

Oak Hill CASE STUDY

NETWORK APPLIANCE

OAK HILL SPEEDS TECH SUPPORT TRAINING FOR NETAPP

The Client: Network Appliance (NetApp) is a world leader in unified storage solutions for today's data-intensive enterprise, including data storage and email backup, recovery, data protection and archiving solutions.

Your customers' loyalty is only as good as your support team. When your product is mission-critical, your support staff must be on-point 100 percent of the time. At fast-growing NetApp, new support engineers are being hired and trained continually. On-ramping these new employees must be rapid and thorough, because when customers need support service, they need it now, and they need it to be right.

The problem, according to Rusty Walther, senior vice president, Global Support, was that newly-hired tech support staff took four to six months to train. "Our training had developed quickly, under the pressure of fast growth, and the materials were inconsistent. People were trained on the fly, without a clear methodology," explains Rusty. "We didn't have standardized materials or processes for training people on this very complex product set. It just took too long."

Rusty had worked with Oak Hill Corporation at several previous companies, and had always been impressed by the firm's value proposition. "Oak Hill has consistently met and usually exceeded my expectations," states Rusty. "They do a terrific job of understanding the business problems I'm trying to solve, and putting together an ecosystem of planning, talent, oversight, and commitment that solves those problems at a price-point that I could never achieve using my own resources."

Rusty worked with Sanjiv Varma, NetApp's senior manager, Global Support Learning and Performance, to define what was needed to expedite the training process, and they called in Oak Hill to jump-start the program.

"The Oak Hill consultants are experienced," says Sanjiv. "They understood the subject matter, there was no learning curve, and they dug into the project with minimal input from us."

Within a fairly short time, the Oak Hill instructional design consultants had designed four courses and created the training materials. The result was a set of advanced courses that provided a global, sustainable training infrastructure assuring consistency in training new tech support personnel. These courses complement NetApp's Global Support New Hire OnRamp Training program. This is a 10 week program that covers the handling of troubleshooting calls, soft skills, escalation procedures, and lab work across NetApp's entire product set.

Best of all, it takes just 10 weeks for NetApp's tech support engineers to come up to speed and begin helping customers—cutting training time by two-thirds. Rusty states, "For every dollar we spent, we got real value."

"The objective was to improve training productivity, but that was only one part of the equation," says Sanjiv. "We also needed high-quality results. Support engineers have to have the technology down cold, but they also have to handle our customers with tact and consideration. With Oak Hill, we achieved both of these objectives."