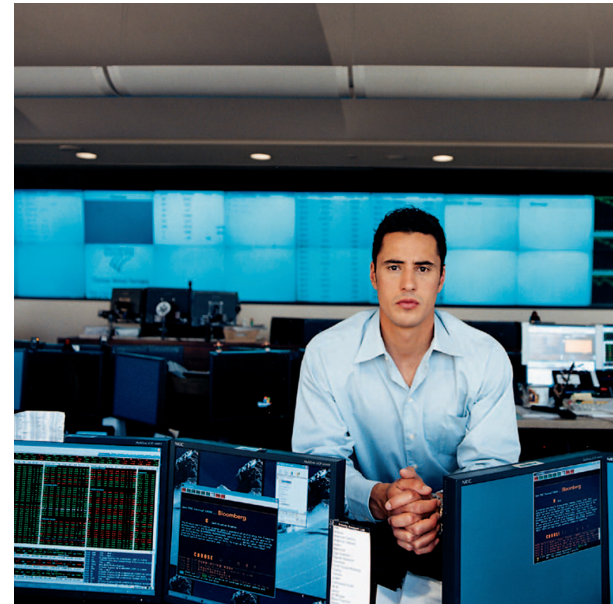


Toyota Canada reaps huge return on investment in HP Virtual Classroom



“Using the HP Virtual Classroom saves the dealer an enormous amount of travel time and money; and equally important, it saves them from having to leave the dealership and losing productive time in the office.”

— Deborah Williamson, Manager, Learning Technology and Administration, Toyota Canada Inc.



Challenge

- Eliminate travel for centralized, on-site training
- Deliver consistent content to a nationwide audience
- Cut travel costs

Solution

- HP Virtual Classroom

Results

- Estimated \$7.5 million in annual savings
- Reduced associate time spent away from dealerships
- Faster implementation of company-wide training

Toyota Canada reaps huge benefit from HP Virtual Classroom

Toyota Canada Inc. has found the HP Virtual Classroom saves millions of dollars in dealer education costs and thousands of associate hours each year as a tool for training dealers across Canada.

"It's proven very successful for us," says Deborah Williamson, Manager, Learning Technology and Administration for TCI's Toyota University in Scarborough, Ontario (just outside Toronto). She says Toyota's investment in the HP Virtual Classroom paid for itself in just the first two weeks of use. "As a result, we could invest in the development of other programs of interest to our dealers."

Training for a far-flung audience

The HP Virtual Classroom provides a rich environment for conducting effective, interactive online training and events of any type, with no travel. Associates, business partners and customers can attend training classes, product launches, team meetings, and collaborate in geographically dispersed groups. The HP Virtual Classroom lets users enjoy the advantages of live human interaction from anywhere in the world, at any time, via a standard web browser.

Toyota University, with a staff of 21, handles product education for technicians, sales staff, and parts and service staff for 240 dealerships spread across Canada. Williamson estimates there are 7,000 potential users in dealerships.

Toyota Canada uses the HP Virtual Classroom for a number of different training applications in both English and French. For new car launches (there will be six this year alone), a trainer acting as the HP Virtual Classroom facilitator will start by going through a PowerPoint presentation highlighting new features, changes in the vehicle, and comparing and contrasting Toyota's new offering relative to competitors. Throughout the process, product advisors participating in the HP Virtual Classroom session will be asking questions using the Hands Up feature or by submitting questions directly to the facilitator.

"It's really very interactive," Williamson says. "There are also quizzes to reinforce what's just been covered and to test the effectiveness of the learning tool." Such sessions target everyone in the dealership — from sales and service staff right up to general managers — as well as TCI's five zone offices.

Upgrading technology yields big savings

The HP Virtual Classroom fits into Toyota's larger effort to upgrade computer-based technology within the dealerships. "The HP Virtual Classroom was one way to practice what we're preaching," Williamson says. "It's great to show the dealers that technology really does save you time and money, and really does work. Using the classroom saves the dealer an enormous amount of travel time and money; and equally important, it saves them from having to leave the dealership and losing productive time in the office."

Just how much time and money? Williamson estimates total savings amount to more than \$30,000 (Canadian) per dealer, or more than \$7 million across the national dealer network.

Toyota Canada's corporate office adds to the total by avoiding the cost of instructor-led on-site training, and the cost of sending trainers out to dealerships for on-site training. Total savings between dealers and the corporate office: just over \$7.5 million.

And Toyota's cost to realize those savings? Less than \$20,000 in costs to use the Virtual Classroom for a year. "It's really a compelling business case," says Williamson. "The return on investment — more than 350 times the annual cost — is astounding."

The benefits go beyond direct cost savings, though. First, she notes, associates spend less time away from their jobs. Rather than traveling cross-country to the Toronto area and often missing more than a day of work, they can attend a one-hour Virtual Classroom session and then return to their jobs. Williamson hasn't quantified those savings, but they would drive up the ROI even more.

Finally, she says there are intangible benefits. Company-wide training happens faster, so product advisors and technicians are up to speed on new vehicles sooner. The dealership's time to market is effectively faster, and its associates better prepared.

Why HP's Virtual Classroom?

Williamson says Toyota Canada chose the HP Virtual Classroom because it offers an attractive value in an easy-to-use package. "We had an immediate need to implement some company-wide training. So we needed a solution that offered robust features and yet still was easy to use. The HP Virtual Classroom was the best solution available for our needs."

Using the HP program met TCI's immediate need, and garnered positive feedback. Among the comments: "super ... saved a lot of time and money ... should be the norm ... I'm glad that Toyota is going this way..."

"Even people who aren't tech savvy said that even though it was their first time using it, they had no problems," Williamson says. To get up and running as fast as possible, Toyota initially hired outside consultants to serve as meeting facilitators in the HP Virtual Classroom. But the company's own trainers have now taken over that function — after seeing how easy-to-use the HP Virtual Classroom actually is.

The company has just started using some of the classroom's features, such as polling (each participant "votes" for a choice among multiple solutions). The next step, Williamson says, will be recording virtual classes. That provides two benefits: associates who miss the live session can go back later and watch them; and those who participated in the original session can review it.

Expanding use of the HP Virtual Classroom

Toyota uses the HP Virtual Classroom for new product launches, as mentioned earlier, as well as training for dealership system administrators, technician certification, and even an annual skills contest for technicians and service advisors.

In some cases, associates still travel to Toyota University for a hands-on class. But before they leave, they spend an hour in the HP Virtual Classroom as a prerequisite to the actual class. "You get to know your audience before they come in so you know what level they're at and can anticipate their questions a little easier," Williamson says.

She also envisions broadening use of the classroom to include other types of regular meetings in which dealers get together to discuss business issues and learn about new technology.

The HP Virtual Classroom has proven so successful that Williamson's staff had to implement an on-line reservation system so people don't overbook it. Thus far, the company is continuing to use a single, 15-seat classroom. When there's extra demand, Toyota can simply "rent" a second classroom from HP. "It makes a difference that a company as big as HP can be so responsive. Sometimes you have to make things happen quickly, and HP was able to do that for us."

At a glance

Company: Toyota Canada Inc.

Headquarters: Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Number of associates: 526

Telephone: 416-438-6320

URL: <http://www.toyota.ca>

Primary business: Marketing and distribution of Toyota and Lexus automobiles across Canada.

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