

Sales Readiness Group

Sales Readiness Group standardizes on Adobe® Acrobat® Connect™ Pro software to create on-demand and real-time interactive, online learning experiences that bring sales training course materials to life

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www.salesreadinessgroup.com



Industry

Corporate training

Challenges

- Provide highly engaging, interactive training for sales teams
- Help clients develop better, more effective sales teams without breaking the budget or pulling sales teams out of the field

Solution

- Online learning
Sales Readiness Group uses Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro to create interactive, real-time, online learning experiences that bring course materials to life.

Results

- Increased revenues with large number of repeat customers
- Enabled delivery of multiple 60- and 90-minute online training sessions, spread out over several weeks
- Increased the number of online training classes by 50% in one year
- Achieved high satisfaction ratings from customers engaged in online training sessions

Systems At A Glance

- Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro

Engaging sales training solutions

Sales Readiness Group (SRG) develops and facilitates training courses that help businesses improve sales performance, develop sales leaders, and increase sales results. Working across a number of industries, including healthcare, financial services, high-tech, medical devices, and pharmaceuticals, SRG offers a comprehensive, proven set of sales training solutions customized to meet individual clients' sales objectives and to address industry-specific challenges.

A skills-based training company that keenly understands what it means to be “sales ready”, SRG is committed to providing the highest quality training through private and public workshops, group and individual coaching sessions, and virtual, web-based workshops. SRG utilizes a skills-based approach that emphasizes multi-phase learning, pre-workshop training guides, interactive scenario-based role plays, and reinforcement activities that promote rapid and sustainable adoption of powerful, proven selling skills and techniques.

“Salespeople represent a unique type of learner,” says Norman Behar, CEO of Sales Readiness Group. “They want to be out in the field selling, and if you can’t engage them from the outset, you’ll lose them. Regardless of industry, we have to ensure that all of our sales workshops are highly engaging and interactive from start to finish in order to create the best learning experience.”

Taking instructor-led training online

In years past, when the economy was in a growth mode, SRG’s clients emphasized sales efficiency, invested in technology such as CRM and sales force automation, and sought sales training focused on those technologies. As the economy slowed and companies found it more challenging to secure business, SRG’s clients began to place more emphasis on the core selling skills of their sales teams. However, as the economy contracted, so did corporate budgets.

“In today’s economic climate, our clients’ ability to bring distributed sales teams together for training has been dramatically reduced,” says SRG President David Jacoby, “Not only are they reluctant to spend limited budgets on travel and accommodations, they are also understandably averse to pulling salespeople out of the field for one or two days at a time.”

Yet the need to help clients develop better, more effective sales teams remained. Convinced that technology held the key, SRG began to research the best way to replicate and simulate a traditional instructor-led classroom experience using a virtual, web-based delivery mechanism.

Evaluating online delivery solutions

In spring 2008, SRG began testing several leading online delivery solutions against two primary criteria: ease of use for facilitators and participants, and a feature set that supports the creation of highly engaging sales trainings. Ultimately, SRG chose to standardize on Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro.

After careful evaluation, Sales Readiness Group standardized on Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro for its ease of use for facilitators and participants, and a feature set that supports the creation of highly engaging sales trainings.



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David Jacoby,
President,
Sales Readiness Group

“What appealed to us was the ease of use and the incredibly powerful feature set,” explains Behar. “Acrobat Connect Pro doesn’t include features just for the sake of having a long feature list. Instead, it includes specific features such as live chat, video, whiteboards, and polling that really encourage engagement, which is our primary focus.”

Citing a highly intuitive interface, the SRG team appreciates how simple it is for participants to enter a web-based training session in Acrobat Connect Pro. With virtually no wait times or software downloads, Acrobat Connect Pro requires only a web browser and Adobe Flash® Player software, already installed on more than 98% of Internet-connected desktops worldwide. “With Acrobat Connect Pro we don’t need to provide any instructions for getting started,” says Jacoby. “The chat pod just pops up in the middle of participants’ screens, which makes for a much better experience.”

Bringing course materials to life

Facilitators appreciate the clean interface as well. Because they do not have to help participants navigate the system, they can take advantage of the robust features to create interactive, real-time learning experiences that bring course materials to life. “Regardless of whether we are conducting a course in person or online,” says Jacoby, “we want participants to walk away feeling very excited about what they learned. Acrobat Connect Pro helps us realize that goal every time.”

A typical SRG online sales training will take advantage of the video conferencing feature throughout each 60- or 90-minute session. By selecting the video pod within Acrobat Connect Pro, the facilitator can be seen by all of the participants, helping create interest and deepen rapport. Additionally, a facilitator might choose to quickly open up multiple pods, show a slide on the screen, and conduct a poll of participants; all at the same time. Simultaneously, he or she can open up two chat pods, one for participants who voted “yes”, one for those who voted “no”. Within each chat pod, the facilitator can initiate an interactive discussion of why participants voted the way they did.

“Acrobat Connect Pro is so easy to use that we can do all these things at once without a whole lot of effort,” says Behar. “By combining all these interactions, we can facilitate deeper engagement and thinking among participants.”

Interactive, media-rich training

The seasoned training professionals of SRG know that a salesperson’s attention span during training courses can be short, especially during a web-based presentation. Yet while many participants fear “death by PowerPoint”, they have nothing to fear when they attend a virtual training from SRG. If a slide is up for more than a minute, the SRG facilitator will take advantage of the numerous annotation tools found in Acrobat Connect Pro to keep the action high and the learners engaged.

A typical Sales Readiness Group online sales training will take advantage of the video conferencing feature throughout each session. A facilitator also might choose to quickly open up multiple pods, show a slide on the screen, and conduct a poll of participants.



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Marlaina Williams, veteran trainer and SRG director of client services, says, “Acrobat Connect Pro enables us to maintain frequent interactions with participants, which are crucial for effective, online trainings.” Behar concurs. “The whole idea is we always want to have action. If things get static in a virtual world, we lose the participants and we lose the engagement,” he says. “With Acrobat Connect Pro, we can keep participants focused and paying attention.”

To keep things active, the facilitator can easily use the arrow feature to point out key information on the screen. She can utilize the whiteboard feature to capture ideas or key take-aways. The polling feature might be used for breaking the ice, taking the temperature of the group, or doing a quick read on level of comprehension. The chat feature is useful for getting concurrent engagement and involving all participants in a discussion. SRG facilitators also use the chat pods to direct role plays where participants practice newly learned skills with each other.

According to Williams, an unanticipated benefit of chat rooms is that they encourage banter among the participants. “What delights me is that getting together in a chat room is a lot like getting together in a sales meeting,” says Williams. “Instead of trying to remain anonymous, participants often use the chat pods to tease each other, and playfully give each other a hard time which heightens levels of engagement, participation, and enjoyment.”

Deepening retention through shorter sessions

Both SRG facilitators and their clients appreciate the fact that Acrobat Connect Pro enables training to be delivered in multiple 60- to 90-minute segments spaced out over several weeks. For example, consultative selling classes are taught online as five 90-minute modules over a five-week period. Between modules, participants are given reinforcement work to use in the real world. When they return to the virtual classroom a week later, they have the opportunity to ask questions that arose in the field which helps deepen and enhance knowledge retention.

A testament to the power of short sessions, Behar recently received feedback from a course participant who is also a professional trainer at a very large company. “She told us that she had planned to minimize the window so she could go onto Outlook during the training,” says Behar. “But she couldn’t—not because she was technically unable, but because she was so engaged, she never found the opportunity to break away. That’s the kind of feedback we love to hear.”

Changing the game

Only one year ago, all of SRG’s courses were conducted as in-person, instructor-led trainings. Today, about 50% of the courses are conducted online using Acrobat Connect Pro. According to Jacoby, SRG’s virtual course offerings could easily grow to be 80% or 90% of all trainings offered by 2010.

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With a challenging economy and the reduction of clients’ training budgets, SRG transformed its business model. The virtual training model has enabled SRG to stay competitive while delivering a high-quality, valuable alternative to in-person training sessions. Client feedback on the virtual trainings is very positive, scores on evaluations are consistently high, and repeat business is strong. For SRG, the trend is so clear. The cost advantages and the convenience to the customer of virtual training, as well as the effectiveness of teaching 90-minute modules over several weeks, is quite compelling when compared to traditional approaches to learning.

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For More Information

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