



About StratX

Headquarters:

Paris, France
Offices in London and Boston

Number of employees:

50

Lines of business:

Professional consulting services,
specialised in management
development

Target markets:

Pharmaceuticals, manufacturing,
consumer product goods, retailing,
and academia

WebEx service in use:

Meeting Center

Has been a WebEx customer since:

2001



StratX Builds Global Consultancy Business Through Remote Learning

StratX is a global marketing & strategy development consultancy, which helps Fortune 500 companies build their marketing edge over the competition by designing and deploying simulation-based, interactive seminars. 90 per cent of the learning now happens face to face, but two years ago the business decided to expand using computerised conferencing systems.

The Challenge

With 19 years experience of delivering high impact seminars, StratX was already in an advantageous position as market leader in its field, facilitating and leading group-learning environments for customers such as GE, Exxon Mobil, Novartis, and L'Oréal. The missing piece from its offering of industry and concept-specific business simulations, though, was the concept of remote learning. The company wanted to expand and capture a larger customer base of learners who did not necessarily have access to high quality onsite educational opportunities, and the logical method of achieving this was through e-learning.

This desire for growth brought with it several challenges. StratX was convinced that a distance learning approach needed to be instructor led with coaching around the StratX business 'games'. In its program design, StratX sought to duplicate the classroom environment at a distance. To do so they sought out an online platform that allowed for distance collaboration.

However, some of StratX's customer base of top-flight companies are reluctant to let StratX install computer programs on their PCs to enable e-learning, for example, and they are well aware of issues such as network congestion and the costs associated with it. "For some companies it's a matter of policy not to allow partners to install anything on their computers," says StratX director of e-Learning solutions, Delphine Parmenter.

The Solution

The answer was to invest in WebEx, which was appealing for a number of reasons, one of which was word of mouth. "I spoke to a colleague in our Boston office who asked whether I'd seen what WebEx was doing," says Parmenter. "It's a light program on the client site, it takes minutes to set-up and it's very firewall-friendly." The high performance and reliability provided by the WebEx MediaTone network were also instrumental in the choice.

The adoption of WebEx formed a new e-learning channel for StratX – which offered the capacity to share documents, software applications and a whiteboard in real-time, in order to teach market-focused strategies to 'classes' of individuals in remote locations, via the internet. Anyone with a telephone and an Internet connection can attend a WebEx session – and over



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Delphine Parmenter
StratX director
e-Learning solutions

the past two years thousands of participants from over 50 countries have enjoyed the StratX e-learning experience.

The technology was only part of the story. “We understood the importance of teaching marketing in an action oriented manner, for example if you want to retain someone’s interest on a screen you have to get them to interact with the consultant every five minutes,” comments Parmenter. “We adopted the polling aspects of the WebEx technology to complement this experience-based teaching methodology.” For this reason the online classes include periodic multiple-choice polls to ensure participants are absorbing all of the information.

The Benefits

The total number of StratX customers being taught through the WebEx platform is at 600, up from 200 the year before, which Parmenter says is a significant figure considering the recent implementation of the online learning channel. The results of the iterative and interactive teaching methodology enabled by WebEx speak for themselves. “Normally in web-based learning around 70 per cent of the people do not complete the course – it’s so easy not to click the button,” she says. “We’ve got that up to a 92.5 per cent retention rate, which I’ve got to admit is an extraordinary achievement for which we have WebEx to thank.”

This is due in part to the StratX e-learning programs, which duplicates the classroom environment and includes computerised business games and on-line classrooms to build interaction in live learning experiences over the web with StratX consultants. The rise in retention rates is also due in part to the conduit the tutorials are delivered by: the WebEx online classroom environment. The site is designed to provide an intuitive experience for the user; the simplicity of the user interface provides a very effective platform for StratX to build its teaching methods upon. This is paying off – customer satisfaction surveys prove that students give the content a four out of five rating in all departments, constantly. “We’d like to build that up to five but we accept that at a distance, that’s as good as it gets,” says Parmenter.

The Future

It can already be seen that WebEx is growing the business and growing as part of the business, and its use will become more flexible as students start to take advantage of it on a part-time basis as well as full-time. In the future, the company plans to investigate pre-course and post-course components to support classroom programs, but for the moment the growth figures are substantial enough – the 10 per cent of the business that is delivered through the system is set to grow to 20 per cent during 2003. “There are people in the company who believe it will reach 40 per cent in 2008.”



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One area the company wants to address is the reach of the product. Because of the light, internet-based nature of the system, bandwidth isn't an issue, but time zones are. "Being based in Paris we can cover most of the US, but when we get to the West Coast and beyond we start to run up against time zone issues," confirms Parmenter. "In the near future we will have e-instructors in our Boston office to address that."

That and the blended learning initiatives, in which there will be a mix of electronic and in-person learning happening, should ensure a solid base of expansion for StratX, facilitated by technology that would have seemed like science fiction only half a decade ago.

