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Jini Ryan, executive video producer,
EPA Office of Multimedia



Busy staff at EPA Office of Multimedia embraces on-demand online training

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) enforces federal health and environmental laws to ensure all Americans are safe where they live, learn, and work. In addition, it partners with industries and state and local governments to reduce pollution and conserve energy. Established in 1970 and headquartered in Washington, DC, the EPA has 10 regional offices and 17,000 employees across the country.

Completing as many as 200 projects annually, the EPA Office of Multimedia uses video, photography, audio podcasts, graphics, print materials, and more to support and communicate the work of the EPA. "We try to educate the American people. And if there are important programs that the EPA workforce needs to know about, we also provide communications internally," said Jini Ryan, executive video producer.

Challenge: convenient training on a tight budget

As technology evolves, the Office of Multimedia employees are working in an expanding number of formats and mediums, Ryan said. "We make sure all our content functions across platforms. If I produce a video, it may wind up being shown on a large screen during a conference, added to a website, played in a classroom on a small TV monitor, or watched on a smartphone."

With budgets tight, it's difficult for the Office of Multimedia to send employees off-site for training; classes can cost up to \$1,900 per person. Off-site sessions can last several days, making them logistically difficult for a fast-paced team busy shooting footage in the field, conducting interviews, editing, or building graphics and animations.

"If employees had the opportunity, they attended a training session maybe once a year. And it would be very focused," Ryan said. "If they were looking for other information, they might try a Google search. This wasn't very reliable. When you're not able to provide significant training or growth opportunities, and your workforce starts to stagnate, it doesn't make for a very healthy work environment."

BENEFITS

- Provides a convenient on-demand solution
- Offers cost-effective and current training
- Teaches a wide range of software, creative, and business skills
- Helps employees learn at their own level and pace

The Office of Multimedia needed a convenient, on-demand training solution, and an affordable way to keep employees up to date with a wide range of technology and creative skills.

Solution: lynda.com

After evaluating several options, the Office of Multimedia in 2011 subscribed to lynda.com, which provided all team members access to the full lynda.com library of instructional videos.

The team quickly embraced the service, Ryan said. "If we're struggling to learn something, or if we're frustrated trying to get something to work, someone will see if a lynda.com course exists. If so, we immediately send each other an email or say, 'Hey, have you watched this? If not, you need to, because it will cover exactly what you're trying to do.'

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Result: convenient on-demand training

Because it's available on demand, lynda.com lets employees train when schedules permit, and they can progress at their own pace. When a course is finished, users can print a certificate of completion. The Office of Multimedia notes these certificates during annual reviews. In moments of need, office employees watch bite-size videos for quick answers to questions—using searchable, time-coded transcripts to explore specific skills.

Before she had access to lynda.com, graphic designer Londa Scott Forte searched the Internet for answers. "lynda.com is more reliable," Forte said, adding that she uses it for staying up to date on the Adobe® Creative Suite®, for help creating infographics, and for assistance with other projects.

Ron Slotkin, director of the Office of Multimedia, described lynda.com as cost-effective and unique. "It's presented from the experts' points of view. The knowledge transfer is superb. There's nothing left out. It doesn't leave our staff walking away wondering what's going on."

Result: simplified technology migrations

lynda.com helped videographers migrate to Adobe Creative Suite 6, Ryan said. "I don't think we would have been very successful if we didn't have lynda.com. Just being able to find courses accounting for our varied backgrounds and experience levels was very, very helpful. There would not have been another really good, cost-effective, viable training solution for all of us."

"It's quick and easy," said Ray Flores, executive video producer, who relied on lynda.com during the migration. "lynda.com has a lot of knowledge on a lot of projects. And there are theory-based classes, which are very important to me. ... The menus are easy to navigate."

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The team also switched from standard broadcast cameras to the latest digital Canon® gear, Ryan said. “lynda.com helped us wrap our heads around how to think differently when we’re telling a story, because we no longer have the ability to zoom in. We have to change out lenses, and there aren’t any follow focus options. lynda.com videos came in very handy as we were learning to adapt to that new camera culture.”

Result: professional growth

lynda.com helps the Office of Multimedia staff keep tabs on emerging technologies and develop in new directions.

“The Office of Multimedia is always looking for better ways to communicate the EPA message,” Ryan said. “We want to be able to reach the public where it consumes information. lynda.com allows us to see what new technologies are out there. It keeps us in tune with industry trends.

“Kinetic text is something that we’re diving into quite a bit on lynda.com. We use it for public service announcements and internal EPA employee training content,” Ryan said. “Sometimes if you don’t have the footage to back up what you’re trying to say, being able to use kinetic text to further emphasize a point is extremely helpful.

“We do a lot in the 3D environment on our green screen in the TV studio,” Ryan said. “Originally, we were sending a lot of that content out to graphics contractors, because we just didn’t have the ability to do it in-house. But now with Adobe CS6 and lynda.com, we’re learning how to do the green screening ourselves.”

In addition, “We now have our graphics person helping us with animations,” Ryan said. “She never in a million years would have thought that was going to happen. But being able to take these quick little classes and expand our capabilities is great.”

Added Director Slotkin: “It’s the only training tool we know of that teaches everything we use. It’s the best tool on the market, hands down.”

Looking ahead

Ryan said she foresees a day when her EPA colleagues in finance, IT, and other roles embrace lynda.com.

“Having a training tool like this, we’re very lucky,” she said. “This is training on our terms. It’s really great that our senior leadership has supported us by providing access to this resource. If we didn’t have it, we wouldn’t be able to do the things we’re able to right now.”