tool used to create a virtual learning environment, the skill and experience of the instructors leading the course, and the quality of the course content.

TEKsystems quickly adapted to the company's web-based tool, hosted securely by the company behind its firewall. This tool allows a student to participate in a class from anywhere in the United States. TEKsystems developed courses that take full advantage of the tools capabilities, which include mechanisms for chat rooms, quizzes, live whiteboards, application-share, "Over the Shoulder" viewing of student windows, and shared slide shows provide a toolkit for instructors to create interactive and engaging learning environments. A "group" feature allowed instructors to break students into teams for discussions and assignments.



Instructors leading virtual classrooms have a unique challenge over traditional classrooms, because students can often feel isolated and disengaged. TEKsystems instructors are experienced classroom managers and skilled at creating question-friendly classes. Instructor experience with the material allows for assertive questioning of students, while the grouping feature of the tool allows the instructor to create virtual teams for thought-provoking and interactive discussions.

To help ensure the courses would be both informative and relevant to the students, TEKsystems collaborated with the client's subject matter experts (SMEs). TEKsystems gathered the appropriate course material from its expansive course library, which contains over thirteen hundred titles spanning over forty-five disciplines, business processes, and professional development topics. Detailed outlines were sent to the company's technology SMEs and learning consultants, who reviewed the material and provided feedback through conference calls with the TEKsystems curriculum team. TEKsystems tailored the chosen courses to ensure the course material aligned with the company's technology use.

**The Result:** TEKsystems delivered the first virtual course of this ongoing program in July 2007. Through this program, TEKsystems has conducted over twenty virtual classes and trained over four hundred employees across the United States. The shift to virtual training has been successful in part because the IT group embraced the new learning format; during course evaluations, students have given the virtual classes an average 4.42 rating on a 5-point scale.

The virtual classroom has eliminated the company's concern about student travel expenses and class cancellations. Student travel has been eliminated, and no classes scheduled through this program have been cancelled.

**The Technology:** The virtual program developed for this client includes the following courses: SharePoint® 2007, SQL Server® 2005, UNIX®, Red Hat® LINUX®, XML, Java® Web Development, Oracle®, and Mercury QTP. For several of these technologies, both introductory and intermediate level courses have been provided. TEKsystems uses the customer-provided Saba Centra® online learning tool to deliver the courses virtually.