

# Training to the Speed of Business

**How the American Research Institute teamed up with MicroTek to deliver fast-paced training.**

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THE BUSINESS WORLD moves faster than ever before, requiring a new velocity in its workforce. Without the boundaries of time and space, today's workforces are not only global, but diversified, dispersed, and constantly in need of training and education to keep pace. Every day, the media reports stories of mergers and acquisitions, further streamlining workforces and systems. Finding a way to deliver consistent, productive training to this workforce is a new training industry challenge.

American Research Institute is a leading provider of education and training services, which helps customers achieve their maximum effectiveness through high-quality, educationally sound, and mission-critical training. ARI offers a wide range of services, from designing custom training solutions to full outsourcing of training divisions. ARI has learned how to effectively blend techniques to customize learning programs designed to optimize the results of any education plan.

To achieve velocity, companies are constantly looking for ways to introduce training to their workforce faster, cheaper, and more effectively. With organizations spending billions of dollars annually on training and education, out-tasking certain functions of the training process has become necessary to maximize available resources and minimize costs. It's no longer cost-effective to build and maintain training facilities that are empty a significant portion of time. As companies re-purpose their real estate, they are looking for partners to provide the necessary components of the train-

ing function on an as-needed basis.

For more than 10 years, the training logistics experts at MicroTek have been providing clients with the mission-critical facilities and services needed to train their global workforces in a cost-effective, on-demand environment.

"Each of our clients is being asked to do more with less—train more people in more places with fewer resources and less time," explains Don Slivensky, chief executive officer of MicroTek. "They demand wide-reaching solutions, both figuratively and literally, to keep up with the education demands of their growing global workforces."

With more than 300 classrooms in the United States, each of MicroTek's business education facilities are equipped with state-of-art computer hardware. An on-site technical staff will set up and support client's software needs, and a hospitality staff accommodates the needs of both students and instructors. In addition, the MicroTek Alliance Partner network has access to 3,000 classroom facilities in 250 locations worldwide.

## The challenge

"We need to move fast, and be flexible" was the mandate given to MicroTek as the American Research Institute prepared to coordinate the training for one of the biggest telecommunications mergers in recent years. ARI was selected for this contract because they are nationally recognized as a leader in training delivery services. The stakes were high, and ARI needed to schedule classroom facilities to accommodate 200 days of training in 40 different locations, all to take place

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over a few weeks time. With little more than a week to prepare, ARI authored multiple courseware titles and scheduled the trainers, and MicroTek coordinated the logistics. That required synchronizing 200 classrooms, with advanced computer hardware, in multiple locations across the United States.

“Most people think of hotels first when trying to schedule a business education event,” says Vern Tepe, vice president of information technology at MicroTek. “While hotels have rooms for events, it’s not their primary business. They want the ‘heads-in-beds’ business and coordinating a successful training event is secondary to them.”

It is, however, MicroTek’s primary business, and as any meeting planner or training manager will tell you, a lot more

croTek facility—white boards, projectors, Internet access, even the soda and coffee—and are things that a hotel facility can’t accommodate easily and usually charge extra for.

Required FCC approval that accompanies mergers in the telecommunications industry complicated the training process. “Flexibility is the most important factor in coordinating training of this magnitude,” says Richard Kristof, president and CEO of ARI. “In situations where FCC approval is required, we need to be able to react quickly and be ready in case the approval comes through as expected. In our case, the FCC approval did not come through as expected and all training classes were pushed back by a week,” he adds.

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dence to trust MicroTek with this assignment.”

## More than computer classrooms

In the past year, MicroTek has expanded the utilization of the web-based Tracker reservation system to accommodate meeting planning logistics for clients as well. In preparation for the 2004 holiday shopping season, OfficeMax scheduled its Traveling Roadshow to introduce its employees to the new products that the company would be featuring in their stores. Representatives from their retail partners such as Hewlett-Packard, Compaq, and Avery came to set up product demos, pass out information, and educate OfficeMax employees on the features and benefits of their products so that they were equipped to answer shoppers’ questions.

Over the course of two months, the OfficeMax Roadshow takes place in 24 different cities; often two on the same day. Finding and scheduling space for each Roadshow in such a short period of time can be a daunting task, so OfficeMax enlisted the help of the training logistics experts at MicroTek and the Tracker system to coordinate the events. Rather than contacting each venue individually and dealing with many different invoices, MicroTek scheduled everything, handled all audio-visual and catering needs, and provided OfficeMax with one detailed invoice at the end of the Roadshow.

MicroTek understands the pace of business today and the need to keep the global workforce trained and ready to meet new challenges. Worldwide training delivery is now easier and faster than ever before. Through expert training environments and logistical systems, MicroTek specializes in keeping business moving and workforces adequately trained. All you need to do is show up and teach.

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goes into it than you think, especially when training on high-tech software applications. All classrooms have to be pre-configured and pre-loaded with the necessary computer hardware and software before the class begins. The Image Catalog System that MicroTek utilizes ensures seamless distribution of software images across the nation or around the world.

“We also have an FTP Automation system, which eliminates any errors in event delivery,” says Tepe. “Our clients can upload their software images and all related event forms, and everything is automated.”

The Premium Bandwidth Allocation services and on-site technical staff give MicroTek facilities a clear edge in high-tech training. Facilities that are not set up for delivery of high-tech training classes can result in expensive downtime and added frustration. But all of the incidental training needs are included in a Mi-

croTek facility—white boards, projectors, Internet access, even the soda and coffee—and are things that a hotel facility can’t accommodate easily and usually charge extra for. Required FCC approval that accompanies mergers in the telecommunications industry complicated the training process. “Flexibility is the most important factor in coordinating training of this magnitude,” says Richard Kristof, president and CEO of ARI. “In situations where FCC approval is required, we need to be able to react quickly and be ready in case the approval comes through as expected. In our case, the FCC approval did not come through as expected and all training classes were pushed back by a week,” he adds. In that kind of situation, constant

communication is key. “Having a single point of contact at MicroTek has been instrumental in the reservation process, allowing us to concentrate on delivering exceptional service to our clients,” says Carrie Woodard, logistics and venue manager for ARI. “The MicroTek team is always quick to respond to our rapidly changing needs, locating new venues, adding services, or addressing special requests. We’re comfortable knowing that we will get their best effort in every location.” “ARI relies on the quality and consistency that MicroTek provides our customers throughout North America. The programs we deliver for our clients are mission-critical, and we have to know that the facility will be properly configured and conducive to learning,” says Bob Baer, ARI’s delivery and operations manager. “Past experiences of successfully producing training events for other large clients gave us the confi-

Have a success story and want to tell us about it? Contact Eric Brandt at 703.683.8175; ebrandt@astd.org