

CASE STUDY: Microsoft Partner Learning Center Automating Training for Global Breadth Partners



CUSTOMER PROFILE

In 2003, Microsoft began a strategic shift towards an increasingly channel-based sales approach. As part of this initiative, the company undertook an ambitious top-to-bottom overhaul of its partner program that would bring all of the company's programmatic partner relationships under one umbrella and incorporate hundreds of thousands of small partners who were not previously in a program. A key enabler of this consolidation effort was providing the platforms that provide unmanaged partners with self-service access to the resources and tools they need in order to sell and service Microsoft's many diverse products.

As a result of this shift, Microsoft's global partner program is today's industry standard in management of breadth partners with more than 380,000 registered partners worldwide.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

In 2003, Microsoft Canada, the regional subsidiary that provides product sales and support services across the country, needed to enable its partners to find and register for all of Microsoft's product training from a single, centralized location. The company engaged Constructive to develop a training search portal that pulls together training opportunities from five different training and events systems and allows its partners to search for them in a single location on Microsoft.com.

The following year, the group responsible for training Microsoft's partners worldwide was tasked with centralizing all of Microsoft's partner training offerings into a single, globally managed portal. They hired Constructive to develop and integrate the Canadian search technology and build a portal management solution that allows their worldwide subsidiaries to publish content in real-time, in their own language. Constructive was responsible for developing the global content management system, the security model, the partner facing events search, the partner training portal and integrating all of the various events management systems.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

The training offered to Microsoft's partners is vast and, as it grew organically across different groups at Microsoft, it became very challenging for partners to find. They had to find and remember all the different training opportunities across Microsoft's various training web sites and each of the siloed registration systems had a completely different user experience. This had a direct impact on Microsoft's ability to ready its partners to sell its ever increasing line of complex products.





It was also extremely time consuming for Microsoft's partner training managers to manage all of the online training, web casts and live events. There was a huge amount of overlap in the publishing processes for each system and duplication of effort by the different training teams around the world. There was no way to centrally measure the success of the various programs, and an unclear picture of which training initiatives had given the company good return on investment.

In short, Microsoft needed a centralized training management system to meet the needs of its Global Partner Program, which was moving from multiple global programs to a single one.



SOLUTION

Constructive worked with Microsoft to develop complete business and functional requirements for the Partner Learning Center. The company used its knowledge of Microsoft's partner business systems and a team of highly skilled software engineers to help Microsoft develop a global portal system to:

-  **Centrally manage Content and Events.**
The multi-lingual portal was created so that partners in all of Microsoft's 50+ subsidiaries could create and post their own content and partner training opportunities. Each subsidiary gets its own site for their partners where they control content and are able to publish and manage targeted content for the region.
-  **Allow partners to find and register for training in a single location.**
Constructive delivered an integrated search which allowed partners to find training opportunities around the world that are targeted to their partner profile and preferences. The portal search integrates with Microsoft's various event management systems including worldwide registration, online training, webcasts, virtual software demos and e-commerce.
-  **Get critical business data about partner skills:**
Partner training activity and profile data are housed in a single repository where Microsoft training managers can report on how skilled their field partners are and which training offerings their partners are attending and completing. This easy to use reporting system allows management to guide investment and direct training program development to partners' needs.
-  **Support global training team to drive partner skills:**
Constructive continues to provide Microsoft with 24/7 support for subsidiaries worldwide, providing mission critical tier one support for Microsoft training managers and partners.






BUSINESS BENEFITS

Microsoft places high importance on the readiness and ability of its partners to sell their products and uses the PLC to help achieve this goal. The solution Constructive developed for Microsoft is a global, centralized one-stop shop for Microsoft partners. Partners can access an extensive catalogue of training opportunities and can register and take the training all from the same centralized location.

MANAGEMENT BENEFITS

The PLC allows Microsoft to interact on a regular basis with partners to help guide their sales and marketing activities. The system provides Microsoft with an effective and timely means of directing content whether in an open or in a personalized manner. Managers have better reporting tools to see which partners are trained in certain areas, what elements of training they may need, as well as the ability to target marketing efforts to individual partners and groups.

Management benefits include:

-  *Less time and process redundancy in managing training and events for partners*
-  *Automation delivers a training solution that can scale for breadth partners*
-  *Increased partner satisfaction around training and increased training attendance*
-  *Better understanding of partner skills and skill gaps across various partner segments*
-  *Clearer picture of the return on investment for various training programs*



PARTNER BENEFITS

Microsoft partners get the benefit of targeted training and are thereby better enabled to sell Microsoft technology. Partners can track their learning experiences every step of the way and choose from hundreds of training resources through expanded search capabilities.

Partner benefits include:

-  *Partners can find and register for all of their training opportunities from a single location*
-  *Individuals can easily find training opportunities that are specific to their language, region and training goals*
-  *Partner companies can more easily organize training for their employees in order to align their skills around the types of solutions they want to sell*

RESULTS

With the creation of the PLC, Constructive has helped Microsoft to improve its partner engagement level through better training. In FY07, the PLC registered nearly 250,000 partners for training and this year it is expected to grow significantly with the addition of the U.S. subsidiary to the program.

Microsoft's Corporate IT Department now manages the hosting and product development team that maintains the Partner Learning Center from its office in Sammamish, Washington. Constructive has provided tier one support services to Microsoft's worldwide team of partner training managers during global business hours since the 1.0 system launched in early 2005.

By having the right knowledge in place, at the right time, Microsoft partners are better enabled to make sales. If you would like further information about Constructive Enterprise Partner solutions, please contact us at:

sales@constructive-media.com

