National Gallery Case History

GeoMetrix helps the United States National Gallery of Art manage employee training and development.
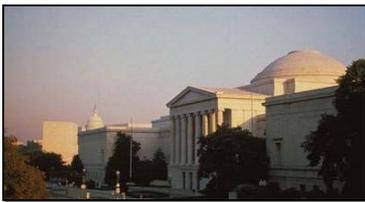
Photos courtesy of The National Gallery of Art

The mission of the National Gallery of Art (Gallery) is to serve the United States of America in a national role by preserving, collecting, exhibiting, and fostering the understanding of works of art, at the highest possible museum and scholarly standards.

Located in Washington, D.C., the Gallery collects American and European works of art from the late middle ages to the present.

Preserving the Gallery's collections involves maintaining effective programs of security, environmental control, building maintenance and conservation. Supported by public and private funding, the Gallery also conducts research and disseminates knowledge as an educational institution.

Daily activities include curating, education, programming, restoration, research, and administration. These duties, along with many more, are the responsibility of a dedicated staff of approximately 1,000 employees. Maintaining a skilled workforce is a vital component for the Gallery in meeting its mandate of maintaining its collections and passing these works of art on in optimum condition for future generations.

Over the years, the Gallery's Training Office has used a range of processes and systems to manage personnel training. In 2002, the Training Office purchased commercial training management software to automate the administrative processes and functions of managing, tracking, and reporting training information. "In 2009, the vendor was purchased by another company, which indicated that the software was no longer in production, and they would not provide technical support," said Judy Frank, Training Officer at the National Gallery of Art.

"Additionally, the software had become incompatible with other Gallery systems and could not support procedures for posting courses, scheduling classes, and tracking training attendance." So the Gallery began the process of replacing the outdated and unsupported software with a more up-to-date, comprehensive Learning Management System (LMS).

"An LMS that integrated the registration process with the data collecting function would eliminate redundancy of information and provide opportunities to grow and develop training in new ways, such as offering e-learning," noted Judy. "The new system would also expand the scope and accuracy of data through increased data sharing and the opportunities for increased reporting capability."

GeoTalent ...the evolution of TrainingPartner™
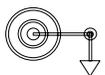
The National Gallery of Art (Photos from Wikimediacommons.org via USGS)

Mendi Cogle Wingfield, Employee Development and Training Specialist at the Gallery said, "The Gallery utilizes the expertise of several training administrators or subject matter experts to manage training for their respective subject areas."

She continued, "We needed a system that would suit this decentralized management approach, allowing several SMEs to control their training processes from an administrative perspective, while at the same time maintaining certain levels of functionality and quality control solely for Training Office staff."

To begin the process of finding an LMS, the Training Office staff developed a general list of needs and requirements that included the following.

➢ Integrated, centralized database for managing training information
➢ Robust reporting functionalities
➢ Centralized location for offering training materials
➢ E-learning functionality and SCORM compliance
➢ Multiple administrator capability
➢ Ease-of-use for both administrators and end users
➢ Operation within the Gallery's IT environment

The Training Office staff then began researching the LMS marketplace. "The initial process included familiarizing and educating ourselves on what an LMS is and does," explained Mendi. "As part of the information-gathering phase, we researched other organizations, similar in size to the Gallery, to find out what type of systems they were using."

Training staff also reviewed the LMS KnowledgeBase report produced by the industry analysts at the Brandon Hall Group to help them identify a system that would best suit their requirements. "Based on recommendations from other organizations and the Brandon Hall report, the Training Office staff requested preliminary demonstrations of systems from a select group of vendors that met our initial needs," said Mendi.

Following these demonstrations, a Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued, which outlined more than 80 specific requirements as well as 14 use cases. Each use case described how the Gallery believed the system should interact with its users in specific circumstances. Vendors were asked to describe how their systems would support the use cases and meet the requirements.

Responses to the RFP were evaluated, and a second round of demonstrations was carried out with Training Office staff and IT personnel. References were checked for those vendors that best met the requirements.

"With approximately 1000 employees, we were looking for a vendor that had experience with small to mid-size organizations, as well as those who have worked with the federal or state government, museums and/or educational organizations. We wanted a scalable solution that would allow us to meet our needs in a cost efficient manner," said Mendi.

In the end, the National Gallery of Art chose the LMS from GeoMetrix Data Systems Inc.

"TrainingPartner's hybrid composition of a web-based system for learners, supervisors, and instructors and the core or administrative system for our SMEs and training staff was a huge plus. It allowed for us to simultaneously decentralize training management and maintain quality control for the Training Office through its tiered access levels."

The National Gallery of Art's Training Office staff gave the following reasons for choosing TrainingPartner over its competitors.

✓ Most functionality for the cost
✓ Simplicity of the interface and intuitive nature of the system: "It is user friendly and easy to navigate."
✓ Ease of configurability: "TrainingPartner provided opportunities to fit the system to our established processes, terminology, and approval requirements, while providing options for us to grow within the system from a functional stand point."
✓ Capability to tailor to many different types of training
✓ Features to facilitate, manage and deploy e-learning
✓ Works well in an educational-based environment
✓ Ease-of-use by multiple administrators or SMEs
✓ Ability to focus the web system uniquely for particular audiences: supervisors, learners, and instructors

"Training staff and SMEs will use [the LMS] to post course and program descriptions, build curriculum, schedule classes and instructors, manage enrollments, and monitor

attendance and expenditures," said Judy. "It will also be a tool to help identify trends and address skill gaps."

Implementation of the system began with a kick-off meeting, which was followed by regular meetings between GeoMetrix and the Gallery until the project was complete. "National Gallery of Art staff was very organized," noted Greg Gammie, Implementation Services Manager at GeoMetrix.

"Often, there are roadblocks at the client's end and nothing we can do but wait for those to be cleared. But most of the project specifications were done by the Gallery in advance. They knew exactly where they wanted to go and how they wanted to get there."

Neal Johnson, Intranet Program Manager for the Gallery, worked closely with GeoMetrix on the implementation. Neal was involved in all stages of the project, from installing and configuring the software, through mapping and importing data, to creating customizations and email merges, and finally testing the system before it went live.

"Every implementation project should have someone like Neal," said Greg. "He had every detail laid out in writing. He was very professional and really got it. Neal and all the staff at the Gallery were great to work with."

One reason the Gallery chose TrainingPartner was that it can be easily tailored to specific processes. Most organizations have proprietary procedures, and the National Gallery of Art is no exception. One of these was that Gallery employees had to use a standardized government form to request training at an external facility.

"This form included course and vendor information and was used as part of the approval process," said Bryce Myers, Employee Development and Training Specialist at the Gallery. "A web-based version of the training form was developed and integrated with TrainingPartner for managing non-cataloged events."

Personnel in the training office say that they appreciate TrainingPartner's flexibility, which let them configure the system to serve the Gallery's unique needs."

"TrainingPartner's flexibility allowed us to create custom notifications, statuses, and course/program catalogs that mirrored Gallery terminology and processes. The look-and-feel of the web-module user interface was also tweaked to better match our needs," noted Bryce.

Most of the initial configurations and customizations were made with the help of implementation specialists at GeoMetrix. "This was truly a team effort on our part," said Greg. "Different members of our client services staff were assigned to the project at different times depending on the skills required. We also consulted with our development and support staff during the implementation to ensure that the Gallery's requirements could be met and supported to their satisfaction."

After completing system administrator and administrator training, Gallery staff members were able to make minor modifications to the system themselves. "Training Partner is designed to let customers make changes themselves," noted Greg. "Once the Gallery's administrators were trained by us, they could tweak the system to match their needs without our help.

Bryce noted, "Throughout the implementation phase, GeoMetrix technical and project-management staff did an excellent job of responding to our issues and questions. GeoMetrix support has also been excellent. Support staff has always been willing to step us through solutions to the issues we have encountered."

While the system has only been in place a short time, response from employees has been positive. "Our internal customers tell us that the simplicity and intuitiveness of TrainingPartner's web-based interface is a great improvement over our legacy course-enrollment system," said Bryce.

"During our hands-on training for the system, many said that the training was hardly necessary because the system was so easy to use."

The Gallery's Training Office now has a centralized learning environment where all training and development activities are tracked, managed and maintained. According to the Training staff, "This system allows employees and supervisors to view and print copies of transcripts without involving the Training Office. In addition, it provides employees with an opportunity to manage their own learning and development. Supervisors can be more involved in planning and monitoring the training and development activities of their employees."

GeoMetrix is proud to be helping the National Gallery of Art of the United States ensure that its employees have the skills needed to preserve art for future generations.

For more information about the National Gallery of Art visit www.nga.gov

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