



Learning

The personal side of outsourcing

An outsourcing initiative has an impact on the professional and personal lives of learning professionals. Yet, as these executives discovered, effective transition services, fresh challenges and new colleagues can add up to a more rewarding career.

When companies transfer all or part of their learning functions to an outsourcing provider, change ripples through both organizations, especially the people whose jobs are redefined. Guido Minaya—who until June 2001 was the director of learning services for Avaya's Caribbean and Latin America region, with a staff of about two dozen—recalls his initial reaction to hearing that his company had decided to outsource its learning and development functions to Accenture Learning. Quite simply: "What will my new role be? And what will happen to the people on my team?"

Brian Butler, a former regional manager at Sun Microsystems who now heads up engagements with that company at Accenture, recalls a similar reaction, one also focused on the effects of moving from the known to the unknown. "A change like this involves much more than just the 'working' side of a person," said Butler. "The work itself, in fact, may be the thing that changes the least. What you think about is the change in colleagues, in culture and in all the day-to-day presumptions by which you may have interacted with people for years."

Both men have discovered, however, that there can be even greater job fulfillment, responsibility and opportunity waiting for people who find themselves changing uniforms and playing for a different team. For companies considering outsourcing their learning function, the keys to creating that ultimate satisfaction are twofold:

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providing transition services and support that can address head-on the challenges of "leaping into the unknown," and ensuring that the work at the end of the transition is something that gives the employees a renewed vigor and engagement with new roles and responsibilities.

Greener grass?



Guido Minaya

Minaya's role prior to outsourcing was focused on developing training delivery strategies that were aligned with Avaya's Caribbean and Latin America region leadership. Although the innovative solutions from Minaya's team made the role exciting, it was also very challenging. "It was difficult to get product course materials on time prior to the launch of a new product," Minaya said. "In fact, the international regions were usually the last to receive content that was applicable to new product launches. This made the training readiness objective difficult to meet. We never had done an adequate job of developing learning prior to the introduction of a new product launch," he said.



Brian Butler

Minaya and his global team also faced a history of unclear investment levels and team size. "It was difficult to manage training without clarity regarding investments in our internal training infrastructure." In fact, Minaya ultimately interpreted his company's outsourcing decision as a commitment to learning, not a de-emphasis. "When I first heard of the outsourcing decision, I felt some comfort knowing that Avaya was making a strategic decision to improve the effectiveness of learning, rather than just cut the budget or downsize the staff."

Making the transition

Change management and transition activities are vital to the success of an outsourcing arrangement. They help ensure that services continue without interruption, and also address the apprehension and fear of the unknown for affected employees. For example, Accenture Learning has a complete methodology called "Transition Services" that not only moves learning services effectively from the client to Accenture Learning, but also addresses the transition issues from a personal point of view. This process brings people up to date on what their new roles will involve and demonstrates a commitment to them and attention to their concerns.



Norbert Krebs

Communications play a big role in ensuring that transition services produces a new learning department that is fully operational more quickly. "A couple of things were especially effective for us," said Peggy Dougherty, a delivery manager who transitioned to Accenture Learning from AT&T Wireless (now Cingular). "We received an e-newsletter from the transition team every Monday morning, which would talk about the progress of the outsourcing effort and some resources that would be available to us. It was also the vehicle for asking and answering questions on people's minds. I thought the transition team performed extremely well in communicating what was going on, why it was going on and what the progress was. That team worked on the plans and processes that needed to be in place to transition our wireless training operation in its entirety to Accenture Learning."

Norbert Krebs, a former Avaya operations manager who moved to a director position at Accenture Learning in January 2002, noted that keeping all parties informed also means providing clear and consistent messages. "What was helpful in the transition was the strong commitment expressed by leadership—especially clear communica-

tions about how we could work together to achieve the ultimate goal of uninterrupted services to customers through the transition period," he said.



Peggy Dougherty

At Avaya, Accenture Learning held weekly conference calls with the affected team members. "My first few weeks with Accenture were quite impressive," said Minaya. "It was a challenging scenario to leave my former company, but the weekly calls and access to information I needed made it easier to understand my options."

As questions occurred to Minaya, both personal ("What are the new career progression options available to me?") and professional ("What tools and learning architectures does my new employer use?"), he got immediate answers from John Hubbell, executive director of transition services at Accenture Learning.

"There is a two-pronged effort in doing a transition," Hubbell said. "One is around the people, and one is around the service. People transition is all about getting people successfully moving to their new organization. Service transition is about moving the service from the existing client's processes to the new processes." In both cases, time is of the essence. The first 90 days, said Hubbell, are critical for both the employee and the client services.

Minaya's immediate supervisor made sure that he and other delivery team members understood what it is like to be part of Accenture Learning, and they led the way to the transformation needed in the global delivery operations. Minaya met with the Accenture Learning team face-to-face, and then, through regular conference calls and e-mail newsletters, he was kept up to date on the progress of the transition to Accenture Learning. Minaya played a role in helping his team transition, as well. "I was able to represent our team as we began working on



improved role definitions," he said. "It was exciting to see my team members take on expanded roles within Accenture Learning."

What's on the other side?

A transition period is truly effective only if meaningful and fulfilling work is waiting on the other side. Many employees discover that their careers are enhanced with the company they've moved to. "The opportunity side of the equation is perhaps the most welcome, and sometimes unexpected, benefit of moving from one company to another during an outsourcing arrangement," said Nelson Frye, executive director of account management at Accenture Learning. Frye, who has managed several learning outsourcing transitions, added, "Transitioned employees can often look forward to building new skills and participating in new client opportunities. For example, those involved with delivery often expand their knowledge base into curriculum design and development. Others may get the opportunity to teach or work abroad."

"I have gotten more opportunities presented to me at Accenture Learning," agreed Butler.

"Sun offered me a rewarding career as well, but due to the nature of the economy and its business, the learning department was in a downsizing mode. At Accenture Learning, we're in a big growth pattern, and there is constant opportunity that I am being offered here. I feel it's a very challenging position, but one that's welcomed. I am happy with the growth opportunities here, and I wouldn't trade that for anything, really."

Krebs emphasized two aspects of the opportunities that result from an outsourcing arrangement: personal career development and richer interactions with new colleagues. "I have been given excellent career development opportunities from the beginning," Krebs said. "But perhaps more important, I have had the opportunities to develop richer work experiences with expanded responsibilities, first in a different geography and then on a global level. A second kind of opportunity, however, comes through the interaction with new people on a global basis. I found I was now with a larger community of learning professionals that shared my passion for the corporate learning field."

Dougherty echoed this sense of the expanded opportunities made available by transferring over to the outsourcing provider. "You find yourself now as part of a large team focused on multiple clients," she said. "You have more resources available to you. There are more people with different backgrounds and different client experiences. I have found that my peers or colleagues are both willing and able to share their experiences and share resources or different solutions."

Transitioned employees in a learning outsourcing arrangement generally continue to feel a deep sense of commitment and loyalty to their former employer (because that is the client they are now serving), and that feeling is to everyone's advantage. In the case of Avaya, following the outsourcing arrangement, Accenture Learning and the former Avaya employees immediately set out to improve the quality of the learning programs that accompanied the release of new products, as well as the ability to measure the effectiveness of learning. "In the first few months, we all worked very hard to understand what the existing work processes were, how these

might be changed, and how Avaya University could improve its overall efficiency and effectiveness," Minaya said. "I think around month five of the outsourcing, I was getting a much better view of the types of learning programs needed in other regions. That was an improvement, as well. Before, I had absolute visibility into the Caribbean and Latin America region but not as much into the other regions."

This greater organizational connectivity gave Minaya a new perspective across learning geographies, which he could share with his colleagues. "I started seeing a gap in the Asia-Pacific and Japan regions—they were not well-connected to the U.S. operations," he said. "So I recommended to Accenture Learning leadership that I could potentially support the region and leverage some of my team's successes from the Caribbean and Latin America region. A week later, I was on a plane to Singapore."

Minaya said that it was a rewarding experience to work with his new team in Asia and Japan. "I was able to leverage my knowledge and expertise from my previous role and assist Avaya in Asia to improve its learning operations. My wife and two children loved the time we spent in Singapore," he said.

Learning BPO success stories like those of Minaya, Dougherty, Krebs and Butler are not uncommon, especially when a professional or a team is sent to an organization with a knowledge base and resources that support that particular field. The new arrangement is a "win-win-win." Employees are happy to have job continuity and to be able to work in a field that interests them. The organization that receives them is pleased to add enthusiastic and qualified personnel to its workforce. And customers often benefit because they now have a dedicated team with a true customer service perspective.

"I feel that I'm on a roll now—fully utilizing the capabilities I have, and being respected for what I can bring to the table," Butler said. "It's a challenging new position, but one that has brought with it many rewards."

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About Accenture Learning

Accenture Learning collaborates with its clients to help them significantly improve business and operational performance by unleashing the value of their workforces, channel partners and customers. Delivering training to more than 1 million learners globally each year, Accenture Learning is one of the largest learning services providers in the world. Providing a full range of global learning services—from content development to comprehensive outsourcing of the learning function—Accenture Learning designs each solution to meet the specific needs of a client organization.

Using an innovative approach, Accenture Learning works with organizations to establish a clear and ongoing link between learning investments and business results. With deep industry knowledge, patented learning processes and technologies, and proven delivery capabilities Accenture Learning is uniquely positioned to help organizations convert their learning investments into high performance.

To learn more about the unique capabilities of Accenture Learning, visit www.accenture.com/learning.

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