



FROM LEFT: Al Torres, VP, Human Resources, Verizon Telecom & Business; Martha Delehanty, SVP, Human Resources, Verizon Telecom & Business; Alan Gardner, VP, Human Resources, Verizon Wireless; Magda Yrizarry, VP, Corporate Human Resources, Verizon; Lou Tedrick, VP, Human Resources, Verizon Wireless.

# Verizon's New # is 1

Verizon rings in 2012 in the top spot on the Training Top 125. **BY LORRI FREIFELD**

One may be the loneliest number, but Verizon isn't complaining. After appearing five times in the Top 10 over the last six years, the telecommunications company captured the No. 1 spot on the Training Top 125 for the first time in 2012.

Despite a relatively flat training budget and a work stoppage that resulted from the expiration of union collective bargaining agreements, Verizon remained

PHOTO: DOMINGO MONES

steadfast in its commitment to effective training tied to corporate strategic goals—and had the results to show for it.

“We focused on the major training initiatives that would advance our strategic business goals and business unit/functional-specific initiatives,” says Al Torres, VP, Human Resources, Verizon Telecom & Business. “We remained relatively flat on full-time staff across Verizon, but we increased the number of internal subject matter experts (SMEs) significantly to help drive key initiatives deeply through the organization.”

Verizon’s three main business goals for 2011 were:

1. To build a business and workforce as good as its networks.
2. To lead in shareholder value creation.
3. To be recognized as an iconic technology company.

Verizon’s strategic business units (BUs) align BU-specific priorities with the overall company’s business goals and core values. “Our federated L&D organizations, supporting each BU, establish training priorities/initiatives that align with each BU’s priorities and Verizon’s business goals and values—top to bottom and across,” says Magda Yrizarry, VP, Corporate Human Resources. “In fact, if a training request does not link strategically with one of these priorities and Verizon’s business goals and values, it’s not supported.”

## CREATING SHAREHOLDER VALUE

Creating a leadership culture that leads for shareholder value was one of Verizon’s significant training goals in 2011, and the company’s implementation of Leading for Shareholder Value (LSV) was a key lever for cultural change, says Yrizarry.

Verizon launched a customized executive education initiative in partnership with Duke Corporate Education in February 2011. Sponsored by new President and CEO Lowell McAdam, LSV is a 1.5-day mandatory executive education program designed to help senior leaders understand how to drive long-term value creation. The program provides senior leaders with tools, frameworks, and metrics that help them analyze how their decisions and actions affect shareholder value (SHV).

Each LSV session is led by CEO McAdam and CFO Fran Shammo. The first session was delivered to Verizon’s top 50 leaders and featured a keynote presentation by Robert Lane, a Verizon Board of Directors member and former chairman of John Deere Company. Lane used SHV as a unifying metric at Deere while quadrupling the company’s stock price over 10 years. As part of the program design, Yrizarry says, senior leaders are placed in cross-business unit and cross-functional teams and given an assignment to identify obstacles preventing Verizon from creating more shareholder value. Each team recommends actions that will remove those obstacles. At the end of each session, each team reports to a panel of top executives. As a result of these recommendations, Yrizarry notes, several cross-functional/cross-BU improvement initiatives are underway, including:

- New capital budgeting and allocation processes.
- New Voice of the Shareholder measurement process.
- New device life cycle management process.
- New Process Improvement/Lean Six Sigma consulting and curriculum.

In addition, during the program, each senior leader submits an Individual Accountability Plan (IAP). These IAPs are aligned with “value drivers” or metrics by which shareholders, analysts, and potential investors assess company performance. Each senior leader selects one to two actions he or she will commit to as part of driving SHV. The IAPs then are digitized and provided to Lowell McAdam and business unit presidents for review and follow-up. More than 300 senior leaders now have SHV IAPs that will be incorporated into 2011 performance reviews and, where appropriate, into 2012 performance agreements, Yrizarry says.

“We’ve also created a shared networking site on our intranet to provide senior leaders with key resources, such as an interactive SHV map with a quick tour job aid and a ‘Shareholder Value’ communications kit to be used foremployee meetings or for other leadership communication opportunities,” Yrizarry notes.

Eight LSV sessions were delivered to senior leaders between February and July 2011. Verizon now plans to drive shareholder value deeper into the organization by delivering LSV to its 2,300-plus director-level leaders. A pilot for directors was launched in 2011 in EMEA and APAC and will be delivered to all U.S.-based directors in 2012.

## SCHOOL SPIRIT

At the other end of Verizon’s leadership development spectrum, “we are focused on attracting and retaining the best talent from colleges and universities as we see this as critical to building our leadership funnel for the future,” Yrizarry says. In 2011, Verizon rolled out a new “Verizon Leadership Development Program” (VLDP) across the enterprise. VLDP objectives include:

- Becoming college students’ first-choice employer.
- Capturing a larger share of exceptional talent.
- Building future bench strength across Verizon.
- Grooming future leaders.

“VLDP recruits the highest-performing college graduates at strategic partnership schools with 10- to 12-week Verizon internships and semester-long co-ops as a primary feeder pool for the full-time college hire VLDP,” Yrizarry says. VLDP currently supports Finance, Network Operations, Engineering, IT, Human Resources, and Marketing. After graduation and upon hire, participants complete a minimum of two job rotations. The number and length of job rotations varies between functions over the course of two or three years in the program. All VLDP hires experience a 24-month customized leadership curriculum road map focused on cultural immersion and self-awareness, operational effectiveness, high performance, and leadership preparation. In addition, each function has a functional-specific curriculum road map and experiential development activities.

## INNOVATION LEADS TO ICONIC STATUS

Innovation is at the core of who Verizon is, according to Verizon Wireless Human Resources VP Lou Tedrick, and “it’s essential to be a leading innovator in order to achieve our goal of becoming an iconic technology company. Our 4G LTE network is key to our future ability to deliver innovative technology to our customers.”

Prior to rolling out its 4G LTE network in December 2010,





BACK ROW, FROM LEFT: Michael Flanagan, Steven Englehart, Jeffrey Batiste. MIDDLE ROW, from left: Gabby Diogo, Kristen Columbo, Jason Mesiarik, Andrea Arnowitz, Susanne Rovida-Shepard, Renee Ryan, Nate Thomas. SEATED, from left: Cheryl McCullough and Lori Satterfield.

Verizon delivered 60,000-plus hours of 4G LTE technology and device training to its front-line Sales and Service reps between January and August. “We’ve maintained a one-stop online performance support 4G LTE Resource Center for employees to use at the moment of apply,” Tedrick notes.

Verizon’s L&D team is engaged when product development begins, she adds, so the workforce has the appropriate training for a successful market launch. Of note were two iconic device launches: iPad (late 2010) and iPhone 4 (February 2011). Working with Wireless Marketing, Sales Operations, Customer Service (CS) Operations, IT, and Apple, Verizon deployed iPad training, including operating systems (OS) training—preparing reps for iPhone 4. “They have the same OS, so we built employee OS knowledge early through the iPad launch,” Tedrick says.

iPhone 4 Awareness online training modules and job aids were deployed the day Verizon’s iPhone 4 was announced. Between announcement and launch, instructor-led training covering the device, Iconic Sales Portal, business processes (i.e., store line management), and technical support and troubleshooting was delivered to 55,000-plus Sales and CS reps. “We also launched an online iPhone 4 Resource Center, a one-stop-shop for training and breaking news/updates,” Tedrick says.

Tablets entered Verizon’s portfolio in fourth quarter 2010 (iPad and Samsung’s Galaxy Tab). 2011 tablets included: iPad2, Motorola XOOM, and Samsung Galaxy 10.1. To ensure front-line representatives had the knowledge to drive and support tablet sales, Verizon deployed hands-on training, positioning role-plays/videos, customer use cases, selling tips, and used Yammer for sharing tablet sales successes.

## BENCHMARKING SUCCESS

With the volume of training taking place—particularly on new products and technology—just how does Verizon measure its effectiveness? At the onset of a training initiative, “we work with key stakeholders and business partners to define what success will look like in terms of employee knowledge, behaviors, and targeted business results,” Tedrick says. “Then, we ideally get a pre-training ‘snapshot’ of knowledge, behaviors, and/or business results to compare with a post-training snapshot.”

Verizon Wireless (VZW), for example, uses a CS New Hire Training (NHT) Scorecard to monitor new hire performance at 30, 60, 90, and 120 days post-training. “Working with our CS Operations Leaders, we measure new hire performance on a set of CS key performance indicators such as ‘Entire Rep Performance,’ ‘Quality,’ ‘First Call Resolution,’ and ‘Average Handle Time.’” Tedrick says new hires consistently meet the expected key performance indicators (KPIs) by 120 days post-training and that VZW has used this scorecard to determine curriculum changes needed for a CS NHT redesign and

for targeted reinforcement training.

Likewise, Wireline’s “Sales New Hire Class of 2011” onboarding program has shown significant results. Launched in January 2011, the five-day “green” program has been completed by 500-plus new hires.

The “Class of 2011” provided foundational training that ensured new hires quickly achieved a level of competency that

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## FAST FACTS

- Total number of employees and independent contractors/franchisees trained overall annually: 286,411
- Annual revenues: \$106.6 billion
- Average length of employee service: 12 years
- Percentage of job openings filled by internal candidates: 51 percent
- Percentage of new hires referred by employees: 33 percent
- Total number of employees and independent contractors/franchisees trained annually via instructor-led classroom sessions: 179,140
- Total number of employees and independent contractors/franchisees trained annually via online, self-paced study: 286,411
- Number of courses offered as instructor-led classroom sessions: 990
- Number of courses offered as instructor-led virtual classroom sessions: 337
- Number of courses offered as online-self-paced modules: 11,440

would accelerate Verizon's sales/revenue objectives. The program equips participants with knowledge and skills in sales tools and systems, strategic solutions (IT Services, Security, Mobility, Communications, Networking), and job-specific processes and procedures. Evening "homework" reinforces learning. Participants collaborate on an executive-level presentation modeling expected behavior. Post-training participant feedback is provided to participants' managers.

Some 44 percent of graduates are at 75-plus percent of performance plan (historical ramp-up is six-plus months), and 30 percent are exceeding quota, according to Torres. "Feedback from leaders is that these new hires have contributed to Wireline's 17.8 percent increase in strategic services revenues (approximately 48 percent of global enterprise revenues). Our quality of hire (retention measure) is 95 percent."

## DELIVERY CHANGES

On the training delivery front, in 2011 Verizon consolidated its last two Wireline learning management systems (LMSs) into its enterprise-wide LMS, VZLearn, so the entire company is now on one system. VZLearn is used to deliver online training/assessments, schedule classroom/distance learning sessions, publish course catalogs, track participation/learning history, and provide completion reports. "We now share learning content assets, reducing content development cycle time/cost and saving \$1.2 million annually in licensing and headcount," Torres says.

Tedrick says video/audio podcasts are fast becoming one of Verizon employees' favorite means for learning quickly. "We've built videos to demonstrate system processes for our B2B sales team—accessed from within their primary sales force automation tool. Videos demonstrating new devices provide a quick, effective, on-demand learning approach." Viewership is viral, Tedrick says, with employees recommending to peers a video lesson they just watched in a manner of minutes. Indeed, Verizon's DROID Charge by Samsung video reached 1,240 views shortly after it launched.

## QUICK TIPS

Verizon Human Resources executives Al Torres, Magda Yrizarry, and Lou Tedrick offer the following tips to organizations seeking to create effective training programs:

- **Alignment with business goals and initiatives is key. Involve the target audience and their first-line leaders in the development and pilot process so they have input to ensure training is relevant *and* ownership to help drive the initiatives forward.**
- **Know what is core and critical and eliminate everything else that becomes "scrap" learning.**
- **Have key measurements of success identified at the onset so you can quickly evaluate if it's working or not—then course correct before it is too late.**
- **Doing all of the above helps you prioritize what's core, critical, and most effective, so if you're faced with cutting costs and/or cutting training, you can do so with a level of certainty versus "gut feeling."**

"We distribute videos via VZTube, our internal YouTube site," Tedrick explains. Year-to-date total videos watched: 1,478,412; audio files played: 13,084; total VZTube members: 83,398. Viewership statistics on existing videos are used to make recommendations for future videos. Tedrick notes that low views on a particular video type are taken into consideration when planning future videos that are similar in style and message.

Verizon also expanded its My NetWork Social Networking platform for peer-to-peer collaboration to include My NetWork On-The-Go in 2011. Employees now can access My NetWork features using their mobile devices.

In 2011, Wireless L&D and IT launched Yammer.com. "We took a 'bottoms-up' approach to making Yammer available and have seen organic growth with more than 8,000 members and 484 groups using social networking features (i.e., message, polls, and praise)," Tedrick says. Sales teams use Yammer to post questions and share sales success stories and best practices. One region's Motorola XOOM sales increased significantly as a result of reps' best practice sharing.

Wireless launched Device Forums for Sales and CS reps to communicate technical issues, solutions, and/or shortcuts, tips, and tricks. Moderated by Verizon's Marketing organization and its device manufacturers, Device Forums average 34,000 views; 1,030 user posts/replies; and 630 moderator replies monthly. Early rep postings on technical issues with new software releases helped Marketing fix issues before they became widespread. Verizon piloted Device Forums with a few Retail regions before rolling out enterprise-wide.

"We've found that the keys to success for social media is to 'pilot' or 'trial' first, so you can work out any issues before expanding to a wider audience, *and* if you track the impact on KPIs, it can be a good case study to share with leaders who may be concerned about the net impact of social media," Tedrick says. "Additionally, we've found that taking a 'low-key' approach to social media for learning has let learners try things out for size, then recommend it to their peers. The result is organic versus forced utilization."

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Verizon currently is exploring the use of tablets for delivering Online Performance Support System (InfoManager) content at "moment of apply," particularly for its Retail representatives, Tedrick says. "This way, our Retail representatives will have access to the information while interacting with our customers and not have to step out of their sales process flow." Verizon hopes to have it available by mid-year 2012.

Looking ahead to 2022, Torres and Tedrick envision a workforce that is well-versed in using personalized mobile online performance support at the moment of need. The executives think L&D teams ultimately will be facilitators and moderators of user-generated content. "We also think L&D teams will be able to spend more time as true business partners focused on developing and deploying individualized and team learning solutions that deliver strong business performance." 