

Case Study: Ford Motor Company

The Ford Motor Company is a world-class multibillion-dollar automobile manufacturer that ranks as the second-largest industrial company in the United States. The company's reputation rests on the quality of its products and services. Over 5,000 Ford dealerships, and the associated 76,000 dealership personnel, currently receive interactive distance training.

Ford Motor Company

In operation since 1994, the ONE TOUCH-powered distance learning network at Ford provides training in more than 112 courses, broadcasting over 70 hours of instruction per day, to their worldwide dealership network.

Ford Motor Company's Dealer Communications Network, FORDSTAR, is the largest interactive distributed training network in the world. Ford not only conducts training to its 5,014 Ford and Lincoln-Mercury dealerships on their ONE TOUCH-enabled FORDSTAR network, but they also use their system as a real-time knowledge sharing infrastructure for both corporate communications and market research. For example, corporate marketing polls dealers on which features to bundle in upcoming products. Ford executives also use the network to conduct two-way discussions with thousands of employees simultaneously, facilitating greater communications and understanding throughout the organization.

Meeting the Knowledge Sharing Challenge

Larry Conley, former Manager, FORDSTAR and Ford Communications Network, recalls that the company began studying what is now the FORDSTAR network in 1993. The company was in the process of introducing multiple new products simultaneously, and it was

impossible to deliver the magnitude of training required using conventional methods. It would have taken an army of trainers and a fleet of airplanes. Ford examined the satellite video systems used by Chrysler, GM, and even its own internal communications network, FCN. "But those systems were just regular one-way television and we said, 'That's not enough,'" recalls Conley. ONE TOUCH provided the functionality necessary to turn a passive business television network into a highly interactive e-Learning environment where people could communicate back and forth.

In 1994, Ford conducted all of its training in traditional leader-led classrooms. At that time, 11,263 dealership employees participated in Ford's top 10 courses. In 1995, the ONE TOUCH network was installed in less than half of the company's dealership locations (2,000), yet almost twice as many participants were trained (18,142) than in the entire previous year. By 1996, upon the full roll-out of the ONE TOUCH-powered FORDSTAR network, more than ten times as many dealership employees were trained (124,510), as compared to just two years prior in the traditional classrooms. In 1997, Ford's distributed training program hit high gear, reaching 405,980 students, more than two-thirds of all dealership service personnel with training on the FORDSTAR network with ONE TOUCH e-Learning.

"The key is interactivity because that's the way adults learn. This is revolutionizing the sales training world."

Larry Conley, Manager
(retired),
FORDSTAR and Ford
Communications Network
Ford Motor Co.



Learning at The Speed of Change™

The FORDSTAR network is a pioneering example of e-Learning and the way in which the solution enhances the knowledge base and productivity of employees for large organizations. Today, each dealership is equipped with the ONE TOUCH KnowledgeSite solution, including the patented KnowledgeSite Manager and Interactive Touchpad. Detroit-based instructors serve as “remote experts.” Since they are often the same people who designed the automobile components and sub-systems, they have instant credibility with their audience. ONE TOUCH’s one-way video and two-way audio enable all students to see both the instructor and the presentation materials, while allowing for an interactive conversation between the instructor and a student at the touch of the “Call” key. Everyone on the network hears the question as well as the answer. Participants are able to answer yes/no, true/false, multiple choice, and numeric response questions from the instructor. These results are compiled and available for immediate display to the instructor and class. Interaction between the students and the instructor creates a shared learning experience and a highly engaging distributed learning environment. Immediate tabulation of the students’ responses informs the instructor of how effective he/she has been in reaching the students. The results are measurable and certifiable, and the class records are logged in the company’s database for future reference.

Measure of Success

For Ford dealers, training at the local dealership saves time and money on lost productivity, travel, and other associated costs. The ONE TOUCH e-Learning solution also enables higher attendance, improved learning, and measurably higher comprehension. The result is a better trained dealer staff capable of delivering superior customer service. The tangible benefit to Ford is enhanced owner satisfaction, increased customer loyalty, and reduced service costs. As a result of the success to date with the domestic e-Learning network, Ford is implementing the ONE TOUCH system on a global basis including sites in Europe, Australia, and Canada.



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