Case Study
CHAMBERLAINS

Famous for Hardware
Since 1903

Chamberlains is a family-run chain of hardware stores dating back to 1903. Having grown from a small shop in what is now Riviera (Pretoria, South Africa), the business boasts eight stores in the Gauteng region with over 1,000 employees.

Chamberlains places great emphasis on training and upskilling, which is a core component of the organisation's ability to deliver good service to customers. As a growing business the scale and complexity of product ranges; the 8 branches, including their geographic spread, as well as the number of staff has presented a deceptively simple challenge: how to ensure training and upskilling of staff meets the demands of the business.

Challenges:

Chamberlains' long history of over 117 years brings with it a training environment that has undergone many changes. Over the decades the training environment at Chamberlains has developed into an interesting story that progressed through many iterations. Skypiom's Knowledge Management System (KMS) joins this journey at an interesting point: while training used to be conducted on a one-on-one basis, Chamberlains has continually evolved their approach to a point where the data/cloud realm has come into play.

One of the early steppingstones in this journey were product presentations by supplier representatives for sales floor staff. While this was a very effective means of transferring knowledge on individual products, the business had to solve for the time-intensive nature of this approach, after which video recordings of the presentations were rolled out.

Videos presented two challenges: managing access to the videos in a structured way and keeping staff engaged with the content. Practically there was no way for the training environment to know whether someone was actually watching the content. Additionally, as we all know, watching a video in isolation from a wider training effort risks dropping engagement with its content.

CHAMBERLAINS Quick Facts

- ⓘ Established: 1903
- ⓘ Number of branches: 8
- ⓘ Employees: 1,200
- ⓘ Training in Johannesburg & Pretoria with dedicated training rooms and PCs for branches to access the KMS directly

Here the Knowledge Management System has provided the following solution:

Solution 01

Videos are hosted on the platform, which has reduced the administrative load considerably. Staff can now be assigned to a session, as individuals or as a group, even remotely.

Solution 02

The Knowledge Management System enables assessments to accompany the videos. Time spent on videos and assessments; staff scores and ultimately knowledge and skill are quantified through the KMS.

More specifically, this is possible through a set of features that address a number of points simultaneously. First, a drastic reduction in the time product representatives spend presenting to staff. For those cases where product representatives are requested to be present in-person, the KMS manages the session and accounts for the desired outcomes. As a fully blended learning platform there is no need to separate traditional, "classroom" training from digital eLearning.

Then there is the administrative overhead of booking classrooms, making DVDs available and marking assessments, which can now all be run from a central node within the KMS. An illustrative example: where previously a drive out to a branch might have been required this can now be averted.

Better yet, while training unfolds the KMS is gathering data. Ultimately, the granular reporting subsystem allows for information on all training aspects to be pulled on demand or in a scheduled manner. The two over-arching benefits here are:

1 significant time savings across the organisation coupled with the reduction of lost productivity as a result of training; and

2 quantification with on-demand reporting of training and ultimately what training is *doing* for the company.

While Chamberlains is a business steeped in tradition and one that operates in the artisanal or skilled trades sector, the organisation has discovered the immense value that tools, such as a cloud-based learning management solution, can deliver to the organisation. In doing so Chamberlains manages to effectively make use of modern technology to springboard the organisation in its wider and very important sector.