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Mary Clare Healy, manager of training and development, Penton



lynda.com instruction helps Penton employees learn and grow

As a business-to-business (B2B) information services and marketing solutions company, Penton provides expert analysis and advice to professionals in five core sectors—agriculture, transportation, natural products and food, infrastructure and industrial design, and manufacturing. Its brands include *Industry Week*, *Aviation Week*, *American City and County*, *Nation's Restaurant News*, *Ward's*, and *Farm Progress*.

Founded in 1892 by John Penton, the company today is the largest independent business of its kind in the United States. It runs 65 tradeshows and conferences, maintains 145 digital properties, offers 20 paid data products, and produces 86 print publications. Penton has offices throughout the United States, and its headquarters is in New York City. The company employs more than 1,200 people.

Challenge: training for a digital future

Similar to staff at many organizations, Penton employees are in the midst of a transformation. "We still have print publications, and will continue to always have print, but we are increasingly moving into the digital arena," said Mary Clare Healy, manager of training and development. "Every day is something new at Penton."

To grow its digital business, Penton in recent years focused more and more on providing content and engaging its millions of customers via websites, social media, mobile applications, curated links, and user communities. In addition, the company has developed new strategies for accommodating user-generated content.

To support these and other initiatives, Healy conducted an employee training needs assessment and determined that new approaches to learning and development were required. To accomplish this, Penton needed a scalable solution that could reach all employees simultaneously and conveniently.

BENEFITS

- Provides employees with a virtual help desk to answer questions
- Supplements content covered during live training sessions
- Supports professional development

"When I started, I would go around the country and do live training," Healy said. "That's great. But not everybody in our small offices could be reached. And we don't have the budget for them to fly into a big office. So I think they felt a bit neglected."

Solution: lynda.com video instruction

Penton determined its employees would benefit from software, creative, and business skills training available on demand. The company needed a solution that could supplement live training, support evolving digital content creation efforts, and provide content relevant to a wide range of company departments, Healy said. "I needed it to be good, and I needed it to be done in a way that people would want to come back to it again and again."

Penton considered nearly a dozen online training providers in a comprehensive search that lasted a year and a half, Healy said. "In one way, shape, or form, they were all good companies. But something was missing."

Deep into the search, a colleague spoke with Healy and suggested lynda.com. "I looked at the subjects covered by lynda.com and thought, 'Oh my goodness, they have everything we need.' So then I began to wonder, 'Was the quality going to be good?' It was. It was cutting-edge content. And the way it was delivered was excellent. lynda.com has great teachers, real experts in their fields.

"I think that our employees sometimes forget that the lynda.com instructors don't work for Penton," Healy said. "lynda.com is exactly what we were looking for."

Result: a solution that meets an array of needs

Penton employees can request access to lynda.com, and they use it in a combination of ways. They have embraced the service and its searchable, time-coded transcripts as a virtual help desk. This allows users to quickly find answers to questions as they arise, and eases the burden on IT and learning and development staff. Penton employees also regularly watch full courses.

In addition, lynda.com is now an integral part of the annual employee review process at Penton.

"Some of the questions a manager asks during a review are, 'How do you want to develop professionally?' and 'How can I help you?'" Healy said. "Employees can talk with their managers about what training they see themselves needing to get ahead, to be successful and effective. If I have a manager's approval, and if I know it aligns with an employee's goals, I'll give that employee a lynda.com license. They can watch any course. But primarily they're using that license to achieve their goals."

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and Dreamweaver® are particularly popular, reflecting the company's emphasis on growing its digital properties.

"I had a wonderful experience using the *Create an iPad Web App* course," said Lauren Watters, a digital content manager in Chicago. "The videos were clear, precise, and easy to follow. Never in a million years did I think I could build out a mobile app in just one day, but I did."

"I took an Excel course," said Val Pombert, an ad design supervisor in St. Charles, Illinois. "I'm actually hoping to take a few more courses. The course I took increased my knowledge and in some instances acted as a just-in-time refresher."

It also supplements the live training Healy provides employees, she said. "lynda.com offers instruction that employees may never get, especially those who work remotely. And it gives our staff a follow-up opportunity to practice and master skills they do learn in a live session. lynda.com is great for when they go back to their offices and think, 'Wait a minute. I learned that, but I don't quite remember it.' With lynda.com, they can look it up."

Making lynda.com available has freed up Healy to work on large learning and development projects, and to concentrate on further evolving the company's training strategies.

"Our day-to-day training needs now can be met by lynda.com," she said. "This means that I can think more about patterns and big training needs, and focus, for example, on developing training content that supports highly customized systems and applications that we've built in-house. I can do that instead of worrying about how we are going to get people trained on PowerPoint."

Looking ahead

Penton is considering an end-of-year employee survey that would provide the company with additional insights on how lynda.com is being used. Healy said she is confident lynda.com will continue to serve Penton well. "We know we're providing the right content. We know we have the right vendor."