Case Study:
Symbol Technologies

Symbol Technologies is a global leader in secure mobile information systems that integrate application-specific handheld computers with wireless networks for data, voice and barcode data capture. Symbol works with a large, worldwide network of valued business partners, software developers, resellers and distributors to implement solutions for Symbol's customers. In January 2003, Symbol launched its PartnerSelect Program specifically to help its channel partners increase both revenue and profitability by better selling and implementing Symbol mobility products and services. As an integral part of Symbol's channel-centric sales model, it accommodates various types of partner companies, authorized resellers, solution providers, integrators, etc., to serve the different needs of Symbol's customers.

The Challenge

To become more competitive, Symbol recently started moving away from its barcode product line, which had become a commodity business, and into mobility products. These products were much more complex, requiring new selling and implementation skill sets for the company's channel partners. Without an infrastructure, Symbol could not provide certifications, other than in a hands-on, proctored environment. Symbol needed a way to bring its partners up-to-speed on the new product line, as well as to keep them current on information about thousands of its other products. To accomplish this, Symbol required a solution that would deliver timely information to this diverse international audience, yielding a consistent level of knowledge among all partners, based on demonstrated competencies. Symbol believed that educating partners in this way would ensure higher customer satisfaction across products and platforms in any country, for any size implementation, while driving greater revenue and decreasing implementation cycle time.

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Shafiq Hajee
Director, Education Services,
Symbol Technologies

The Solution

Symbol deployed the SumTotal Enterprise SuiteTM, to create Symbol University, designed to support the

performance@work™

PartnerSelect Program worldwide. The PartnerSelect Program establishes a tiered approach, where top partners, integrators, exhibit the highest competency in selling Symbol's products and generate the highest revenue, earning more incentives and discounts from Symbol as a result. Symbol also requires higher levels of certification from its top partners in using and selling its products. Using SumTotal's comprehensive certification functionalities, Symbol developed a variety of program tracks to certify partners in each tier and to help them work toward the level best for them. Many certifications could now be offered for no charge to encourage more participation from smaller, non-US companies.

Based on the type and level of partnership for which a reseller or distributor applies, Symbol assigns it specific certification requirements. SumTotal's certifications features allow Symbol to offer blended learning programs to create and provide information, courses, exams and other internal and external activities necessary to achieve each level of certification. Partners have six months to complete their certifications and to pass required exams. For sales certifications, Symbol provides information about competition, industry, applications markets, vertical selling, customer success stories and more. For technical, or systems engineer certifications, partners receive training and information about installation, troubleshooting and more. Exams are mandatory and partners must re-certify every 24 months. Because exams will include questions about the newest products, Symbol University offers optional refresher courses.

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Some certifications may require an industry technical certification that can differ depending on the country. SumTotal can accept codes specific to that certification and recognize that external activity as part of the satisfied requirements. SumTotal also worked with Symbol to integrate the SumTotal suite with the company's sales force automation solution. This enables Symbol to streamline the assignment of sales leads and referrals to each partner after Symbol University s that confirms company competency and certification levels. Those partners demonstrating the highest level of competency and achieving the highest level of certification become "preferred partners," and are put at the top of their regional lists to receive qualified leads.

The Results

Symbol currently has 8000 partners with product certifications, 4000 of which have platform certifications. (Shafiq, is it important to get partners to higher levels of certifications? If so, how many partners have reached the top partnership and certification levels?). To date, Symbol has awarded XX certifications, at a rate of YY per month.

Symbol also has seen a direct correlation between the number of partner certifications and increases in the channel's revenue stream. In the last five years, partner revenue has climbed from 59% to 75% of total company revenues. Partners with sales certifications have increased their understanding of the attributes and benefits of the products and platforms and are able to successfully sell against competitive products. Symbol also plans to add TotalDashboardTM, SumTotal's analytics application, to provide more specific reporting to chart this correlation.

In addition to driving revenue, partners using Symbol University have shown much faster time-to-competency. For example, Symbol recently introduced a new wireless switch. Within three months, almost 300 companies were certified on the

use and benefits of the product. Based on this and other examples, many product managers at Symbol now rely exclusively on Symbol University to disseminate critical product information to partners.

By providing technical certifications, Symbol also has seen a decrease in support costs and a direct correlation between the increase in certifications and a reduction of support calls regarding basic problems. The company estimates a 5 – 10% decrease in partner support calls in its Tier 1 support program. Instead of calling, partners are using FAQs or other basic information available through Symbol University. Because of decreased call volume, the support team has more time to be more strategic and proactive. It can now pick up 90% of its calls in the first 10 seconds and XX in the first 30 sec and has realized an xx% increase in its ability to provide fixes in the first three minutes. Over time, Symbol University has become one of the best single sources of information anywhere in the company and registration for certification courses has increased exponentially.

"It was quite an eye opener because people were so caught up being certified we were not sure that they were really going through the courses, but just going through the motions instead. However Symbol University's competency model and exams proved otherwise." said Shafiq Hajee, Title, "More partners are taking the courses despite the increased depth of content and time required. There's no other way to really measure that they are reading and absorbing the material, except by using a solution like SumTotal," added Hajee. "Even our CEO is requiring that our policies and procedures be delivered to our employees and our partners through the SumTotal solution. It's the only place for accountability. That's what makes it so powerful."

For more information

To learn more about Stranix please visit: **www.stranix.com**, or contact Stranix Sales at Telephone: 214 432 8261

E-mail: sales@stranix.com

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