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—Lori Van Holmes, VP of Training and People Development

BUCA, Inc. uses WebEx Training Center to dramatically improve information delivery processes and standardize quality of service.



INDUSTRY

Restaurant Company

WEBEX APPLICATIONS

WebEx Training Center

SUMMARY

BUCA, Inc. needed an effective training method to ensure its new programs and services would be rolled out quickly and accurately by staff in 104 restaurants located throughout the U.S. Using WebEx Training Center accelerated BUCA's information delivery processes, saving \$30,000 and weeks of in-person training in its first online food rollout. BUCA now offers Family Members (employees) frequent interactive online trainings, improving productivity and quality of training across its restaurants.

ABOUT BUCA, INC.

Headquarters

Minneapolis, MN

Number of employees

6500

Line of business

Restaurant company

Target market

Individual consumers

WebEx customer since 2005

With 104 BUCA di Beppo and Vinny T of Boston restaurants located in 30 states, BUCA, Inc. is one of the premiere restaurant companies in the US. To maintain the integrity of its well-known brands, BUCA must consistently replicate its unique family-style dining experience — complete with distinct ambiance, exceptional Italian cuisine and warm, attentive service — throughout all of its locations.

The Challenge

For a dynamic restaurant company like BUCA, Inc., new menu rollouts and changes to restaurant services need to be frequent, fast and effective. With restaurants located throughout the United States, BUCA found that distributing this type of new information to the field was challenging. During each rollout, it became clear to BUCA's VP of Training and People Development, Lori Van Holmes, that the changes implemented by the corporate office were not being rolled out consistently by all 104 restaurants. "We would send out enormous information-packed rollout books to each restaurant. The restaurant managers were responsible for wading through the information and then passing along the essential bits to the kitchen staff and service personnel," recalls Van Holmes. In addition to the books, divisional vice presidents and culinary supervisors often traveled to each restaurant to train the staff in person. "The amount of information was overwhelming, and the delivery method just wasn't working," says Van Holmes.

The Solution

When Van Holmes attended a WebEx online meeting to further her own professional training, she immediately began thinking about how a web meeting application could help solve the rollout problems at BUCA. She introduced the idea to BUCA's CEO and soon began a trial of WebEx Training Center. "It was surprising how easy it was to use WebEx and integrate it into our organization. Not only is the system intuitive, but the trainings provided by WebEx were great, the instructors excellent, and the ancillary training material answered all of our questions," she says.

The first food-related WebEx training Van Holmes conducted was for a lunch rollout. Van Holmes simply sent out a meeting invitation through Outlook giving restaurant managers the option of choosing one of four meeting times. "During each WebEx training session, we launched our desktop publishing application and dynamically drew lines to show the managers exactly where the new items were on the menu. We were also able to show pictures demonstrating how to prepare the food. It was a significant success," explains Van Holmes.

BUCA's most recent program rollout with Training Center was a program acknowledging employees who have reached tenure throughout its restaurants. "I administered the meeting but the senior director of family resources was able to log in to WebEx and make his presentation



right from his office,” says Van Holmes. To keep the audience interested and involved, Van Holmes used the WebEx polling feature. “I asked attendees questions throughout the presentation, inviting them to raise their hands to answer. Then I showed the percentages for each answer on the spot,” she explains.

WebEx is now used for all rollouts at BUCA. For each rollout, up to 400 managers are trained by three hosts using WebEx Training Center. “The traditional rollout books are still sent out two weeks before, but now the WebEx meeting schedule is listed in the books so managers can attend at their convenience. The books are there as a reference, but the WebEx training is what we rely on to make sure our managers get the real essence of the material,” says Van Holmes.

The Benefits

With approximately 20 BUCA rollouts a year, the business results of using WebEx have been significant. “We completed our first online lunch rollout in less than a week when normally it would have taken our culinary supervisors and divisional vice presidents a month of travel. We saved \$30,000 in travel costs in that one rollout alone,” says Van Holmes.

WebEx has also enabled BUCA to deliver information quickly, and in smaller, concentrated amounts, improving knowledge retention, speeding employee productivity and ensuring that training

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is aligned with corporate objectives. Van Holmes has also found that WebEx provides built-in accountability for BUCA employees and encourages communication. “By polling the audience during a presentation, I can check to make sure managers are focusing on the right information. There are no more excuses for not doing what’s being asked of them,” states Van Holmes. In fact, WebEx has enabled a new dialogue between the restaurants. During the online meetings, restaurant managers have begun sharing their experiences with each other. “Managers can now learn best practices from their peers, not only from the presenters,” she says.

Finally, WebEx is helping Van Holmes meet the development needs of the BUCA staff by enabling more frequent training. According to Van Holmes, “WebEx is helping us achieve our organizational goals: to grow sales, increase profitability and provide ongoing development of our people. We now provide more training than we ever did before. And everyone loves WebEx, from the restaurant managers to our COO and CEO.”

The Future

As a result of the significant impact WebEx Training Center has already made on the BUCA organization, Van Holmes is focused on finding new applications that will further streamline and improve BUCA training. Using WebEx, Van Holmes is planning on cutting out a full day of training at BUCA University, a six-day in-person training conference that takes place four to six times a year. Transitioning part of the training conference to ongoing online classes will deliver the information in smaller, more palatable amounts and enable users to advance at their own pace. “We plan to use WebEx hands-on labs and breakout sessions to make these trainings even more robust,” says Van Holmes.

BUCA’s dedication to improving processes and providing better services is what led Van Holmes to incorporate WebEx in the first place. Now she looks forward to having WebEx help her execute on her department’s vision. “We haven’t even scratched the surface of what we can do with WebEx. We’re really excited about coming up with even more ideas to meet our goals,” she says.

HIGHLIGHTS

- New program materials sent to restaurant managers required in-person training, and were not being incorporated effectively by BUCA staff.
- BUCA found that WebEx was easy to use and integrate into its existing processes.
- WebEx Training Center enabled BUCA to convert the large amounts of rollout information into short, online presentations managers could conveniently attend.
- Better and faster delivery of information, combined with more frequent training, ensures uniformity of service across all 104 restaurants.