

Learning Becomes Easier, More Convenient and Engaging for Qualcomm's 31,000 Employees

Education is a critical component of success in today's world. That's true on both a micro- and macro-scale. Personal education is important in attaining individual success. But organization-wide education is also crucial in achieving and maintaining success on an enterprise level.

It's a fast-moving world, and it's easy to get left behind. That's why successful organizations proactively work to assure the ongoing education of their employees.

Qualcomm is a perfect example of a company that recognizes the crucial importance of employee education. In just a few decades, Qualcomm has grown from a tiny home-based start-up to one of the largest, most dynamic players in the field of mobile communications.

Qualcomm's success hasn't happened by accident. The company's achievements have been built upon groundbreaking technological breakthroughs, out-of-the-box thinking and a vibrant vision of the future - all supported by a well-trained, highly educated global workforce.

But success can sometimes lead to unanticipated problems.

Learning Had Become Nightmarishly Difficult

As Qualcomm grew and the knowledge base expanded exponentially, finding and accessing needed information became progressively more difficult for users. Users were presented with three options for finding the information they needed:

1. Try to navigate the overwhelmed learning management system
2. Sort through a multitude of purpose-created, subject-oriented internal websites
3. Be directed to a vendor's website

"It was a nightmare for our end users," said Villetta Reeves, a learning program manager with the Qualcomm Learning Center. Reeves said that much of her first year with Qualcomm was spent just trying to get a handle on the resources that were available to end-users. "At one point, I thought: I'm an expert in our Learning Center, and I'm having trouble finding content myself. How frustrating this must be for our users!"

It was also frustrating for the Learning Center's staff. Much of their time was spent in simply trying to help direct users to the information they needed - so much so that it became a hindrance to pursuing Learning Center business objectives.

And the informational ball of yarn continued to become ever more tangled as more information was added to the system. "We didn't have a good way of stringing content together," said Reeves. "When we came upon some great content that would complement existing content, we just had to create a new website for that content and link it to relevant sites."

The resulting multiple layers of websites made it progressively more complicated and confusing for end users to find the content that they sought. It was very clear that serious change was needed.

A Serendipitous Tweet

The Qualcomm Learning Center team went to work looking for a solution. They considered developing a system internally. They did a lot of brainstorming, envisioning what their perfect system would look like if they developed it themselves.

They also evaluated a number of different vendors. They talked with vendors they had worked with in the past, along with some new vendors, trying to see if anyone offered a solution that conformed to their vision. No luck. And quotes they received for building a new system from scratch were through the roof.

And then one day a team member happened to see a tweet about a new company offering a different kind of learning solution: Pathgather. The Tweet was intriguing; the team member followed up on the tweet by visiting Pathgather's website.

When he shared his discovery with the rest of the team, the reaction was unanimous. "We were all just floored," said Reeves. "We knew that this was *exactly* what we had been looking for. Pathgather's solution was so inline with our needs that it was as though they had eavesdropped on our brainstorming sessions about what our system would be if we developed it ourselves."

A Perfect Fit

Qualcomm's Learning Center team found that Pathgather's features fit their needs like the proverbial hand-in-glove. The system's content aggregation capabilities make the LMS a one-stop-shop, solving Qualcomm's massive content management problems.

And Pathgather's socialization features adds an entirely new dimension to Qualcomm's employee experience. Providing users with the ability to rate content also helps the Learning Center team in their efforts to provide the very best learning experience. As Reeves noted, "while those of us that manage the system might think a piece of content is really good, it's very important to know

what our users think. That helps us greatly in our ongoing efforts to provide the very best content for our users."

Pathgather also provided a solution to a problem that no other vendors addressed. Qualcomm is a huge company, with subject matter experts spread throughout the world. But because of the size and geographic spread of the company, connecting people with the expertise they were seeking had become very difficult.

"We needed a scalable way for people to connect", Reeves said. "One of the key problems we had was that users really didn't have a way to connect with each other. Pathgather was unique in that it provided that solution. And that was a very important consideration in our selection of Pathgather."

A Big Thumbs-Up From Thousands of Users Worldwide

To say that Qualcomm's implementation of Pathgather was successful would be a bit of an understatement. "The user adoption rate has been absolutely phenomenal," said Reeves. "Within about 8 months of implementation, we had half of the company's global workforce of 31,000 using Pathgather. That was very important to us, because we consider user adoption to be a primary marker of success."

And user participation hasn't been just casual. In less than a year, more than 20,000 courses were started, and over 6,000 completed. Hundreds of new learning paths were published. In comparison to Qualcomm's previous learning management systems, employees are starting courses at a 300% greater rate, and completing courses at a 900% greater rate.

It's evident that Qualcomm and Pathgather are travelling a good path together. Qualcomm's employees have been empowered by the ability to add and manage their own content. They've enjoyed the socialization aspects of Pathgather. And learning has been transformed into an enjoyable activity. At Qualcomm, learning is fun again.