

patagonia®

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Anthony Garcia, training manager, Patagonia



Patagonia complements in-person training with company-wide online video instruction

A manufacturer and retailer, Patagonia produces and sells sports apparel, outdoor gear, and luggage for men, women, and children. Founded in 1973, the company grew globally, has an online store that serves a wide range of countries, and maintains more than 75 brick-and-mortar shops worldwide, including more than two dozen in the United States. Patagonia employs more than 1,200 people, 400 of whom work at its Ventura, California, headquarters.

Challenge: scale training to a diverse and dispersed workforce

Patagonia experienced double-digit annual growth in recent years. Amid this success, the company steadily added employees.

"We're hiring rapidly," said Anthony Garcia, training manager. "And we've got a very diverse workforce. Some of our employees got here 20 or 30 years ago at the ages of 22, 23 years old. Now they're in their 40s and 50s. And we've got a lot of younger employees who are right out of college."

Though scattered across the globe, Patagonia employees are closely knit by a set of shared values—including a love of the outdoors, a passion for quality, and a desire to protect the natural environment. Product developers still follow design principles of simplicity and utility embraced by the climbers and surfers who founded the company more than 30 years ago.

To help employees keep skills sharp, and to complement in-person training initiatives with online video instruction, Patagonia in 2008 purchased several licenses of lyndaPro. This gave employees unlimited, 24/7 access to the lynda.com library of instructional videos on a rotating basis. lyndaPro was well received, helping workers learn Adobe® Illustrator®, Microsoft® Excel®, and other software, creative, and business skills. However, it wasn't available to all employees simultaneously.

BENEFITS

- Serves employees across the globe, 24/7
- Scales to an expanding workforce
- Functions as a value-added employee benefit

"We were constantly having to call somebody and say, 'You haven't used your license in three weeks and this other person wants to take Excel. I'm going to have to take it away,'" Garcia said. "We did a lot of juggling."

As Patagonia grew, it sought a scalable online training solution that it could provide to all of its increasingly diverse and dispersed workers at the same time. And it needed a solution that continued to supplement in-person training sessions. These considerations came as the company worked to establish a new Learning and Development Department to oversee and expand employee training initiatives.

Solution: lyndaEnterprise

In 2012, Patagonia purchased lyndaEnterprise, which provides organization-wide access to lynda.com. The switch from lyndaPro enabled all Patagonia employees to access lynda.com simultaneously.

To explain and promote the new service, Patagonia conducted an extensive initial rollout. The company displayed promotional posters at offices and held meetings with workers. In addition, lynda.com Client Services representatives visited the Patagonia headquarters and staffed informational tables in the employee cafeteria. They also conducted presentations that highlighted end user tips and tricks.

Result: access for all employees, at any skill level

lyndaEnterprise provides a wide range of software, creative, and business skills training to Patagonia employees of all skill levels—from beginner to advanced.

"The longtime employees, they need lynda.com because they didn't start out with computer skills," Garcia said. "The new workers, they've never known life without computers. They know online training because a lot of them took college courses that way, so they're very comfortable with it."

Excel courses remain popular at Patagonia. And employees view tutorials on Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop®, and InDesign® extensively. One employee used lynda.com to learn Microsoft OneNote®, and she encouraged colleagues to learn the collaborative, note-taking, and information-gathering software as well.

"She does everything in OneNote now," Garcia said, adding that she no longer lugs around cumbersome pads of paper. "We are very environmental at Patagonia. Think of how many trees we saved because she's not filling up those notebooks. She's gotten her department to use it more, and other departments are catching on."

On-demand online instruction dovetails nicely with the in-person training that Garcia provides employees, and the latter is often more specific to Patagonia and its processes, he said. "There's always room for both

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Patagonia

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approaches. Not all learners are solely online learners. Some people like to have the person there in front of them, especially somebody that they know understands their day-to-day.

“One of the things I hope employees get out of any in-person training is not to remember the exact steps of how to do a particular function, but to remember that function is there. And then later, with lynda.com, they can look at that function further and learn it in depth.”

Garcia praised lynda.com authors. “I love the fact that, even though it’s online training, you get to know the instructors. You have the ability to search by instructor and take several of their courses. That makes it different than other online training offerings.”

At Patagonia, lynda.com access is viewed as an added employee benefit and as a recruitment tool, Garcia said. “When I tell a new employee that, oh yes, you get a lynda.com subscription, that seems like a great benefit to them. When I give job candidates a tour, one of the stops is our Learning and Development Department. I mention they would get a lynda.com subscription as an employee. I’m using it at the candidate stage as a selling point.”

Looking ahead

As Patagonia grows its Learning and Development Department, the company plans to integrate lyndaEnterprise with a new learning management system (LMS). Patagonia will assign employees custom learning paths relevant to their roles and track their progress. And the company will likely use lynda.com reporting features to increasingly measure ongoing ROI of the service, Garcia said.

Among other subjects, Garcia said he looks forward to incorporating lynda.com business skills courses such as *Time Management Fundamentals*, *Coaching and Developing Employees*, and *New Manager Fundamentals* into future employee training initiatives. He anticipates these will become more and more important and helpful as company training programs evolve.

In addition, Patagonia plans to increasingly promote lynda.com during new-hire orientations. “We will talk about our intranet, and how to navigate that, and also the various online resources we have. We’re going to do an overview of lynda.com. It will be featured prominently.”

Because traveling sales reps and other employees use iPad® and iPhone® devices, some have begun accessing lynda.com through its iOS app, Garcia said, adding he expects more team members to do so as online training continues to catch on.

“lynda.com has been great,” Garcia said. “People here are really excited about it.”