

case study

Westlake Training

Westlake Training and Development chooses Saba Centra OnDemand to expand online offerings

Overview

Industry — Information Technology Training

Business Challenge

Needed to provide more efficient and cost-effective training to Web and applications developers, and to extend its public training offerings to a broader audience

Saba Solution

Saba Centra OnDemand

Business Benefits

- Helps WestLake expand course offerings, broaden its customer base, and enhance its profitability
- Allows companies to obtain instructor-led, interactive training without sending developers to offsite facilities
- Provides a lower breakeven point for more specialized training, reducing last-minute cancellations
- Hosted solution eliminates need to house servers on-site or maintain technical support staff
- Seat licenses can be easily adjusted to meet higher demand for popular classes

Founded in 1995, WestLake Training and Development is a leader in information technology training, specializing in vendor-neutral Web-development and applications-development training. Headquartered in Washington, DC, the company provides developers the skills necessary to effectively create enterprise applications leveraging the Internet.

“Centra OnDemand creates a virtual classroom that gives instructor-led training scale, so we can deliver learning right to where employees work, and meet the needs of additional people by offering a very effective and efficient way to learn.”

— Mark Rogers

President, WestLake Training and Development

Starting with a single instructional center in Washington, DC, the company quickly added facilities in the New York, Atlanta, San Jose, and Chicago areas. For a number of years, WestLake focused primarily on in-classroom training at these instructional centers; however, WestLake quickly realized that several of its customers, such as a large government contractor, could not afford to part with its key developers for days or weeks at a time to receive training offsite. To provide training to customers unable to come to WestLake’s training centers, the company realized it could dramatically benefit its business and relationships with customers by using Saba Centra OnDemand to create live, online, instructor-led training.

“Most businesses simply can’t afford to send all their people to one location, or to take a group of people out of the office for days at a time,” says Mark Rogers, president and CEO of WestLake Training and Development. “Centra OnDemand creates a virtual classroom that gives instructor-led training scale, so we can deliver learning right to where employees work, and meet the needs of additional people by offering a very effective and efficient way to learn.”

Using Centra OnDemand to deliver online, virtual classroom training helped WestLake to expand its learning offerings, broaden its

customer base, and improve its bottom line, but — most importantly — Centra also allowed WestLake to strengthen its relationships with customers. “Because of Centra OnDemand, we’ve been able to build repeat business with the government contractor, year after year,” says Rogers. “I’m not sure that would have been possible if we had to travel to the company’s various offices, or if they’d had to fly all their people to one of our regional instructional centers to get the training they needed.”

With Centra OnDemand, WestLake’s clients can take part in a fully interactive, virtual classroom experience from their own offices over the Internet. Course attendees are conferenced together and have access to a variety of tools such as an interactive white board, PDF courseware, polling, and other forms of simulated feedback such as laughter and applause, and even chat-based “breakout” rooms. In this way, Centra OnDemand delivers high-quality learning — without the cost and impact on productivity associated with travel. “The majority of users find Centra OnDemand to be a very effective way to learn,” says Rogers.

Building the Business With Centra OnDemand

WestLake Training and Development offers a mix of dedicated training designed for specific organizations and broader public courses to a wider developer audience. With physical “brick-and-mortar” classes, WestLake needed a certain number of students to make each course economically viable; however, this required additional planning and sometimes resulted in the last-minute cancellation of courses that did not attract enough interest.

With Centra OnDemand, the breakeven point for virtual classes is much lower — courses can be taught to as few as four students — allowing WestLake to profitably offer a greater number of public courses. “We’re finding that a lot of courses, which probably wouldn’t be viable if offered at one of our regional centers, do reach the needed threshold for Centra OnDemand’s virtual environment,” Rogers remarks.

WestLake Training has also used Centra OnDemand for other learning innovations. For example, using instructor-led, online training, WestLake now offers highly time-efficient

Jam Sessions. These start with a two-hour virtual lecture, and then are followed by a number of labs and self-study modules to be completed at the student’s discretion over a four-day period. Each course concludes with a one-hour recitation — again using Web-based Centra OnDemand. In approximately a half day of live online learning, plus additional hours of flexible self-study, participants benefit from learning that would have required absences of at least two or three days in the past.

Eliminating the Need for IT Support Through a Hosted Solution

For WestLake Training, the decision to use Saba Centra in a hosted environment was easy. The hosted Centra OnDemand solution allows WestLake to offer Web-based, online learning without having to house servers at its facilities or hire an IT staff to maintain the equipment and troubleshoot problems. In addition, although the company currently leases a set number of seat licenses annually, if a specific Webinar proves particularly profitable, WestLake can easily turn to Saba to add seats on a moment’s notice. And Saba’s technical support staff ensures that WestLake is always using the latest version of Centra Live and that the solution runs without fail, 24x7x365.

“Everybody has some sort of business or commerce on the Internet, and they need training and tools to effectively build their applications,” Rogers says. “With Centra OnDemand, the training we offer is not only applicable to everyone, it’s more easily available to whoever needs it — any time, anywhere.”

“Everybody has some sort of business or commerce on the Internet, and they need training and tools to effectively build their applications. With Centra OnDemand, the training we offer is not only applicable to everyone, it’s more easily available to whoever needs it — any time, anywhere.”

— Mark Rogers
President, WestLake Training and Development