How ISE Increased Remote Learner Engagement By 80% With Synapse

With a rapidly growing remote workforce, International Student Exchange (ISE) wanted to find a way to enhance their existing training methods. The goal was to supplement in-person and hard copy training by developing on-demand digital solutions for remote learners that would be easy-to-maintain for the training team.

ISE grew from a small nonprofit exchange program in 1982 to one of the leading sponsors of J-1 cultural exchange programs in the industry, facilitating programs for over 2,500 exchange students every year. With such rapid growth, they faced the challenge of providing comprehensive training to each new field representative that would allow them to get up and running as quickly as possible in their new role.

50+
LEARNING TEAM

1,000+
LEARNERS

Non-profit - Education
INDUSTRY

COMPANY SUMMARY

International Student Exchange serves as a sponsor of J-1 secondary school exchange for international students as well as a provider of cultural exchange programs for American high school students interested in living and studying abroad. Founded in 1982, their certified 501c3 non-profit organization has provided quality exchange programs for over 30,000 exchange students.
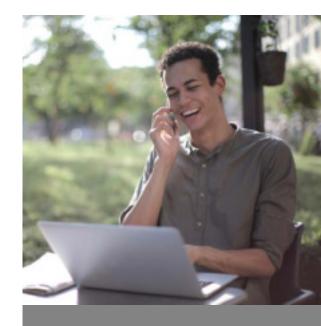
PAST AND PRESENT

Since ISE was founded, the goal has been to provide the best in class training to their field staff. As a forward-thinking organization, this means constantly looking for opportunities to use the latest technologies to support staff in their roles. In the 1980s, training primarily consisted of small and large in-person sessions supported by print materials. As technology evolved, ISE also leveraged video conferencing and soft copy materials, as well as the now discontinued Area Representative Resource Center which strove to house all training materials in one online location but proved slightly cumbersome and difficult to maintain.

Therefore, the team began to look for an easy-to-maintain, streamlined solution to digital training with the goal of empowering field staff members to learn the skills they need to succeed in their roles at their own pace and on their own schedule. This digital solution also needed to be flexible, allowing for frequent changes to program technology and policies.

"Ensuring that we're delivering consistent and up-to-date training throughout each of our remote regions presented a challenge. There would sometimes be changes that would occur mid-program, such as a change in student insurance providers, which would require a massive recall of printed materials. This would make it difficult (and costly) to ensure that each and every rep had access to up-to-date information in the field."

ISE also wanted to ensure regional managers felt supported when training their staff. Immediate one-on-one mentorship for each rep was not always realistic for managers, particularly those overseeing reps in multiple states. ISE needed a solution to help those managers to fill the gap and ensure every rep was getting the training and support they needed at the time of need.

"Ensuring that we're **delivering consistent and up-to-date training** throughout each of our remote regions presented a challenge."

THE CHALLENGE

ISE wanted to find a more streamlined digital solution to overcome some of these remaining training challenges. They wanted to ensure training was consistent, learners were engaged, it was centrally deployed and accessible, and could be updated quickly and easily.

Other digital solutions had been successfully trialled. For example, webinar sessions were run from HQ as a way to deliver consistent learning experiences throughout the organization. But the organization wanted to take it one step further and cater to learners' varying degrees of existing knowledge levels and availability.

> "We could have a training session with 15 people with significant variations of existing program knowledge and experience levels. While we wanted to provide as much one-on-one guidance as possible, it was often difficult to do so while respecting the group's time."

Another initiative incorporated training specialists based out of HQ who would travel between regions delivering in person sessions. This helped to bridge the gap between fresh learning experiences developed at HQ and the learners in the field.

While these learning experiences were effective, the training team at HQ still wanted to find a way to reach a wider audience, quickly update existing resources, and develop training quickly and at scale. For example, the physical handbooks took a long time to update, print, and distribute.

"We wanted a training curriculum for our reps that we could update easily, and wasn't overly reliant on physical print or instructor-led training."

BARRIERS TO SCALE

- Staff operating on different schedules and involvement levels
- Maintaining consistency across multiple training mediums
- Management teams needing additional support due to rapid growth

THE SOLUTION

The training project was already underway when ISE discovered Synapse. After coordinating between different departments and regions, they had decided on a consistent approach and needs analysis for the overall curriculum structure. The focus was on the enrichment of existing training practices to include digital solutions that would be accessible to all field representatives to help them with onboarding, job performance and everything in between.

"Our goal was to take our training to the next level, beyond compliance and into the knitty-gritty details that would help a new or seasoned representative succeed to the best of their ability."

The "goal process" for field representatives is to make a placement. So the training was structured around helping Area Representatives (ARs) achieve the goal of making placements and then conducting ongoing compliance supervision.

ISE wanted to create a repository of readily available online courses. There were **two** criteria:

1. **Each training should be as short as possible**
2. **Each course would be a standalone topic without encapsulating too many different topics in one training**

Once ISE discovered Synapse, the path towards creating and deploying the training became clear, and would look something like this:

- HQ would work with other departments to gather the information and content needed for each training
- The training would be structured and blueprinted through Synapse
- The training would be deployed and promoted to all team members in one central online location

THE RESULTS

Once the trainings were created through Synapse, they were easily deployed to "The Toolbox", a new online repository for learning that could be accessed easily at all levels of the organization.

Not only was on-demand training now more readily available for reps, but it could be updated at the click of a button. ISE can now quickly update courses on Synapse, refresh the link, and the training is automatically updated in The Toolbox.

"Now, we can just make a change to the course and update it without having to go and change any links or URLs elsewhere. Synapse has really allowed us to be flexible in a way that we never were before."

ISE has also found a way to further boost team members engagement with online training. Reps are now prompted by a friendly chatbot named Cooper to find training relevant to their role. They can also ask Cooper questions and receive answers that guide them to the appropriate training courses. Learners can access the training they need, when they need it, especially as the courses are now categorized using meta tags, enabling an intuitive search function for specific topics in The Toolbox.

As a result of this new digital solution, ISE has seen an increase of 80% in unique readers of courses in the space of three months.

"This has reinforced to team members that they can access the online learning repository and search for more information. They can learn on their own time."

ISE COURSE EXAMPLE

Every rep in organizations like ISE that supervises or places students has to get a department of state certification. Recently, the platform that hosted the certification test prep was dissolved, leaving student exchanges everywhere scrambling to create the certification prep training needed.

ISE was able to quickly move all of that test prep information into Synapse and host the requisite compliance training there instead, with minimal interruption and delay for learners.

THE RESULTS

ISE had been looking for a way to disseminate on-demand training materials to a remote workforce operating on different schedules. Through this new digital solution using Synapse, the organization has seen a significant uptick in learner engagement and are confident about the quality and consistency of training provided to their field representatives.

SYNAPSE CONTRIBUTIONS

126
COURSES CREATED IN 8 MONTHS

1,000
LEARNERS

WANT TO SEE HOW SYNAPSE CAN HELP YOU?

Standardize and streamline the design phase of training creation with Synapse's Learning Design System. Manage training requests, maintain course design, collaborate with subject matter experts more effectively, and work at the speed of business.

SCHEDULE DEMO

Interested in making a difference by joining the ISE team?

APPLY NOW