

# Extending Certification-Based Training with Web 2.0 Chrysler Academy 2.0

## Background

Chrysler Academy required performance-proven, certification-based training programs for its customerfacing dealer personnel. Studies indicate that participation in certification-based training programs are leading indicators of performance in the automotive dealer workplace. When combined with an environment that nurtures the development of its employees' social capital and networking, the organization has effectively addressed the top two factors in employee performance within the automotive dealer workplace (*Dealership Evaluation Systems*, *Carlos Mora, PhD, Trevor Leutscher, PhD*).

Chrysler has long embraced the use of robust dealer certification programs for its global dealer network. This network is comprised of over 160,000 employees, with the bulk located in North America (USA and Canada), but also supporting worldwide operations in approximately 93 countries and supporting translations for 13 languages.

For Chrysler, the implementation and integration of Web 2.0 capabilities into existing learning and certification management system was viewed as an opportunity to address several issues. This included customerfacing challenges confronting its dealer communities on a daily basis, as well as developing concerns tied to the changing nature of its dealer workforce. Chrysler Academy 2.0 supports 160,000 employees throughout USA, Canada, Mexico and 90 other countries, including translation to support 13 languages.

# Drivers for Chrysler Academy 2.0 (CA 2.0)

Based on feedback from its dealer base and those challenges realized within the business, four (4) key factors were defined as contributing to the need for Chrysler Academy 2.0:

- 1. There is a challenge for sales and service personnel as customers are frequently well educated prior to arrival at the dealership and expectations are that dealership staff is on par with this knowledge. This was comprised of both:
  - Product Information about product specifics and cross-platform technologies
  - News and Media Industry and marketplace news about Chrysler and its dealers, as well as customer incentive programs

- Web 2.0 social networking and content management tools are available that provides real-time performance support, helping dealerships sell more cars, parts and peripherals, as well as fixing vehicles.
- 3. There is a challenge to train New Hire District Managers faster and more efficiently, and with that a need for greater collaboration and informal learning.
- 4. There is a need for rapid knowledge sharing and the capability to capture this collective intelligence as the "Boomer" generation approaches retirement age.

Additional objectives were also identified in conjunction with this effort:

- Eliminate the significant cost of design, development, production and distribution of hardcopy product and service literature
- Provide more timely distribution of product and service information, including related performance support (training) content
- Provide a mechanism that will allow for more timely feedback from the dealer user base on a variety of topics, helping to shape future performance support content and educational offerings.
- Further enhance partnerships with targeted 3<sup>rd</sup> party vendors and service providers (including revenue generation opportunities)

There are legal considerations that prevented the complete adoption of all of the functionality available in Web 2.0 tools. Highly regulated industries such as the automotive industry must be sensitive to outbound and inbound content, particularly those tied to critical service-related communications.

Additional challenges were presented by the occasionally low computer literacy of staff, process and workflow challenges from the coordination of multiple parties (Chrysler, Chrysler Academy, 3<sup>rd</sup> party marketing, content providers, technology vendors, etc.) and the scalability of Web 2.0 functionality needed to meet service level performance and availability parameters in an online environment that could support over 300,000 users.

#### Drivers for Chrysler Academy 2.0

- Respond to increased customer knowledge, product and market news
- Streamline onboarding of Managers and improve collaboration
- Increase knowledge sharing and collective intelligence as 'Boomers' approach retirement.
- Availability of robust Web 2.0 tools to aid dealer sales and service

# **Project Overview**

This project enhanced the Chrysler Academy Learning Center by incorporating commercial Content Management and Web 2.0 capabilities with existing Learning Center functionality to support targeted learning and performance support objectives:

- Streamlining access to Learning Center courses and resources tied to ongoing training and certification activities – Tailored to the individual, providing at-a-glance status and next steps information.
- Increasing visibility and ease of access to additional performance support content Both
  resources tied to training and certification requirements, as well as those in support of day-today job activities.
- Centralizing and streamlining access to disparate resources Focusing on enhancing access and availability, not redundancy of information where possible.
- Incorporating new ways to deliver knowledge and best practices within and across CA communities.
- Employing tools and technologies to aid in content presentation and administration while engaging end-users through personalization of content and updated look and feel.
- Expanding inbound contribution of knowledge and best practices by increasing collaboration and cross-pollination within and across CA communities.

Initially, these Web 2.0 capabilities are accessible by U.S. Learning Center user populations (Sales, Service, Parts, Warranty and CA Corporate personnel) through Chrysler's DealerConnect portal, with active user status confirmed via Chrysler's personnel management system, MyPersonnel. Existing user profile information received from MyPersonnel and stored in the Latitude Learning Management System (LMS) is used by the Content Management System (CMS) to tailor the presentation of content and the user's overall experience while navigating CA 2.0.

Authenticated users have access to a range of training and performance support information, made possible through intuitive, taxonomy-driven navigation. The user may also leverage the robust search features spanning several key knowledge areas, including news and announcements, product and technology information, as well as targeted skill-building resources and training aids. Additionally, 'spotlight' content (i.e. hand-picked articles, videos and lessons from various knowledge areas) are made available on the user's home tab to aid in overall knowledge sharing across functions.

Rollout of CA 2.0 employed the use of a 3<sup>rd</sup> party (.Net/SQL-based) CMS from Ektron, which was fully integrated with the existing (.Net/SQL-based) Learning Center application developed and supported by Latitude. When combined with custom integration services, this CMS allowed for rapid integration and extension of underlying Learning Center functionality, as well as rapid deployment and configuration of Web 2.0 capabilities generally aligned with SLATES (*Reference: A. McAfee*):

- Search Finding information through keyword search.
- *Links* Connecting information together into a meaningful information ecosystem using the model of the Web, and providing low-barrier social tools.
- *Authoring* The ability to create and update content leads to the collaborative work of many rather than just a few web authors. For example, in the case of blogs, posts and the comments of individuals build up as new resources over time.
- *Tags* Categorization of content by users adding "tags" short, usually one-word descriptions = to facilitate searching, without dependence on pre-made categories.
- *Extensions* Software that makes the Web an application platform as well as a content/document server.
- Signals Use of syndication technology such as RSS to notify users of content changes.

# How CA2.0 Users Are Leveraging Common Web 2.0 Capabilities

#### Personalization and application extensions helping to tailor content:

- Product and role-specific resources:
  - Product materials including Web-based courses and self-contained web-based learning objects, videos, MP3, and content available in various document types (PDF, Word, Excel)
  - Function-specific best practice documents, job aids and real-time postings this includes blog postings (currently one-way dissemination due to legal constraints) for prominent service and warranty issues.
  - Integration with 3<sup>rd</sup> party iShowroom site, enabling deep-dive product review, as well as real-time inventory and pricing for pre-order vehicle configuration with customers.
  - Personalized 'widgets' for operational managers integrated with the Learning Center, providing windows into employee training and development activities.

- Extensions examples of new integrated functionality ('widgets') to aid in the presentation of
  personalized training and performance information include:
  - My Training Status Providing student-users with current certification status and upcoming training requirements, as well as real-time pending approvals information for managers.
  - *My Rewards Status* Presenting sales users with the latest Excellence Rewards incentive payment information.
  - *My Sales Status* Providing sales user with up-to-date sales performance data and personalized ranking across several targeted organizational levels.

## RSS news feeds and audio/video casts

- Real-time RSS feed to access Chrysler's existing internal news feed, which includes administrative tools and workflow to review, refine and apply metadata tags (for search and distribution) prior to publishing on CA20.
- Audio and video casts, both internal and from preferred CA training partners and service providers

#### Blogs

- Two-way blog targeted at sales populations This capability includes workflow checkpoints for mediated approval and refinement of content as needed.
- One-way blog postings implemented for service and warranty-related topics.

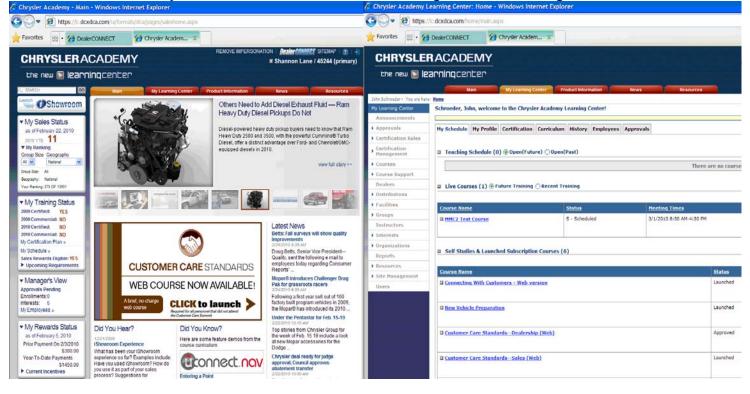
#### Polls and surveys

- Currently employed across all sales, service-technical and corporate user communities. Typically these are weekly polls on a range of business-focused topics, tailored and deployed based on department or position group metadata defined within CMS.
- Ad-hoc surveys are employed for deep-dive exploration of training-related topics. Leveraging metadata definitions allow for distribution of online surveys by department or position group.

## Illustrative Examples

#### Personalized – Tailored by Position/Individual

#### Seamless Integration with Existing LMS



#### Easy-Access to In-Depth Product Information

#### Blog – Collaboration & Inbound Knowledge Capture

Chrysler Academy - Proc	duct Information - Windo	ws Internet Expl	orer			Chrysler Academy - Did \	Your Hear? - Windows Internet Explorer		
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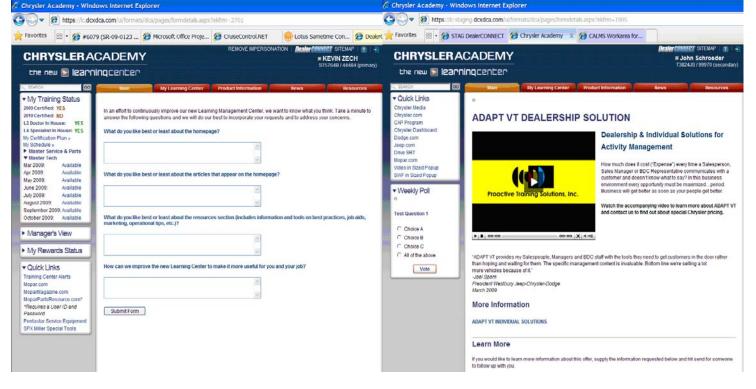
#### Personalized Best Practice/Standards Information

#### **Robust Site/Content Search and Filter Tools**

Chrysler Academy - Resources - Windows Internet Explorer	🖉 Chrysler Academy - Search - Windows Internet Explorer			
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#### Ad-Hoc Surveys Validate and Enhance Offerings

## Targeted 3<sup>rd</sup> Pty Offerings – Partnerships/Revenue



# **Benefits**

Over the past five years, Chrysler has realized significant, tangible benefits from their focus on certification-based training and development. By defining structured training curriculum, moving to a blended learning model (web based, instructor-led and virtual) and mandating certification for its dealership personnel, Chrysler has accomplished the following:

- Increased the number of certified sales, service and parts dealership personnel
- Decreased the cost of training and certification to dealerships
- Validated that certified personnel consistently outperform non-certified personnel, sometimes by a factor of 2:1.

Chrysler has statistically proven that the increase in performance of a dealership and its personnel is directly related to the training and certification they have attained.

- The success of Chrysler's structured learning and certification programs was primarily enabled by the Latitude Learning Management System (LMS). While the LMS remains at the center of their learning initiatives, it is now a core element of their learning portal strategy – Chrysler Academy 2.0.

The introduction of Web 2.0 technologies was designed to enhance the focus and provide a more robust learning environment that drives the core mission of structured training and certification that has proven so effective for the organization. The most tangible benefit of the implementation was the structured and targeted content for Chrysler dealers and staff. The health of the organization is based on the quality of the information it provides and the speed at which the company delivers it. Given the tumultuous year in the automotive industry in 2009 this was a critical area to address.

#### Example:

It is common for competitors to cast negative aspersions about the Chrysler brands. It is in Chrysler's best interests to analyze the misinformation and educate dealership personnel about the appropriate way to respond and counter the statements.

Prior to the introduction of the CA 2.0 it took an average of two weeks for information to be delivered to the dealers in printed and usable form. The turnaround is now typically completed within one day. This rapid response enables dealers to mitigate the impact of misinformation which contributes to better customer retention and improved customer service.

The distribution of printed content to the dealers – regardless of topic – represents a significant cost to Chrysler. Under dealer agreements Chrysler is obligated to provide this information to the dealers. The creation process still occurs but the delivery of that content is now managed through the use of Web 2.0 tools; virtually eliminating the production, inventory and delivery costs previously associated with this information.

## Example:

When a new vehicle is launched or product updates require dealer training a launch kit is developed. The typical cost of a launch kit and dealer distribution was approximately \$100K.

With the introduction of CA 2.0 the creation costs are still incurred but the production, inventory and distribution costs are nearly eliminated. The cost for a similar launch kit has now been reduced to approximately \$10-15K.

The impact of the cost savings and faster distribution allowed Chrysler to maintain the dealership training costs at previous levels – offsetting the impact of lost dealerships and personnel. Other savings/benefits include:

- Quicker delivery of content from creation to dissemination.
- Agile content management allowing for changes to content based on market need. (This includes refinement and redeployment of content based on feedback from field personnel using Web 2.0 functionality.)
- Reduction of lost time associated with content not pertinent to the job function.
- Refined content development allowing for specialized content for each constituent group when necessary.

#### Additional Benefits Realized:

Since the new capabilities have become available, the amount of time learners spend in the portal has increased. According to statistical analysis, users are seeking information in the portal to help them perform their jobs better. Statistics on inbound contributions further support the assertion that the Web 2.0 tools will drive the future success of this community. In the first six months following rollout of CA 2.0:

- 750 Learner Blog contributions have been vetted and published as ongoing performance support resources.
- 1,100 Ad-Hoc Survey responses to targeted operational and resource-specific topics have been received from learners.
- 9,000 Weekly Poll responses have been received, and are helping to drive resource development and learning in new directions.

Chrysler believes in the value of highly trained and well certified dealership personnel to provide the best possible customer experience regardless of which area of the dealership they are working. Historical data validates this claim. The introduction of the Web 2.0 tools to the learning process will help Chrysler build their vision of a learning community that spans dealerships, crosses states and country lines and helps everyone share their collective dealership expertise to provide the best possible service to its customers.

## Summary

The Web 2.0 tools embedded in the Chrysler Academy 2.0 learning center are responsible for improving the learner experience and engaging the dealership community as active contributors in the learning process, all the while lowering costs, reducing waste, and shortening the turnaround time for responding with reactive messaging.

However, the most important accomplishment of the Web 2.0 tools is not a simple reduction in costs or faster time to market. It's the improvement of the dealership staffs that are not only better able to respond to customer needs, but also are committed to strengthening the learning system by sharing best practices and solutions to common challenges that dealers face.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Latitude Learning at (888) 577-2797 or by e-mail to info@latitudelearning.com.