

case study

Kuehne + Nagel

Kuehne + Nagel Centralises Global Training and Collaboration Processes for 46,000 Staff with Saba Centra® 7.5

Solution Overview

Industry — Global Logistics

Challenge

- To facilitate and accelerate training and collaboration for 46,000 employees in 830 offices in more than 100 countries worldwide
- The reduction of training and travel expenditure
- The connection of a range of global operational communities
- The reduction of 'live' meetings and their durations
- The empowerment of otherwise difficult, impractical collaborations

Benefits

- Accelerated training of business processes, IT applications and products
- Reductions in travel, accommodation and facilities expenditure globally
- Substantial time, operational and opportunity cost savings
- Faster, easier, more flexible training delivery and session setup and attendance
- Regular interaction and collaboration between remote and geographically disparate communities
- Improved employee interactivity with greater time-saving and more convenient training attendance

Solution

Saba Centra 7.5

With 830 offices in more than 100 countries, Kuehne + Nagel is one of the world's leading logistics providers.

The company maintains an extensive portfolio of integrated logistics solutions. Its strong market position lies in the seafreight, airfreight, contract logistics and overland businesses, with a clear focus on providing IT-based supply chain management services. The company particularly relies on the know-how and expertise of its 46,000 employees as well as the high quality of its operational processes.

“ Prior to Saba Centra, reaching out to train our operators across the globe was both challenging and extremely costly. Centra From Saba has played a significant role in overcoming that hurdle. E-collaboration is now so ingrained in our business that it has become a totally normal way of communicating and training across all our physical and operational borders. ”

Matthias Feller, Vice President Business Field Training & E-Learning
Kuehne + Nagel, Switzerland

With both business and competitive pressures growing rapidly, Kuehne + Nagel wanted to accelerate its training and collaboration processes, connect its hundreds of geographically disparate business communities across the globe and cut the amount of time travelling and in location-dependent meetings. It found in the Web-based Saba Centra training and e-collaboration platform a key strategic element in facing this challenge.

The logistics industry is, by its very nature, a geographically diverse and disparate business, with people, premises and IT systems spread across the globe, and recent years have witnessed increasing and sustained expansion across the entire sector.

For its players, speed, size, control and flexibility have become vital characteristics not just in terms of competitiveness, but also business success. Kuehne + Nagel was no exception, having increased its

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headcount from around 14,000 in 2000 to around 46,000 in 2006. This explosive expansion also gave rise to a serious dilemma — how to easily integrate these extra people and processes and, most importantly, transfer know-how to leverage this growth.

Kuehne + Nagel's central training division identified some key elements to ensure its ongoing success; the need to streamline and automate its training processes while optimising the effectiveness, timeliness and impact of the training sessions themselves.

However, with the market moving faster and faster and becoming more and more competitive, the solution would have to meet and surpass a number of challenges.

“With such massive and geographically widespread operations, it was no longer practical or even possible to simply use a team of travelling trainers as we had in the past and ‘normal’ classroom-based training had itself become a virtual impossibility,” says Matthias Feller, Kuehne + Nagel's head of business field training and e-learning.

Additionally, with internal and external pressures burgeoning, it wasn't sufficient for Kuehne + Nagel to simply maintain the pace of its training processes. The company was expanding through new acquisitions and organic growth, which in turn entailed the integration of new people and processes — all of which had to be assimilated as rapidly as possible. It was vital, therefore, that training actually be accelerated.

“The company wanted to derive greater value from live meeting times, make them shorter and more efficient, and to enable meetings that would otherwise have been very difficult or completely impractical to arrange. So we decided the best and most efficient answer would be a high-performance, IT-based learning and e-collaboration solution,” says Feller.

In doing so, Kuehne + Nagel favoured a structured approach; deciding to simultaneously professionalise and strengthen the divisional training structure, while also investing in new learning technologies.

They adopted a blended learning approach which combined a number of elements including live training classes, self-study CBT's and virtual classroom sessions, all of which proved extremely popular, successful and cost-effective.

Having carefully scoped the market for a suitably flexible, powerful and cost-effective solution, Kuehne + Nagel opted for Saba Centra. Part of the suite of Human Capital Management solutions from Saba, it would enable Kuehne + Nagel's employees globally to learn, interact and present to one another in real time over the Internet, intranets and extranets via low-bandwidth network connections using features including:

- Voice-over-IP (audio conferencing)
- PowerPoint sharing with mark-up tools
- Application sharing
(Operational Software, Word, Excel, PDF)
- Whiteboard
- Surveys and assessments
- Session recording (screen and audio)

Initially rolled out in Kuehne + Nagel test locations such as Hong Kong, New York and Hamburg, it was an instant success, with 95% of users rating it a ‘very helpful and user-friendly tool.’

The Saba Centra platform quickly enabled Kuehne + Nagel's network of trainers and software developers to communicate, exchange knowledge and conduct ‘live’ software training sessions online.

Due to the ‘incredibly easy user navigation,’ participants from all over the company's global community were soon interacting with one another quickly, easily and seamlessly. New processes and new software versions could now be introduced to staff globally in a matter of days, rather than the weeks or months it had taken previously.

“In addition, the solution not only proved effective in ‘connecting’ the business to its outlying virtual communities, but in connecting those communities up with one another, enabling customers and suppliers to coordinate projects virtually,” says Feller.

Benefits emerged here from both operational and cultural perspectives.

“The social aspect of Saba Centra’s value has been interesting,” he explains. “It’s not only been invaluable in maintaining contact with the more remote, geographically disparate parts of our business; it’s also a ‘fun’ way of maintaining a community feel, both in a commercially driven, practical sense and in a human sense too.”

“When we first began experiencing these aspects of the solution, and enjoying the benefits, more than five years ago, we could hardly have realised that they were anticipating trends that have now become both hugely fashionable and highly sought after.”

Within months of Saba Centra’s introduction it was already contributing to considerable cost-savings in areas such as travel, accommodation and telecommunications.

“Before we deployed Saba Centra, several of our teams had to meet six or seven times every year, but this has now been reduced to just two or three times annually,” explains Feller. “With all the attendant cost, time, productivity and efficiency savings, it’s proved invaluable.

“There have been substantial savings — most importantly on flight and accommodation costs — but qualitative aspects have perhaps played an even more significant role.”

Saba Centra’s underlying knowledge was vital in this respect.

“Many of the tools we looked at had good qualities, but Saba Centra had something extra. They didn’t just have a thorough knowledge of their own technology and a clear and well-defined implementation process, they also had a genuine understanding of the learning process too,” adds Feller.

Another benefit since the Saba Centra rollout has been the quality of the training provision. “It wasn’t enough to virtualise and speed up our training processes and then sit back and enjoy the operational, cost and logistical benefits. It was essential that the quality was maintained too.” says Feller.

“One challenge in introducing these virtual collaboration processes that Saba Centra allowed us to overcome was enabling the trainers and managers to conduct virtual trainings effectively. It was reassuring to know that Saba Centra is much more than simply giving out a password. It’s all about the quality of the training too.”

The initial phase saw Kuehne + Nagel training hundreds of Saba Centra session leaders both in the use of the tool and in the soft skills required to lead a virtual event. Saba Centra proved such a reliable and user-friendly platform that the company was able to focus predominantly on soft skills rather than on training the trainers to use the software itself.

Saba Centra was eventually rolled out across all Kuehne + Nagel’s operational regions and divisions, with tens of thousands of online training sessions, presentations and meetings completed since the install. For many of the thousands of users, the usage of Saba Centra has become as normal as the usage of email.

Feller describes the solution as a very important pillar in the company’s global operations.

“We could never replace all our live training sessions and meetings — there will always be occasions when face-to-face communication is essential — but it’s difficult to imagine where Kuehne + Nagel’s training setup would be without Saba Centra now.”

With usage continuing to expand and software features increasingly enhancing and merging with other applications, Feller believes that the possibilities of Web-based virtual classroom and e-collaboration tools such as Saba Centra are huge and that the benefit doesn’t end with the obvious top-line cost-savings. “It has the potential to speed up all communication/training processes in a similar way as email has revolutionised correspondence processes in the last decade.”

Looking to the future, Kuehne + Nagel's next goal is to gain maximum coverage and value from its new training regime. "Saba Centra is now as firmly established as email at Kuehne + Nagel, and its value speaks for itself. The technology is more and more reliable, the challenge now is making best use of it — ensuring that new employees can be quickly and smoothly familiarised with Saba Centra and the benefits it can bring."