

HPINFOLAB: PIONEERING E-LEARNING PROGRAM ACHIEVES BRAND PREFERENCE AND INCREASED SALES IN RETAIL CHANNELS

Over the years, HP maintained an extensive, highly regarded training program for independent retail sales representatives (RSRs) in North America. Sixty HP field trainers covered retail stores in their respective market areas, making regular visits to deliver training materials and to conduct brief, informal training sessions.

THE NEED

Although HP retail training was considered the best in the industry, there were still problem areas in the ongoing battle to achieve and maintain brand preference in the channel:

- Most stores had no consistent place to store training materials, and often RSRs could not find the materials a week after they were delivered
- If the RSRs were absent or busy with a customer when the HP trainer visited, they may not have received any training at all
- Tracking the success of training efforts was difficult because there was no convenient way to test RSRs and no way to know if the materials were read or by whom they were read, or what knowledge was retained
- Due to time constraints, the training delivered by field trainers was often cursory at best

THE SOLUTION

HP selected Via Training to develop, launch and co-manage a comprehensive e-Learning program as a cornerstone of its retail training efforts. Via created HPInfolab, a dedicated training website where RSRs could become more effective selling HP products by accessing training, sales tools and related channel communications. This website was initially launched in 1998 as a pilot project offering courses on two product lines.

In addition to developing the site and the online courses, Via also created an extensive promotional


HP Business Inkjet printers

Choose a product category.

Product category selector

Media Center Photosmart PCs

Pavilion desktop PCs

Pavilion notebook PCs

Photosmart printers

ScanJet

Innovation at work

High-performance, cost-effective black and color printing

Combining the ease of use and simplicity of a personal inkjet printer with the features and reliability of an HP LaserJet printer

HP Business Inkjet 1200-series color printer



HP's most cost-effective desktop business printer packs in the value with these features:

- Automatic two-sided printing
- Print speeds up to 28 ppm black, 24 ppm color
- Separate ink cartridges for cost-effective color business printing
- Network capable

Take these courses

Learn more about selling HP Business Inkjet printers with these courses:

- » HP Monthly Focus for February: Making Color Mainstream
- » HP Monthly Focus for March: Do-It-Yourself Color Printing
- » HP Business Inkjet Printers
- » HP Color in the Office Challenge

- » HP Inkjet Printers Overview
- » HP Inkjet Supplies
- » HP Science of Printing

Your resources

Sales tools
To assist you on the sales floor

Reference materials
For your preparation—so you're ready to sell

HPInfolab grew to provide training on product knowledge and applied sales skills to 30,000 retail consumer electronics sales representatives.

campaign to build awareness in the channel and drive RSRs to the site. As a result, more than 5,000 RSRs registered at HPInfolab in the first month. Following the success of the pilot project, several other HP product lines signed on to offer training through HPInfolab. By 2001, the site was the #1

destination for RSRs looking for product knowledge and applied sales skills training offering 20 product-line courses to 30,000 registered users.

A key feature supporting this large number of users was the configuration of separate portals to offer content tailored to the needs of specific retail and reseller accounts. In addition to the training section, the site content included a reference library of sales tools and performance support materials; a training incentive points program; and an administrative, tracking and reporting interface accessible to site managers at their desks. HPinfolab addressed the problem areas in HP's training program and delivered significant additional benefits:

More effective training

HPinfolab's interactive training was designed to efficiently teach RSRs what they need to know to move customers through the sales process. Learning activities were included in courses to engage the learner and teach both product knowledge and applied sales skills, including how to cross-sell.

Accessibility

Training and performance support materials for HP products could now be easily accessed at a single website. RSRs could train at any time, day or night, from home or work. New hires could get up to speed quickly, without waiting for the HP field trainer's store visit.

Measurable results

HP could track and measure the training to determine how much the site was used, who used it and what they learned. In addition, HP could build a one-on-one relationship with each RSR while measuring aggregate use across the stores of each retail partner.

Reduced costs for printed materials

Reference materials could be distributed electronically and printed on demand at each store.

Seamless incentive fulfillment

The site included many industry firsts, such as a turnkey training incentive program. This program enables the names and addresses of incentive prize winners to be downloaded daily to a fulfillment house through Via's training incentive management system. Mailing labels can be printed automatically. An inventory management back end helps ensure that items are always in stock.

The screenshot shows the HP Sales Toolbox website. At the top left is the HP logo with the word 'invent' underneath. To the right of the logo is the title 'Sales Toolbox'. Below the logo and title is a welcome message: 'Welcome to the HPinfolab Sales Toolbox—your sales resource site for detailed information about HP products. This toolbox contains product guides, data sheets, presentations and many other sales resources.' Below this is a sub-header: 'Reach your favorite sales resource in three ways: check out the latest resources, use the search engine or browse products and resources.'

The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Search:** A search bar with a 'Submit' button and a 'Search tips' link below it.
- Latest resources:** A green header with a list of five resources and their dates (8/15/05):
 - » HP Scanjet 4370 Photo Scanner
 - » HP Scanjet 4850 Photo Scanner
 - » HP Scanjet 4890 Photo Scanner
 - » HP Pavilion LC3700N 37" LCD HDTV
 - » HP Pavilion PL4200N 42" Plasma HDTVA link '»More resources' is at the bottom of the list.
- Jump:** A section titled 'Jump' with the text 'Streamline your browsing with this no-frills search option.' and a '» Go' link.
- Browse:** A section titled 'Browse' with the text 'Want to find a specific product line or model? Want to locate a specific resource?' and two links: '» By product' and '» By resource'.
- ZIP-n-go:** A green section with a folder icon, the text 'ZIP-n-go', and '»Your ZIP station' followed by 'You currently have (0) items.'

At the bottom of the screenshot, there is a quote: *A frequently used feature of online training sites is a sales toolbox with a wealth of performance support materials that can be zipped and downloaded.*

A FULL-SERVICE PROGRAM

To firmly establish the program, Via provided HP with turnkey program support including the following services:

- Course development for new product introductions
- Training site hosting and maintenance
- Promotional programs to increase traffic to the site
- Management of the popular incentive program
- User support

The HPinfolab site established a highly successful model for the online training of retail sales representatives on product knowledge and applied sales skills. The site was subsequently localized for more than a dozen additional countries. With new features and new content, this program has continued to provide HP a competitive advantage in the battle for channel mindshare.