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Creating a Corporate University

With more than 60 years experience as one of the world's leading global producers and distributors of machine tools, Japan-based manufacturing company Mori Seiki has been dedicated to continued advancement in the industry through innovation and quality manufacturing. Headquartered in Chicago, Mori Seiki USA has 14 offices spread across the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Brazil and recently agreed to a strategic collaboration with German machine tool manufacturer, Gildemeister AG (DMG).

In the highly-technical and computerized world of CNC (computed numerically controlled) machine tools where the technology is changing at a rapid pace, Mori Seiki found it was struggling to keep up with training employees, distributors and customers in a timely manner. Having hosted typical customer technical training courses for a few years, the decision was made to restructure into a professional corporate university – Mori Seiki University (MSU). That plan required researching and finding a learning management system (LMS) that would

provide a foundation for the learning goals. Mori Seiki found that GeoLearning's *GeoMaestro*™ LMS fit the immediate needs of their company.

“The *GeoMaestro* LMS increased the speed by which information traveled throughout our organization, becoming a big cost saver. When you are a fractured organization like we are; with 14 offices throughout the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Brazil; more than 30 distributors across the country; and numerous engineers and salesmen working from their homes, that becomes critical,” says Rod Jones, Chief Learning Officer for Mori Seiki USA. “It's a struggle to bring people to a central location for training because of the cost that incurs. When we had to reduce our travel budget during the recession, we were already positioned perfectly online. Our organization benefits tremendously from being able to reach our employees 24/7 from anywhere. The configurability and flexible reporting capabilities of *GeoMaestro* fit who we are as a company.”

Multiple Learning Opportunities

MSU offers a three-pronged approach to learning that includes online, on-site and classroom training with the goal of transforming regular machinists into highly-trained experts. With more than 40,000 machines functioning in the Americas and multiple people requiring training on each one of those, MSU offers numerous course options in nine languages. Mori Seiki USA also has 295 employees and nearly 600 distributor employees in need of training. At the end of FY2008, MSU had delivered nearly 19,000 man hours of instruction through 4,700 course completions. In FY2009, that number jumped to more than 30,000 man hours and 9,000 course completions. Jones expects that number to climb even higher once the DMG/Mori Seiki collaboration in the USA is complete.

According to Jones, the *GeoMaestro* LMS not only provides Mori Seiki with the opportunity to train employees, distributors and customers on their machines, as well as manufacturing skills, it has also been a tremendous differentiator in the company's sales training, safety awareness and HR compliance. "We went back and took a look at our safety procedures and started requiring that our employees train on safety issues once a month through the LMS. Since then, the number of safety incidents we've had has plummeted. We really believe that we have built a safety awareness here that has never existed before. Now, we drive all of our safety procedures and training documentation through the LMS. It's paying off," says Jones.

Each employee at Mori Seiki has an assigned learning plan, including 45 hours of online training each year. Time is split equally among HR training, a manager-selected plan and elective courses of the employee's own choosing from the catalog of near 500 in the system. Jones says this gives the employees more focus and has been a significant difference in productivity.

Speed to Competency is Key

Mori Seiki's customers also benefit greatly from the easy-to-access information via MSU, Jones says. Once an order is placed, customers can immediately begin online training programs before the machine arrives. Then, when the machine is delivered, an engineer arrives and conducts

hands-on training as well. Customers can also come to the classroom for more instruction on machine models.

Rapid deployment of information is beneficial when a company is stuck in a hard situation. "We had a customer who found themselves unexpectedly without their machine operator. They were left hanging in the balance with contracts to fulfill and didn't have time for an engineer to come out and train them. The owner and supervisor both had some, but limited, knowledge of the equipment and were able to start training immediately online and in several hours were back to making parts," tells Jones.

The Future of MSU

With employees and distributors being the primary users of the LMS now, Jones says Mori Seiki plans on utilizing GeoLearning's extended enterprise solutions to reach external audiences. With the ability to create an open site Web portal as a public entrance into the LMS without a login, customers can access MSU's course catalog and purchase at the site as they subscribe for a course, thus reducing the company's cost.

"We plan to bring customers to our LMS in a big way. We want to create a domain for customers using e-commerce and develop a new revenue stream from that. We intend to have customers from around the globe come in and pay at the site as they subscribe for a course, helping us reduce cost and giving them instant access to information," says Jones.

"The tools that the *GeoMaestro* LMS provides us with have allowed us to put together a winning combination and blow the socks off our competition," Jones adds. "The speed at which we are learning has given us a competitive advantage; making us smarter, better and faster than everyone else and putting us way ahead of the pack in the manufacturing equipment market."