



PARTNERS IN TRAINING

GTPs deliver top-notch education for IBM clients

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PARTNERS IN TRAINING

IBM taps five worldwide partners to deliver client training

BY CAROLINE VITSE

Many companies are finding it challenging to hire highly skilled employees who can leverage today's powerful technology to solve real business problems. According to the 2012 IBM Tech Trends Report, only one in 10 organizations has all of the

skills it needs to be successful, while a 2013 survey from IBM Smarter Workforce indicates best-performing organizations drive 68 percent more training to their teams than the worst-performing organizations. Fostering and identifying critical skills is rapidly becoming one of the most important issues facing organizations. Respondents to a recent IBM C-suite

survey placed people skills in the top four external factors they are most concerned about in the next three to five years.

To help its clients and business partners generate the skills needed to maximize and accelerate their return on technology investments, IBM recently announced significant changes to its training ecosystem.

IBM traditionally provided its education offerings within its Lab Services units in the Software and Systems and Technology groups. However, in July 2013, IBM rolled out a new education and training model for its customers. Several factors influenced that decision. IBM wanted to:

- ▶ Foster growth in technology skills in the market for the broader IBM portfolio
- ▶ Enhance training availability at a local level
- ▶ Add more innovation in the delivery and flexibility of learning styles

This move allows customers to choose training courses that better suit their business needs in their local marketplaces.

IBM set out to find a group of partners that could provide essential training for IBM products and solutions as part of its Global Skills Initiative (GSI), allowing all IBM business partners to apply to the program as long as they met the demanding criteria that demonstrated the partner's ability to deliver high-quality training in every country where IBM operates.

Bob McDonald, IBM vice president and executive sponsor of GSI, says the applicants had to demonstrate competency and quality in the education realm of its existing education business model, along with an awareness of—and capabilities for—delivering both classroom-style education, and digitally delivered courses and innovation (and flexibility) in blending learning styles to customers' needs.

The Global Training Providers (GTPs) had to have a global presence, and the ability to attract and retain instructors worldwide. IBM chose five partners to participate

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—Bob McDonald, IBM VP and executive sponsor of the Global Skills Initiative



in the GSI program: Arrow, Avnet, Global Knowledge, Ingram Micro and LearnQuest. These GTPs have impressive track records as business leaders and innovators due to a demonstration of their extensive training network for IBM customers and business partners.

All Education is Local

In 2011, Steve Mills, IBM senior vice president and group executive for Software and Systems, announced a global plan to grow technical skills in the marketplace. As he visited with clients around the globe, Mills heard the same story—they wanted to work with local partners because these partners better understood the specific market requirements and needs.

By leveraging the business partners along with the education business

partners, IBM could triple the number of skills in the marketplace by 2015. As you would expect, IBM is still heavily invested in its training ecosystem. The company provides high-quality content from all brands to the GTPs, and the training providers build an ecosystem of instructors and other partners who can access the training materials.

The partners are encouraged to take the IBM content and adjust it to meet market requirements in crafting their own educational offerings and derivative work courses. “These work courses will meet a niche requirement or allow the instructors to expand the skills in the marketplace,” McDonald explains.

Courses can be classroom-style and instructor-led, or they may be offered as online courses with one instructor and many students in virtual classrooms.

A self-pace option allows clients to access training courses on their own schedules. The GTPs can customize education to help an organization meet its training goals and objectives. The GTPs can also blend the learning experience with mixed delivery styles and augment with coaching.

The Training

All training opportunities can be found on the IBM training website (www.ibm.com/training). The GTPs list their courses on the website, allowing clients to choose the course based on the partner that offers it, as well as how the course is delivered. Once the client chooses the course, the client is directed to the individual GTP's website to see more details about the course and other offerings from the training provider.

IBM intends to incorporate some social-media capabilities so customers can rate their experiences with each course and GTP, according to McDonald. This rating system will help qualify the GTPs and give customers an easy way to provide valued feedback.

Because training is a commercial business for the GTPs, McDonald says, IBM is encouraging them to not just take the old IBM model and shift it to their world. Rather, IBM is pushing the GTPs to come up with new, innovative education offerings and go-to-market strategies. This innovation will grow skills in the marketplace, which is a win for the complete ecosystem—clients, business partners, IBM and GTPs. McDonald describes education as a “very underserved market right now.”

IBM is working with clients, partners and GTPs to revise the certification programs. While the certifications will be based on IBM technology, they will also hit broader topics outside the IBM product line. One topic students may become certified in, big data,

will be re-examined to determine how it would look to a data scientist versus someone who understands only part of the IBM portfolio. “We want to train the broader category of the new certification model,” McDonald explains.

Another avenue IBM is encouraging GTPs to consider is succession plan education. For example, many clients who are maintaining, administering and building applications on the System z* platform are nearing retirement age. “We haven't really established a pipeline of qualified and highly trained specialists for the System z platform in a long time,” McDonald says. “We've encouraged the GTPs to work with IBM customers to address succession plan education offerings. GTPs could look at a particular industry or particular geography where there's a high

presence of System z, and make that an offering into that market.”

This succession plan education is something IBM customers are requesting. By offering it, the GTPs will have an opportunity to grow their business while addressing client needs. “GTPs are looking at how to grow skills in the marketplace, grow their business and hit a sweet spot for what customers are asking for from IBM,” he adds.

Smooth Transition

Since the new training model was launched, McDonald says it has been well received by clients. The network of instructors that was in place prior to this new model is now working with the GTPs, and the transition has been smooth. Customer feedback has been positive, with most clients saying they are getting more opportunities for education from local partners, which is exactly what IBM envisioned.

Analysts are also on board, saying this model is favorable because IBM is keeping its hand in making sure the quality of the training is maintained, but also giving GTPs the freedom to be autonomous and creative regarding how they go to market.

Improving the lab structure is at the top of the list for future improvements to this new model. IBM is working with partners to make this happen, all while being sensitive to the needs of the growth markets, according to McDonald. “We are sensitive to not taking a North America or EMEA sort of mature market mentality as we go into the growth markets,” he says.

IBM is always looking for feedback from partners and clients. “I don't want us to have blind spots to what the markets need,” McDonald adds. ■

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LearnQuest Enables Training Success

The family-owned business puts its passion for IT education to work for IBM clients

Several of today's sharpest workforce members credit their success to the training they received from their company through LearnQuest. For more than two decades, LearnQuest has been providing complete education solutions for corporations and government organizations that need to train their staff on the latest business skills and information technology tools, methodologies and languages.

These solutions have helped Fortune 500 companies and many government agencies plan, create and deploy learning solutions to implement critical business solutions within their organizations. In July 2013, LearnQuest was selected as one of five authorized IBM Global Training Providers in a combined effort to drive a new global training model.

"We are proud, excited and prepared to respond to this vote of confidence from IBM Training," says LearnQuest CEO Lucy Schneiberg. "I would like to assure our existing and future clients that we will provide them with the same level of competence and quality of delivery that has become a trademark of LearnQuest."

The Instructors

As a family-owned IT training company with a unique passion for IT education, LearnQuest boasts more than 500 instructors who are among the industry's best and have hands-on experience in solving real business challenges. This global team is composed of a multitude of experts, including educators, IT experts and veteran business professionals.

All instructors are experts in their respective fields, averaging 15 to

20 years of practical experience and a minimum of five years' teaching experience. A number of them have more than 20 years of teaching experience and 30 years of practical hands-on experience in their respective fields. The wealth of knowledge acquired through several years of practice makes all the difference. LearnQuest receives many testimonials to this fact after courses are completed. "I am not sure how you'd be able to improve this class, honestly," one student commented. "The presenter for today's class was one of the most engaging and concise instructors I've experienced."

Dedicated to its mission of providing clients with the highest level of quality IT education and customer service, these experts consistently deliver creative and innovative solutions to customer challenges—thriving on

bringing results to each individual and the businesses he or she serves.

Client feedback reflects the fact that LearnQuest follows through on this promise. One of many examples comes from Susan B., a government client: "Let me add my congratulations and thanks to all of you, who exemplify what it means to deliver mission-critical systems and training for our customers."

Working closely with IBM, LearnQuest is providing IBM software and hardware training and skills development to customers in thousands of cities and in more than 100 countries, on-site and online. The company has also brought on former IBM executives who possess special insight into the needs of IBM's customers and a personal commitment to increasing those customers' skills and ability to utilize IBM products to grow their businesses.

Outstanding Customer Service

Whether the need is continuing education, certification or a custom solution, LearnQuest offers public and private learning solutions that fit the diverse learner's needs and stands by its statement that: "in everything we do, and in every country where we deliver training, every member of the team shares an obsession with 100 percent customer satisfaction."

Health insurance client Bill B. more than agrees that LearnQuest reaches its ambitious customer service

standards. "I would say that their customer focus is the best that I've seen in the training industry," he says. "LearnQuest will do whatever it takes to make the training a success with your organization, including formatting content to match company-specific needs, updating logistics, leveraging learning management tools such as registration, reporting, notifications and proactively recommending changes to enhance value based on their experience and expertise with the industry."

LearnQuest's capability to harness IBM hardware and software skills into both enterprise and consumer markets is backed by several factors, including: more than 17 years' experience with IBM training across all brands in Systems and Technology Group and Software Group; numerous ways in which training can be administered, such as instructor-led, virtual instructor-led, self-paced training and e-learning; a global team of instructors, facilities and training advisors to best support global and local training needs; and an internationally

Discounts

A variety of discounts are available to eligible customers, IBM business partners and IBM user group members. IBM business partners are entitled to a discount based on their IBM PartnerWorld membership level: 10 percent off list price for Member level and 20 percent off list price for Advanced and Premier level. IBM user group members are entitled to a 10 percent discount on training. IBM Education Packs can be used for training or converted to LearnQuest's LearnPass prepay program. LearnPass is a flexible prepay savings program that can be used for most of LearnQuest's services, including public enrollment classes, private custom training, self-paced training, learning design and development, as well as other vendor-authorized training. It is valid for one year from the date of purchase. LearnQuest also offers quarterly promotions. More details can be found at www.learnquest.com.

Conferences

Impact2014
Las Vegas
April 27-May 1

Global Summit
Tampa
May 12-15

Training Industry Conference
Raleigh
May 19-21

Edge2014
Las Vegas
May 19-23

Innovate2014
Orlando
June 1-5

SHARE
Pittsburgh
August 3-6

IBM Systems Technical Symposium
Sydney
August 2014

Enterprise2014
Orlando
October 6-10

IBM Power Systems Technical University
Lisbon
October 20-24

IBM Power Systems Technical University
Sao Paulo
October 2014

Information on Demand
Las Vegas
October 26-30

Spotlighted Trainers



Taryn Ernd is a seasoned technical trainer and consultant and has been an information systems professional for over 15 years. She has significant experience in developing curriculum and delivering

technical training for a variety of technologies, including Rational, Business Analysis and Java programming.



Robin Wiley has more than 30 years of experience in the information technology industry, specializing in networking, security, database management systems and systems software. His involvement has ranged from in-depth technical installations and problem-solving to high-level application design and

project management. His most prominent expertise is in IBM WebSphere DataPower, MQ and Message Broker.



accredited process for managing the design, development and delivery of IT education.

LearnQuest offers Learning Design and Development services, utilizing cutting edge tools and techniques to provide custom learning solutions designed to meet each client's unique goals and objectives.

Recognizing its clients' need for flexibility, LearnQuest offers five training delivery formats: virtual, classroom, online, Web-based classroom and hybrid, in which case an on-premises instructor is given remote access to virtual learners. Customized training courses are offered in addition to the 15 coursework categories under systems and software training.

LearnQuest also employs an innovative approach to learning by offering three key components: performance support, such as reviewing and aligning existing job aids with the training program, creating video mentor job aids from e-learning demonstrations and simulations or providing custom help and support landing pages that direct employees to formal and informal learning; blended solutions that combine instructor-led training, rapid and custom e-learning development, learning labs, collaboration sites and mobile platforms; and content development solutions customized to the client's specific goals and objectives in any organizational topic

area, from policy, procedure and product to behavior change, soft skills and project management.

By combining superior project management, tools and processes with talented and creative designers, LearnQuest consistently exceeds client expectations for all types of learning initiatives.

High-quality instructional materials are delivered on time and within budget according to the client's preference of tools, media, industry, interactivity levels and method of delivery.

"We are so excited about expanding our IBM Training in so many countries and partnering with these top education organizations," LearnQuest Managing Director Dimitri Schneiberg says. "Partnering with these companies opens the door for LearnQuest into so many different markets. We are confident that these partnerships will help us provide all of our clients the highest level of competence and quality delivery of IT education that has become the trademark of LearnQuest. ■"



IBM Coursework Offerings

SYSTEMS TRAINING

- Cloud Computing
- Mainframe
- Management Platform Computing
- Management Power Systems
- PureSystems
- Storage
- System x

SOFTWARE TRAINING

- Business Analytics
- Commerce
- Enterprise Content Management
- Enterprise Marketing Management
- Information Management
- Rational
- Tivoli
- WebSphere



LearnQuest

www.learnquest.com

Number of years in business: 17 years, started in 1997

Number of training facilities: more than 150

Locations:

Argentina	Ecuador	Mexico	Sri Lanka
Australia	Finland	Netherlands	Sweden
Bangladesh	France	Norway	Switzerland
Belgium	Germany	Paraguay	Thailand
Bolivia	Greece	Peru	Turkey
Brazil	Hungary	Philippines	Ukraine
Bulgaria	India	Poland	United Kingdom
Canada	Indonesia	Portugal	United States
Chile	Ireland	Romania	Uruguay
Colombia	Israel	Russian Federation	Venezuela
Croatia	Italy	Singapore	Republic of
Czech Republic	Korea	Slovenia	Vietnam
Denmark	Malaysia	Spain	



Learning is a lifelong journey ... Let LearnQuest be your guide.

GET AHEAD WITH LEARNQUEST TRAINING

We provide expert training in the following IBM products:

- IBM Storage and Storage Networking
- Power Systems running IBM i
- IBM System z (z/OS, z/VM, Linux)
- Power Systems running AIX
- System x (Intel-based servers)
- Linux on Power



As an IBM Global Training Provider, LearnQuest offers an extensive portfolio of software and hardware training. Our services are distinguished by an innovative approach to learning and the ability to customize content to a client's needs.

We utilize flexible and customizable training techniques in an adaptive approach, blending IBM products, technology, and methodologies to deliver training to our clients with no limitation to where they are in the world. This accessibility has multiple benefits for the customer: a better understanding of its software and hardware investment, faster user-adoption, and more effective use of the product and technology.

The LearnQuest global team brings creative and innovative solutions to customer challenges: thriving on delivering results to each individual and the businesses we serve. Our public and private learning solutions fit the diverse learner needs in any variety of delivery methods: classroom, virtual, self-paced, and onsite.



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