



A VisionCor CASE STUDY

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Cisco Systems Service & Support Advocacy

The Client

As the leading supplier of high-performance internetworking products, Cisco provides the infrastructure for the Internet. With over 40,000 employees and record growth, the need for quick and easy access to information is vital to Cisco's ongoing success

To manage costs and practice what they preach, Cisco runs a significant amount of internal operations on their corporate intranet. While this technology is very useful in many areas, its role in customer support is critical.

The Challenge

Exemplary customer service ranks high in the minds of Cisco employees—starting at the top. John Chambers, CEO, spends up to 40% of his time listening to customers and personally reviewing all critical accounts every night.

Cisco created the Service & Support Manager (SSM) role to provide a single point-of-contact for large clients. This one-to-one relationship gives customers a resource that understands and even anticipates their needs—a role that benefits both Cisco and the customer.

With the goal of hiring 250 Service & Support Managers in a period of 18 months, Cisco needed to minimize their time-to-proficiency by providing new SSMs immediate access to critical information as well as orientation and reference information. Cisco also needed to leverage the expertise of their more experienced SSMs by capturing and sharing their knowledge. Finally, vital to their success was fast and easy access to all of this information.

The Business Objectives

Minimize time-to-proficiency. Orient new SSMs within 90 days of hire date by providing *just enough* of the right information about Cisco, the Customer Advocacy organization, and the SSM role in order for SSMs to become productive as soon as possible.

Maximize performance and sharing of knowledge assets. Provide information specific to the SSM role, such as how other SSMs handled certain customer situations, goal setting, and advice on when and how to engage other departments within Cisco.

Foster ongoing learning and communication. Provide a communication vehicle within Cisco's geographically diverse work environment for sharing information and experiences with other team members.

SUMMARY

The Challenge

Cisco wanted to rapidly grow their new Service and Support Advocacy group, from 20 to 120 people. To accomplish this goal, Cisco needed a way to capture the expertise of the more experienced Service and Support Managers (SSMs) and share their valuable knowledge with newly hired SSMs. Also, since this was a new group, training and ongoing support resources were limited. Although Cisco's corporate intranet contained a portion of the needed resources, the time and effort required by new hires to locate these resources was too costly.

The Solution

VisionCor designed, developed, and deployed a knowledge portal that provides SSMs with a single source for their learning, performance support, and ongoing knowledge sharing needs. Also, by virtually eliminating costly information overload and providing new SSMs with a structured "new hire roadmap," the group has decreased their time-to-proficiency from one year to less than six months.



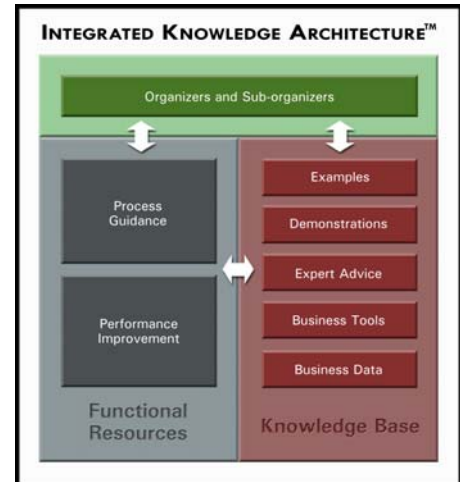
Why VisionCor

For Cisco, an Internet-centered company, a web-based resource was essential. Todd Griffin, SSA Senior Manager, wanted a partner with experience researching, analyzing, and organizing complex environments.

"There are plenty of Internet consulting firms out there today, but we needed a partner with real knowledge management expertise and a proven methodology," says Griffin. "VisionCor understands how to determine what information to gather or build and how to organize the information so it is truly useful. They did it more quickly than we thought possible. Rapid solution development is vital to a company like Cisco—we need resources that can help us continue to grow at a rapid pace. This solution does just that, and we could not have done it without VisionCor."

The Integrated Knowledge Architecture™

The Integrated Knowledge Architecture™ (IKA) is VisionCor's innovative approach to creating highly accessible and usable information resources to support business operations. The IKA is a proven, object-oriented approach to organizing content based on how the content is used. The IKA provides a guide for organizing information, learning, and knowledge into smaller pieces called knowledge objects and building meaningful relationships between these objects. As a result, the end user can more quickly and easily locate the critical information needed to improve productivity and performance. The IKA is technology-neutral and can be used to leverage the capabilities of any portal or web-based KM application.



The Solution

VisionCor assigned a team of consultants that included expert content developers, information architects, and a project manager. The team used VisionCor's project management methodology to develop a project plan. Status reports, project schedules, and conference calls kept the VisionCor team in Charlotte in synch with the Cisco teams in San Jose, Chicago, New York, and Research Triangle Park.

After a complete project and role analysis, the project was divided into three distinct phases:

Quick Hits. With new hires already in place and looking for direction, there was an immediate need for a 90-day new hire roadmap. Through interviews with existing SSMs and managers, the VisionCor team gathered, analyzed and organized the events and tasks required for a new SSM. Within 30 days, the most important new hire information was made available.

Initial Development. Because the SSM role was a new and highly strategic one within Cisco, the VisionCor team conducted numerous interviews to assist in building consensus within the company on some of the aspects of the SSM role.

As a result of this consensus, VisionCor built an overall site map and detailed content plan. The site look and feel was designed based on content, audience analysis, and the existing intranet. Information was then converted into web format.

With site navigation, graphics, and an initial content in place, VisionCor conducted usability tests to ensure intuitive site structure and meaningful content. Experienced SSMs tested specific scenarios to ensure maximized usability.

Core Development. With the initial content in place and tested, development and coding of the site content began. To confirm the team was still on target, the SSM role was reanalyzed and content categorization was checked based on lessons learned to date. The remaining content was gathered, developed, and coded, with additional interviews conducted as necessary.

The site was again retested. In addition to providing feedback, the usability tests also assisted in user acceptance of the site. User acceptance is vital to the success of any knowledge management initiative.



The Results

The Service & Support Advocacy intranet site was very well received within the SSM organization. "This web site is such a great resource," says Mike Pusich, SSM for Boeing. "Everything I need is in one place. I can find what I need when I need it without having to wait on an e-mail reply, walk around looking for someone, or search through gigs of information on the intranet. Plus, after working through difficult situations, I can post my lessons learned on the site so my colleagues can learn from my experiences."

"I'm a new SSM, and this web site is a gold mine of information," says Rob Dacey, SSM for GM. "It guided me through my first 90 days, helped me build a support team, and introduced me to other SSMs. Now I'm using it to define my objectives. Basically, this site just makes my job easier and gives me more time to focus on servicing my customer."

Today, Cisco is working with VisionCor to leverage the knowledge and benefits gained from the SSM project into other areas of their organization. Record-breaking growth and razor-sharp focus on customer satisfaction could be chaotic, but the focus of VisionCor's knowledge management expertise coupled with Cisco's commitment to customer satisfaction turned Cisco's information overload into *knowledge-on-demand*.



"The home page leads to what one SSM referred to as "A gold mine of knowledge."

About VisionCor

VisionCor is a 12 year-old, consulting firm based in Charlotte, North Carolina dedicated to helping companies provide their employees with the information, education, and knowledge that they need to work smarter, faster. VisionCor focuses on creative highly accessible and usable information, education, and knowledge management resources including learning and knowledge portals, training, and performance support applications. VisionCor has worked with many leading organizations such as Bank of America, Cisco Systems, and Wachovia Corporation. VisionCor experts are frequently invited to speak at national knowledge management and e-learning conferences. For more information, visit their website at www.visioncor.com.