Cooper Tire & Rubber Company: Controlling Training Costs with Virtual Live Classroom

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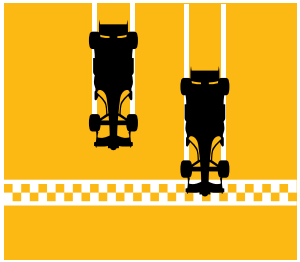
Company
Cooper Tire & Rubber Company

Industry
Automotive – tire manufacturing

Products and Services
Tires for passenger cars, medium and light trucks, motorcycles, and racing cars

Web Site
www.coopertire.com

SAP® Solutions and Services
Virtual live classroom training from the SAP® Education organization



Cooper Tire & Rubber Company and its family of companies work as one team around the world toward a common goal – to create superior value for customers, employees, partners, and shareholders. Virtual live classroom training by the SAP® Education organization supports this goal by helping Cooper offer **software training in a cost-effective manner.** The program provides Cooper with increased training opportunities and more business involvement while decreasing travel time and expense.

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Where the rubber truly meets the road

Cooper is the parent company of a global family of businesses that specialize in designing, manufacturing, marketing, and selling tires for passenger cars and light trucks. Cooper also has joint ventures, affiliates, and subsidiaries that specialize in tires for medium trucks, motorcycles, and racing cars. Headquartered in Findlay, Ohio, it employs nearly 13,000 people worldwide and has facilities in 11 countries around the world that ship tires to more than 155 countries.

Cooper adheres to a high standard of excellence that it calls The Cooper Way. "The Cooper Way embraces core values and principles that guide us in our business practices," says Julie Williamson-Wright, Cooper's enterprise resource planning (ERP) global communications/training manager.

This fundamental approach serves the company and its customers well. Cooper has grown steadily since its founding in 1914. It is currently the fourth-largest tire manufacturer in North America and the ninth-largest in the world.

430 million

Cooper tires on vehicles worldwide

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One team, one goal, together around the world

Cooper manufactures tires that meet the needs of a diverse customer base, from everyday motorists to the most demanding high-performance, off-road, and motorsport enthusiasts. The entire company works together to create superior value for its customers, employees, partners, and shareholders.

As part of an overall strategic plan, Cooper is embarking on several key initiatives that include sustaining a cost-competitive position, achieving top-line profitable growth, and building organizational capabilities. As a key part of this plan, Cooper is implementing the SAP® ERP application throughout its operations. "SAP software will provide us with deeper business insight to support our business decisions," says Williamson-Wright. "So it is absolutely critical to the success of the implementation that we quickly improve upon our organizational capabilities to use the software."

Many of Cooper's ERP program team members were not familiar with SAP software. So Cooper looked to virtual training as a cost-effective and flexible means to quickly build competency and enable cross-training.

For the majority of its training classes, Cooper continues to deliver training using traditional, instructor-led, in-person, classroom training. "Recently, however, the trend has been changing as the business case for virtual training is just too compelling to ignore," Williamson-Wright explains.

"Pursuing virtual live classroom training had a lot to do with controlling cost. It enables us to quickly and cost-effectively build our organizational capabilities, plus it sets a precedent for future training endeavors."

Julie Williamson-Wright, ERP Global Communications/Training Manager, Cooper Tire & Rubber Company

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Building software proficiency in a cost-effective manner

Before making its decision to pursue virtual training, Cooper leadership met with SAP representatives to discuss the opportunities for in-person training, custom blended learning, and virtual live classroom training. They quickly agreed to pursue virtual live classroom training with the SAP Education organization. "Virtual live classroom training provides us with increased training opportunities and lower travel requirements and expenses," Williamson-Wright says. "Plus it provides the ability to cross-train more easily so we have more of our program team using the software."

The flexibility afforded by the virtual live classroom training was a key benefit that appealed to Cooper. Instead of having to conform to a predetermined training schedule, virtual live classroom training can be scheduled at any time. "Having the ability to set up classes according to our rollout schedule is key," Williamson-Wright adds.

Working with SAP Education was another key benefit for Cooper. "Frankly, we wanted SAP experts to train us on how to use the software," Williamson-Wright explains. "After all, there's no one with more expertise about the software than SAP."

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Aligning training to the software rollout schedule

Once Cooper decided in favor of virtual live classroom training, representatives from the implementation project team and the training team, along with the project's solution architect, met with SAP to lay out plans for the training program.

Cooper implemented its SAP ERP software in phases, and training was planned to align with each phase. The first phase focused on order-to-cash, finance, and procure-to-pay processes for the Cooper facility in Stow, Ohio. The second phase focused on HR and finance processes for corporate payroll. The third phase will focus on HR processes to support payroll in the United Kingdom. Future phases will focus on a broader deployment across North America.

"We provided our business process leaders with a list of potential classes and asked that they and their team of business process analysts and configurators take one process overview class together," Williamson-Wright adds. "Then, each leader selected additional classes relevant to the implementation schedule and identified participants to enroll."

Next, the training team developed a spreadsheet outlining the relevant information necessary to enroll participants. "Our biggest challenge was cultural since it was the first time we were offering virtual training for SAP software," Williamson-Wright says. "We were able to overcome this challenge by defining our training strategy, obtaining executive buy-in, outlining clear ownership, and then holding the teams accountable."

"Many of our employees enjoyed the virtual live classroom training experience and subsequently requested it due to the convenience it offered during our deployment schedule."

Julie Williamson-Wright, ERP Global Communications/Training Manager, Cooper Tire & Rubber Company

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Establishing an effective training program

The virtual live classroom training provided by SAP Education aligned with Cooper's deployment objectives for SAP ERP. Each course is led live by an off-site instructor from the SAP Education organization. Participants can ask questions, confer with each other, and practice using the software in a guided-learning environment.

Cooper has developed an internal process and an online form so business process leaders can submit a request for SAP training that is subsequently routed for management approval. "Once approved, the form is routed back to the requestor so the participant can be registered and scheduled for the class," Williamson-Wright explains. "The participants are responsible for downloading and printing their own materials and completing the class."

Cooper has learned some tips and tricks to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its training program. It has centralized the training administration processes and can track all class information in one location. "This makes it easier to assemble a quarterly list of participants for budgetary purposes," Williamson-Wright says. An SAP Education survey is distributed to participants at the end of each virtual live classroom course.

40 classes

Completed by employees in 4 months

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Realizing the rewards of virtual live classroom training

Virtual live classroom training has been an overwhelming success for Cooper. It supports the deployment of SAP ERP as part of the company's overall strategic plan. "Our team found the virtual live classroom training by SAP Education to be of high quality. It offers the necessary instruction for employees to be more effective in their jobs," Williamson-Wright says.

Virtual live classroom training is helping to reduce training spend by cutting back on travel costs. "We compared the cost of traditional classroom training to virtual training, and virtual training is easily 30% less expensive," Williamson-Wright adds. Other benefits include the flexibility to add classes at will and the ability to provide software training to team members in any location.

Cooper is also finding it easier to cross-train its teams to increase and build internal SAP software competency and knowledge. "Not only are we able to train more people, we're finding that our people are able to retain the knowledge better since they're being trained in the environment in which they'll use the software," Williamson-Wright says.

30%

Reduction in training cost with virtual training

Perhaps one of the most pervasive benefits is that Cooper's culture embraces virtual training. "By promoting virtual live training during the implementation of SAP ERP, we've cleared a path for enabling emerging technologies to influence and transform the way we approach all training," Williamson-Wright adds. "We plan to implement virtual training in other parts of the business soon."

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