



Ahold Achieves Success with Centralized Learning Management System

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- Renee Wallace

Ahold

Vice President of Training and Development

Ahold is an international group of quality supermarkets and foodservice operators based in the United States and Europe. Since its parent company's first Albert Heijn store opened in the Netherlands in 1887, the organization has become a \$56 billion enterprise with six brands in the United States and 240,000 employees worldwide.

Centralized LMS Provides Vital Services Company-Wide

Ahold had several business drivers that created a need for the company to decentralize many of its operations: A new focus on its core retail businesses in the United States and Europe, the continued roll-out of value repositioning programs, and the reduction of operating costs. Learning Management, however, was one aspect of the business that we wanted to provide to our business globally. With Plateau, we accomplish that goal while allowing the Operating Companies to manage their own learning programs within the LMS.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ahold Challenge

- Implement globally managed LMS to meet the needs of our unique local businesses.
- Ensure timely compliance and general employee training.
- Flexible and configurable system to support changing business needs.

Plateau's Solution

- Manages a variety of content and deploys seamlessly to end-users.
- Enables each organization to individually select and manage content sources.
- Creates collaboration and consistency among businesses.
- Gives Ahold ability to train large number of employees quickly.
- Saves time and speeds reporting with online training and tracking.

Ahold also needed a consistent way to provide compliance training, and ensure that general employee training could be done within set timelines. The search began for a Learning Management solution (LMS) that would meet the needs of our unique businesses with over 50,000 associates.

Plateau Selected Unanimously

In preparation for an LMS, Ahold combined more than 12 disparate HR payroll systems to create a single repository for the HR data that could be easily integrated into a system. When vendor selection began, Plateau LMS and iContent became the clear choice. “Choosing Plateau was a unanimous decision from all the constituents: the business, IT, and the group who did the LMS financial analysis,” explained Renee Wallace, vice president of Training and Development at Ahold.

Two primary factors drove the decision to select Plateau. The highly-configurable nature of the system would enable Ahold to adapt learning to its changing needs as the business continued to evolve. “The other deciding factor,” recalled Wallace, “was that Plateau had very good people who were not only able to answer the questions, but actually show us during the demo. It was very clear Plateau is a can-do vendor.”

Plateau iContent Streamlines Learning Process

Plateau gives Ahold employees access to a wealth of training options. Ahold's blended-learning approach is supported by Plateau iContent, which enables the company to obtain and manage a variety of content that is deployed seamlessly into its LMS for an experience that is transparent to end-users. Online documentation hosted by iContent includes Ahold's change-management toolkit, PowerPoint presentations, policy documents, and competencies, said Wallace. “Where appropriate, we've taken documentation that resides in other

areas of the company and made them available through the LMS as well—any documentation someone might reference during a training course is out there.”

The flexibility of Plateau iContent enables Ahold and its operating companies to integrate their own training processes from a multitude of sources into the single LMS system. Ahold developed its own change-management toolkit but contracted with an international provider based in India to develop an on-line change management learning program. Ahold also contracted with a local provider in the Netherlands for its orientation program, and uses a PowerPoint conversion product to bring presentations online. All pieces are integrated seamlessly into the Plateau content-integration process.

At the store level, each organization has the ability to develop its own training or contract with local and international vendors to create content, said Wallace. “The integrated Plateau system provides a lot of flexibility for the arenas who want to do their own thing. They like having the vehicle and common tools, and can use our templates if they feel they’ll provide an advantage for them. At Ahold, compliance training appears to be launched from Ahold’s site, but actually resides on the vendor’s site.

“The transparency of our content delivery makes for a very streamlined learning process for our associates,” said Wallace. “One of the things we’re trying to encourage within our organization is growth and development, and Plateau LMS provides great visibility around development, because people know there’s only one place they have to go to see what’s available to them within their organization.”

Incorporating its rigorous Finance and IT Academy processes into the LMS has also created productive results. Ahold is now able to effectively track the Academies’ online and classroom training. “One of the things we’re most proud of is getting an ‘exceeds expectations’ rating on our Sarbanes-Oxley compliance requirement. Plateau LMS has been a part in helping us achieve that,” said Wallace.

Collaboration Brings Consistency

With the Plateau system Ahold has seen deeper collaboration develop among its companies. “With the learning management system, there’s a lot more reason to share, because people want to see what the other companies are doing and apply it to their organization,” said Wallace.

The collaboration has created a consistency in training approaches that the company did not previously have. For compliance training, Ahold has used the LMS to deliver a consistent message to all associates that the company takes compliance very seriously; the first program Ahold launched was a financial-integrity course.

One of the advantages of the LMS is that it allows Ahold to easily launch training programs and train employees in a short period of time, said Wallace. “We had an urgent HIPAA requirement that came out in which all of the requirements for the training weren’t released until just before the training was due. Thanks to our Plateau LMS, we were able to get 7,000 people trained in a 30-day period.”

Online Training Increases Efficiency

Increases in training efficiency and effectiveness have enabled a focused improvement in Ahold’s training development. The company has especially seen qualitative increases in productivity for content developers at the store level. Subsidiary Giant-Carlisle previously had to create and ship training CDs to hundreds of stores and manually track the training, creating a large time gap between training and reporting, explained Wallace.

“Giant-Carlisle saves a tremendous amount of time by no longer having to ship out those CDs. Everything can be launched and accessed directly from Plateau LMS and be reported on in real time. That’s been a huge boost to our training operation.”

A Winning Partnership is Established

“I’ve been very pleased with our experience with Plateau,” said Wallace. “We had a lot of work to do to create a consistent learning system—while at the same time implementing other projects—and Plateau worked with us throughout that process.”

After a successful LMS implementation and positive experience Wallace said she would recommend Plateau to other companies. “Plateau has a good handle on learning-management-system requirements and what’s going on in the industry, and they continue to make sure that their product is very viable. There’s an integrity factor with Plateau. Of all the vendors that I’ve worked with over the years, Plateau is one of the top.”