

SoCalGas: Shifting the Learning Culture Toward Informal and Collaborative Learning

SoCalGas has instigated a shift in its learning culture as well as in its corporate culture. While classroom learning remains a valuable part of the firm's learning strategy, employees are beginning to see value in on-demand learning resources, such as getAbstract.



Combining Classroom Education with Learning on Demand

Southern California Gas Company was founded in 1867. Today, it has more than 20 million customers and is the largest gas distribution company in the US. It belongs to the *Fortune 500* company Sempra Energy.

To define its learning strategy, even before it chose specific content providers or tools, SoCalGas began to gain a thorough understanding of its industry and the company's culture. The company has a 100-year history, and during that time, its core product has remained basically the same. With this long history, the company values consistent and proven processes because they are critical to a utility company's

success. Formal training is one of those consistent processes.

SoCalGas set out to address a few needs: incorporate informal and collaborative learning as formal learning makes up only a small percentage of a learner's experience; find tools that are available on demand to a workforce dispersed throughout California; and find ways to implement the new tools into existing formal learning methods. To accomplish this, SoCalGas began researching the best practices of *Fortune 500* corporations, organizations from *Fortune's* Best Companies to Work For list and existing getAbstract clients.

With oversight from the leadership team, the company developed its first formal learning strategy. They decided to include informal and collaborative learning in the company's learning culture. Classroom offerings are still an integral component of the learning strategy, but now classroom courses are integrated with on-demand learning tools and resources. Another new major piece of the strategy puzzle is Learning Plan consultations. They offer customized plans for entire teams or an individual employee. With this combination of classes, on-demand learning and a learning consultation model, SoCalGas offers learning and development solutions that are comprehensive and customized to client needs.

Achieved Results

• One-fourth of the company uses the getAbstract service regularly, kick-starting

a transformation toward a more flexible and innovative learning culture, and helped

reduce on-site classroom learning.
• One SoCalGas employee downloaded

200 summaries immediately after obtaining access.
• 97% request weekly

push emails, users on average download six summaries a month.

CASE STUDY: SoCalGas



Marketing Best Practices

Next, SoCalGas's training and development team started heavily promoting the new strategy and its various formats. Among other measures, they set about the following:

- **Sent email promotions** – For additional impact, the team sent promotions to the company's leaders to forward to their teams, rather than sending them to employees directly.
- **Posted online ads** – They created highly visible online ads for their on-demand learning offers, such as getAbstract.
- **Created landing pages** – These pages are easy to find and contain overview information and instructions on how to use a learning tool or service.
- **Placed all learning content on one platform** – The platform provides an overview of all the learning offers, including courses.
- **Created sell sheets** – They are one-page marketing sheets for getAbstract that include a description, a "Why you need it" section, and instructions on how to create an account.
- **Organized roadshows** – The training and development team introduced the new learning strategy and its related courses, on-demand tools/resources (e.g. getAbstract), and consultation opportunities at staff meetings and company events.
- **Integrated getAbstract into other forms of learning** – The company combined getAbstract content with classes to enhance the impact of their lesson. In meetings, SoCalGas employees use summaries to cover a specific topic of relevance during a "learning spot."

Future Plans to Drive Usage at SoCalGas

SoCalGas's training and development team will set up internal partnerships to link the on-demand learning offers to other initiatives. The CEO will help drive interest and usage of key learning platforms by participating in executive chat webinars where he will use one of getAbstract's summaries as the primary topic. HR managers will recommend specific getAbstract summaries to address an employee's development need or knowledge gap. For example, if someone has problems with an employee, the HR team can recommend summaries on how to handle difficult conversations; if someone is looking for a project management class, they can bridge the time until the class commences by reading corresponding summaries. In some instances, employees will find that reading summaries already gives them all the information they need.

SoCalGas plans to build an internal SoCalGas Learning Ambassador Network. These ambassadors will be department experts for the company's learning and development resources and will present new workshops, tools and opportunities to their co-workers. They will also serve as a company "pulse" to determine learning needs within their organization.

Within one year, the number of users has reached almost 800 (nearly half of all employees), with 40'000 summary downloads. One of SoCalGas's employees loved the service so much she downloaded 200 summaries straight away so she could read them in transit or listen to while exercising.

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“We have had significant success with getAbstract, it is by far our most popular learning tool, people come up to us randomly in the cafeteria telling us that they are enjoying getAbstract and utilizing it in everyday work.”

Kevin Sewell, Learning Systems Advisor, Southern California Gas Company