

# case study

## Cingular Wireless

### Cingular Wireless Achieves ROI With Centra®

#### Solution Overview

#### Industry — Telecommunications

#### Challenge

Build a nationally competitive business and single corporate culture from a joint venture representing a consolidation of 11 wireless brands

#### Benefits

- Enabled successful change to create a single culture from 11 brands
- Train 16,000 employees on new enterprise sales and ERP applications, before the software was live
- Improved customer experience
- Established a culture that incorporates online learning and collaboration as part of everyday communications

#### Solution

Centra Live Suite

Cingular Wireless, a joint venture between SBC Communications (NYSE: SBC) and BellSouth (NYSE: BLS), serves more than 25 million voice and data customers across the United States.

“Last year alone, we reached more than 19,000 employees a month through Centra for training and communications. We have long since surpassed the need to justify the product through travel savings. The ROI is not something we spend time calculating. We know Centra adds the value we need.”

Rob Lauber, Executive Director of Learning Services  
Cingular Wireless

#### Challenge

- To build a nationally competitive business and single corporate culture from a joint venture that represents the largest consolidation of brands in the wireless industry
- To put an infrastructure in place that allows Cingular to communicate key messages, create a common employee experience and establish a consistent standard of sales and service

#### Solution

Centra's online collaboration solutions enable Cingular to:

- Provide consistent, on-demand internal and external training to its employees, sales organization and distribution partners
- Quickly and cost-effectively deploy training on enterprise applications, new products, services and promotions

#### A Tale of 11 Brands and Centra Online Collaboration

Cingular is the result of a joint venture between SBC Communications and BellSouth that united 11 different wireless companies. When leadership took over the new Cingular in October 2000, the challenge was clear: How would they build a nationally competitive business and single corporate culture from a joint venture that represents the largest consolidation of brands in the wireless industry? Cingular needed to establish its own identity.

According to Rob Lauber, executive director of learning services at Cingular, the critical question asked was, “What kind of infrastructure do we need to put in place that will allow the organization to communicate key messages, create a common employee experience and establish a consistent standard of sales and service?”

In the previous companies, communication efforts comprised road shows, conference calls, letters, standard presentations and “word of mouth.” Rapid growth and acculturation of Cingular’s employee base required a more effective approach. “We had enormous change management issues,” Lauber said. “We had legacy systems and people accustomed to working autonomously that needed to be absorbed into Cingular. We had to look at external tools that could drive those changes faster and with a greater degree of accuracy.”

### **The Seamless Solution**

Cingular settled upon a solution that consisted of a learning management system (LMS) for tracking and managing learning activities, and Centra’s collaboration software as the delivery platform for real-time, online training and communications.

“Centra came highly recommended,” Lauber said. “The technology was the most sophisticated on the market and integrated well with the LMS we selected to provide a complete solution.” Deployed in June 2001, Centra was up and running within seven days to conduct online meetings across the organization, and between SBC and BellSouth wireless entities. “While most of the integration work around the joint venture was finalized, there were still a lot of changes that needed to be communicated,” Lauber added.

Cingular also needed to migrate payroll systems from the 11 legacy companies to one on PeopleSoft, and implement a Siebel sales-force automation application. The latter half of 2001 was spent delivering online sessions through Centra to familiarize more than 16,000 employees with PeopleSoft and Siebel, preparing them for what to expect — all before the actual launch of the applications.

### **Absolute ROI**

Initial return-on-investment figures for Centra revealed a significant savings in travel-related training expenses within the first six months, which, according to Lauber, doesn’t begin to describe the value gained. “Last year alone, we reached more than 19,000 employees a month through Centra for training and communications,” he said. “We have long since surpassed the need to justify the product through travel savings. The ROI is not something we spend time calculating. We know Centra adds the value we need.”

Today, Centra is being used to conduct online meetings and launch new products, services and promotions — all of which are driven out of the learning organization in close collaboration with other departments and senior management. The following two programs exemplify the strategic use of Centra at Cingular.

### **The Cingular Advantage**

Communicating the company’s core value proposition to customers is the foundation of Cingular’s most recent program, Cingular Advantage, which was launched in January 2004 with a massive rollout to all 38,000-plus employees. For Brenda Posey, executive director of retail operations and strategy at Cingular, working with the learning organization has been crucial in driving sales effectiveness. “Cingular Advantage is about empowering our salespeople to make the customer interaction the best it can be and provide a solution that meets their needs,” she said.

With Centra, training can be delivered in real time or as a recorded event for employees to access at their convenience. In order to meet stringent deadlines for rollout of Cingular Advantage, Lauber and his team used Centra to create a recorded training session that integrated assessments and checks for understanding, and made it available to employees. “We were able to train 12,000 members of our sales organization within one week — from sellers to executives — and ensure the information was properly understood,” Lauber said.

### Wireless Local Number Portability (WLNP)

In a momentous decision for the consumer, the federal government mandated that by Nov. 24, 2003, all wireless carriers had to allow customers to freely take their numbers with them if they switched carriers. According to Lauber, when the mandate and timeline became clear at the end of 2002, “it was a mad dash for all the carriers to figure out how it was going to work.” There had to be tighter cooperation between the carriers, new processes defined, and all the integration and system issues solved — all within a very short period of time.

Cingular had to figure out a way to train all customer-facing employees and its external distribution partners (agents and affiliates) on new processes and applications that would not be finalized until three weeks before the November deadline.

Lauber and his team quickly defined a three-phase “blended” approach. In September and October, the team put together asynchronous Web-based courses and instructor-led training in the markets to prepare everyone for the changes and outline the new processes and systems. Once the applications that sellers would be using in the stores were defined in early November, the team had three weeks to get everyone up to speed. When the doors opened on the morning of Nov. 24, employees had to be ready to answer questions and move numbers.

Centra became the critical go-to-market solution, enabling Cingular to remotely demonstrate the actual application to employees online and answer questions in real time. Other interactivity features, such as text chat and agenda builder, enabled Lauber to manage the large volume of participants, capture additional questions for FAQs and incorporate feedback for making presentation changes on the fly.

“Cingular Advantage and WLNP training would not have been completed in the same time frames without using Centra,” Lauber said. “There’s your proof of purchase. These initiatives mandated by Cingular leadership were strategic and created the need for fast, efficient execution.”

### Measuring Success

Cingular maintains four measurements for success as a business; one of them is reputation. “Our reputation directly relates to the customer experience,” said Posey. “The better trained our sales reps are, the better the customer experience. We take this measure seriously and have documented improved customer satisfaction scores in the markets where our sales reps have been through training.”

Another measure of success is cultural. According to Lauber, everyone up to the highest level in the organization is using Centra: “Next week, our vice president of treasury is holding an online meeting with Centra that includes hundreds of directors and above. They will put on their orange Cingular headsets and get online using Centra’s VoIP capabilities to talk and interact in one seamless environment. It is part of the mosaic of everyday communications — as accepted as e-mail or phone calls.”

Moving forward, Cingular plans to use Centra for more external communications with agent dealers and partners. “With Centra’s solution in our arsenal, I am able to deliver online training and communications with confidence,” Lauber concluded.