

Hill-Rom: Faster Time-to-Market and Lower Cost

Introduction

Technological skills are best learned through hands-on experience. Toolwire provides companies with experiential learning products and services, both directly and in conjunction with partners such as Thomson NETg. This case study is an example of how Toolwire delivers tangible, measurable business benefits.

Hill-Rom - The World Leader in Integrated Healthcare Process and Environment Solutions

Hill-Rom provides healthcare facilities in the U.S. with a wide range of products and services to assist in the safe delivery of efficient care. The company's innovative products help caregivers deliver effective, efficient care to acute, long-term, and home-care patients. Hill-Rom has approximately 6,500 employees worldwide.

Hill-Rom has recently shifted its focus to healthcare monitoring technology. The company's *Smart Bed* technology, for example, can collect and transmit patient data from bedside monitoring equipment. This data is networked back to sophisticated software that allows medical personnel to monitor patients remotely. Monitoring technology is of great interest to health care providers and insurance companies due to its potential for both controlling costs and improving the quality of patient care.

The Challenge - Training Personnel on Infrastructure Skills

The Hill-Rom system is networked into various medical databases, including doctors' proprietary systems, insurance companies' systems, and so on. The Hill-Rom system also has a paging interface so that medical personnel can be notified immediately if, for example, a heart-monitor alarm went off.

Hill-Rom technical installation and maintenance personnel had little experience with networking and operating systems technologies. They needed to learn these technologies quickly so that Hill-Rom could start selling the new systems. The company also needed a safe environment for testing new configurations before rolling them out.

The application was installed on Microsoft Windows, thus defining what the Hill-Rom technical personnel needed to learn first. They also needed to be knowledgeable on Cisco networking equipment. Specifically, they need to understand how their system would interface with the hospitals', doctors', and insurance companies' systems, all of which required sophisticated, secure Virtual Private Networking (VPN) technology over the Internet.

In the past, the only available method of training was conventional instructor-led classroom training. Hill-Rom needed to replace classroom training with a faster, less expensive method. Also, according to Hill-Rom Director of Learning Services Mary Hladio, "classroom training was not feasible for the tech staff's schedules. They work with hospitals, which are going 24/7. To take them out of the field and have them not be available for three, four, or five days at a time was impractical."

The Innovation - Hands-on Labs

Hill-Rom first approached Thomson NETg as a prospective vendor to provide a "blended



Organization

- Hill-Rom

Business

- Health Care

Challenge

- Time to market for new product offering

Results

- Able to get product to market quicker and at less cost than training staff via classrooms

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Mary Hladio
Director of Learning
Services
Hill-Rom

learning” solution as an alternative to instructor-led training. NETg’s breadth of eLearning resources include courseware, referenceware, simulations, and exam vouchers. Hill-Rom wanted to add a hands-on practice component to the powerful NETg suite of learning components. They felt the hands-on lab experience was essential to rapid skill development.

NETg brought in Toolwire to introduce *Labs Now* (NETg branded LiveLabs) to Hill-Rom. The customer had identified hands-on labs as the most cost-effective means of delivering the experiential learning that their technical people needed, at about *one-third* of the cost of instructor-led training.

Students learn more effectively on live equipment. Therefore, the real-world, scenario-based nature of labs makes them an ideal component of the blended learning approach that Hill-Rom needed. The company chose *Labs Now* as an ideal means of providing critical hands-on learning for its technical personnel. With *Labs Now*, NETg’s blended learning solution is available to Hill-Rom’s personnel, wherever they happen to be. Moreover, it is far more cost effective than the instructor-led training alternative.

The Decision - Labs Now from Toolwire & Thomson NETg

Hill-Rom used a number of criteria for selecting live, hands-on labs:

- Relevancy to the required skill set - How relevant were the labs to what they were trying to accomplish?
- Performance of the application - How did it perform over the over the network connection?
- Breadth of the content - How much did it cover? Did it cover everything they needed across the IT network?

Hill-Rom selected the Toolwire/NETg offering based on fit with all of their criteria. *Labs Now* enabled Hill-Rom technical personnel to acquire the skills they needed more quickly.

Allowing Hill-Rom technical personnel to practice on live equipment enabled them to acquire technical skills more rapidly, which in turn, allowed the company to begin selling its system more quickly. Another benefit of the *Labs Now* offering was that it also provided Hill-Rom with an environment for testing new configurations before taking them into production.

The NETg/Toolwire solution allows Hill-Rom employees to learn anytime, anywhere. Without the blended learning approach, Hill-Rom would have faced daunting logistics in sending their widely dispersed workforce to training classes.

The Results - Faster Time-to-Market and Lower Cost

Results from the first group of employees to be trained using the new lab-based blended solution are very encouraging. The most significant results have been faster time-to-market and significant cost savings.

According to Hill-Rom learning manager Hladio, the Toolwire/NETg solution has allowed many more employees to complete training on the new systems than would have been possible with classroom training, which means Hill-Rom can sell its systems with confidence now that its people are trained to use them.

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Another key result was lower costs. According to Hladio, “the blended approach ended up saving Hill-Rom approximately 60 to 70 percent of the cost of live, instructor-led training. There are also significant soft savings. Employees are more productive because they are working when they would otherwise have been traveling or sitting in classrooms.”

Although Hill-Rom’s blended learning solution is still in the adoption phase, the company expects the solution to result in further substantial cost savings, significantly faster time-to-market for its new products, lower impact on employees’ schedules, and enhanced training effectiveness.