

Boyd Gaming Wins Big with LearnKey's On-Demand Training

The world's greatest organizations earn their lofty status in part because they have the world's greatest employees. By investing in their workers through professional training and enrichment, these companies create a well-prepared and loyal workforce.

Making those investments usually comes at a high cost, but as Boyd Gaming discovered, the right training solution doesn't cost an entire stack of chips.

LearnKey – Boyd Gaming Case Study	
The Challenge	Boyd Gaming's corporate training structure consisted of an instructor who was charged with keeping their workforce proficient in the Microsoft Office® suite of applications. But with so many employees and 16 locations, the situation was expensive and inefficient.
The Solution	Boyd Gaming implemented on-demand training from LearnKey, which offered extensive professional courses that were available 24/7 online or through CD-ROM.
The Result	Boyd Gaming increased the number of staff they could train in a year by nearly 800%, while having a reduction in cost large enough to win an ASTD ROI award. Besides giving required training to employees that need it, they're also able to offer it to anyone in the organization looking to learn. A vast majority of the employees enjoy the courses, and Boyd Gaming has expanded their usage into LearnKey's HR soft skills suite.

With over 25,000 employees at 16 properties in seven states, Boyd Gaming is one of the largest entertainment and gaming companies in the world. Their holdings include a travel agency, some of Las Vegas' best known resorts and a planned \$5 billion hotel and casino complex on the site of the former Stardust Casino.

The Challenge

Training is a high priority to Boyd Gaming, particularly for employees who must learn computer skills, such as the Microsoft Office® suite. In the past, they had a full-time trainer on staff that would travel to the multiple Boyd Gaming locations holding three-day sessions with employees. He also had a training center at Boyd Gaming headquarters in Las Vegas.

"It wasn't cost-effective at all," said Mike Tunney, Corporate Training Manager for Boyd Gaming. "We were spending close to \$150 a day to send someone to training. For our secretaries, who really needed to know a lot about programs like Excel®, they only had three days to absorb the information."

"On the whole, we were only training

about 90 people a year."

Boyd Gaming was faced with a snowballing situation, with more people to train than their resources permitted. As a result, they were faced with either finding a new solution or seeing employee learning continue to suffer.

The Solution

The obvious alternative to an on-site instructor was training delivered through an on-demand solution. The benefits included the ability to let trainees learn at their own pace and on their own

time, as well as being able to deliver materials to large amounts of people simultaneously. Boyd Gaming would be able to refocus their internal resources toward teaching proprietary skills, while utilizing an outside provider for non-industry specific skills, such as Excel.

Mac McQueen, Boyd Gaming's Director of Learning, had experience with a company named LearnKey in another situation and thought they would be a perfect solution. LearnKey has been around for over 20 years and was one of the pioneers of on-demand training, particularly in the computing fields.

"LearnKey's courses were available on CD-ROM, but that wasn't practical since we have so many locations across the country," Tunney said. "That's when we looked at LearnKey's OnlineExpert, which hosts the courses on the Internet."

Because of the multiple formats the courses were available in, Boyd Gaming was able to offer employees three ways to access the training:

- Those who are required to take training can do so on company time at their work computers.
- Computer labs are set up at each Boyd Gaming location with access to OnlineExpert, allowing any employees who don't have access to computers to train during breaks and personal time.
- Employees can sign out CD-ROMs to take home or use in the labs.

Most importantly, McQueen and Tunney were able to save the company thousands of dollars by going to on-demand training. "Our return on investment was phenomenal," Tunney said. "It was so great, we won the local American Society of Training & Development (ASTD) 'Tribute to Learning' award."

The award recognizes best practices in Southern Nevada training and development. Boyd Gaming won for Best Online & E-Learning and Return on Investment Strategy, both placing them in the realm of elite companies with a serious commitment to educating their employees.

"Over the past year we've trained around 730 people, and we plan on that number growing to at least 1200 by the end of 2007," McQueen said. "Before LearnKey, it cost us hundreds of dollars to train each person. Multiply that by 1200 and that's a lot of money. With LearnKey we spend a fraction of that. It's been tremendous."

Another way Boyd Gaming has saved money while increasing training effectiveness is by being able to keep the training materials developed with their former full-time instructor. Along with the materials provided by LearnKey, the manuals ensure that employees have every resource possible available to them while learning and executing difficult skills.

The technology training has worked so well, Boyd Gaming is actually pulling more employees into the program.

"With the beginning of 2007, we're actually expanding the training," Tunney said. "We're now using an HR soft skills suite. We've put together a pretty hefty succession piece, where we start with supervisors and give them the knowledge to become managers. We use these courses to teach things such as how to do a proper performance appraisal, how to properly hire and fire somebody, and other basic necessities."

Boyd Gaming is where they are today because of intelligent, calculated moves. By moving from an instructor, premises-based method to the LearnKey on-demand, online solution, they were able to increase the number of employees trained by more than 800 percent.

Lisa Course, Employee Management Director of Boyd Gaming's downtown business unit, implemented an employee optional training program within her jurisdiction and has used the

LearnKey materials to train nearly 200 employees who were seeking personal development. The downtown business unit consists of three properties in downtown Las Vegas.

“Since the inception of this type of training, employees at all levels have been taking advantage of the new learning opportunities. They’ve cited flexibility, possibilities of advancement, and affordability as a few of the benefits of this training, not to mention the ease of the learning process,” said Course. “This training opportunity has had quite the positive impact on our properties. Individuals that might never have had the chance to gain computer skills are able to utilize our on-site computer lab at no cost and at their leisure.”