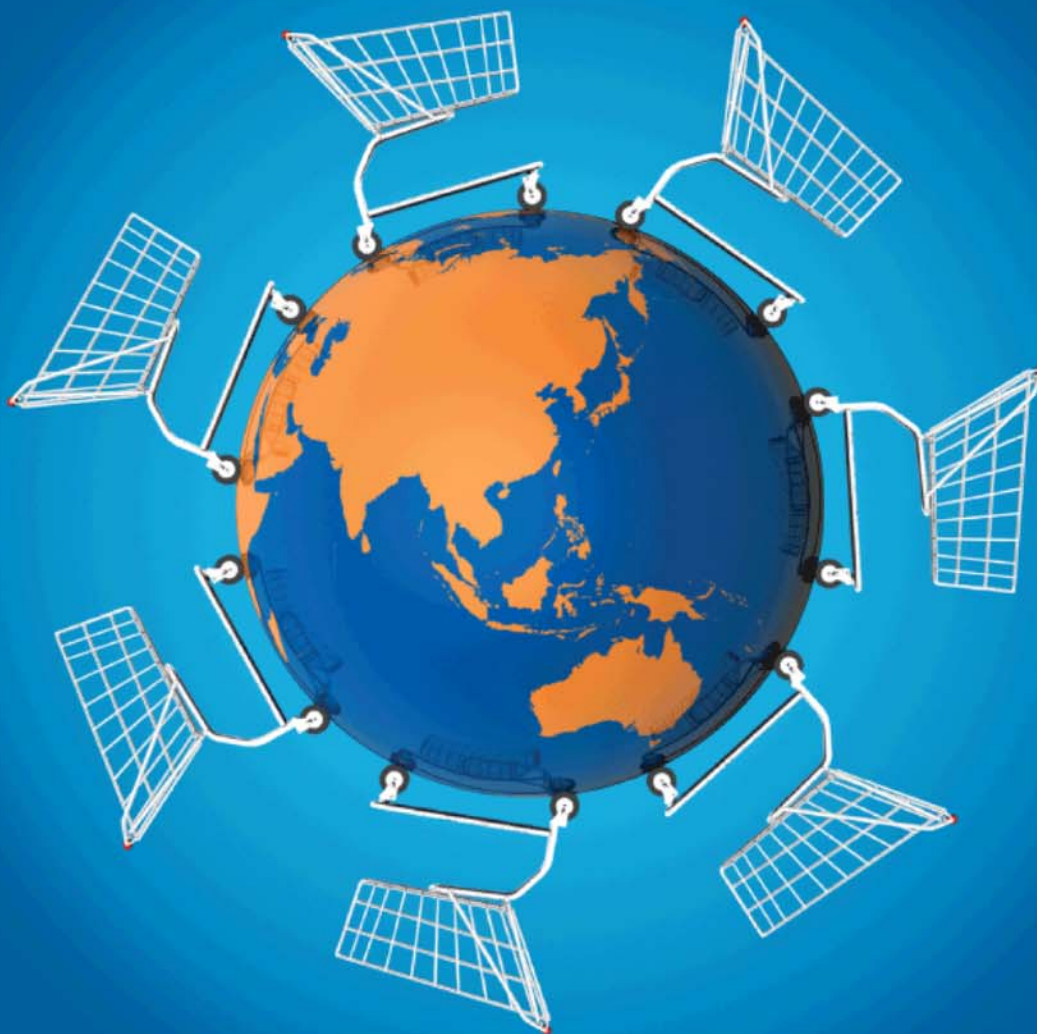


When it comes to global product training, companies must walk the line between consistency and customization. BY HOLLY DOLEZALEK

# GLOBAL YET LOCAL





nce a company goes global, its product training has to do the same. But when training crosses culture and language lines, it doesn't always translate. How do you keep your product training consistent when it's delivered halfway around the world? Here are the stories of three companies that have faced that challenge.

## WYETH PHARMACEUTICALS

Wyeth is a pharmaceutical company with headquarters in Madison, NJ, and affiliate offices all over the world, primarily in Europe, Africa, Latin America, Asia-Pacific, and the Middle East. Its drugs range from Advil to flu vaccines to medications for cancer and animal diseases such as feline leukemia. There are approximately 9,000 sales reps in the company's U.S. sales force, and roughly one-third of those are in the U.S.

About twice a year, sales representatives for Wyeth have to be trained on new drugs that are going to be launched and new uses for existing drugs, called indications. They also have to learn about the conditions those drugs treat so they can talk to doctors and other potential buyers about how the drug is supposed to be used, what it will do, what side effects it may have, and other information about the drug. Finally, they frequently have to be trained or refreshed in Wyeth's particular philosophy about how to sell drugs to buyers in a responsible and informed way.

Richard Creasy, director of marketing development, global training, and instructional design for the commercial learning and development group at Wyeth, explains that product training about new and existing drugs is developed by his group, in consultation with representatives from the regions where it will be delivered. Those representatives have a voice in how the training is designed and delivered, and speak for the specific needs of the region. They also help to keep the content culture-neutral, so colloquial expressions that don't translate well aren't used. "Those regional representatives give us guidance about issues like that, as well as infrastructure issues such as how the content can best be delivered in that region," Creasy says. Some regions, such as the United Kingdom and Europe, access the Web-based training Creasy's group develops through Wyeth's Learning Management System (LMS). All the regions are anticipated to start using the LMS in 2009, but until then, those regions that aren't using it have to rely on CD or paper-based delivery of training content.

Training for new launches or new indications usually consists of three phases: a pre-launch phase, when representatives learn about the history of the disease the drug has been or will be used for; a launch phase that teaches specific information about the drug and how it works; and a post-launch phase that

attempts to fill gaps in representatives' knowledge with weekly activities that reinforce the product knowledge that already has been delivered. The training is designed to avoid any culture-specific references or colloquial expressions that might make it less globally applicable.

Once the training has been developed, Creasy says, it goes through a rigorous review process to make sure all legal and medical information is accurate. Once the training is approved, it is turned over to Wyeth affiliates, or offices in other countries. "Those affiliates then make any needed revisions to comply with their local regulatory bodies, and they also handle getting the content translated to the local language," Creasy says.

To make sure nothing gets lost in translation, Creasy explains, local affiliates work with translation companies of their choice, some of whom use a library of "Wyethized" words, which are common terms of the pharmaceutical industry or terms that have a special meaning at Wyeth. For example, "mode of action" commonly is used to mean the way a drug works in the body, while "customer-focused selling" is Wyeth's particular selling philosophy. "That library helps to improve consistency and localization," Creasy says.

## STEELCASE

Steelcase is a manufacturer of business furniture products, such as cubicle walls, chairs, high-end wood office furniture, and architectural products. Its headquarters are in Grand Rapids, MI, but its products are distributed by approximately 600 independent dealer locations all over the world, particularly in Europe, Asia, and Latin America.

The marketing group for each line of products is responsible for deciding which products require delivery of specific product training. In North America, the company has 20 to 25 Web-based modules about different product lines, which are available on the

## QUICK TIPS

- Develop product training in consultation with representatives from the regions where it will be delivered.
- Design training to avoid any culture-specific references or colloquial expressions that might make it less globally applicable.
- Create a corporate "library" of commonly used industry words to help consistency.



Steelcase University portal. “Trying to do on-site, facilitator-led training is a challenge because we are so geographically dispersed, and we don’t have the dedicated resources to do it,” says Ken Dutkiewicz, director of global learning for Steelcase. “So we take advantage of the Web-based delivery method.”

When product training is created, it’s designed with both Steelcase sales and marketing employees and Steelcase distributors in mind. That’s because those modules are available to the company’s North American distributors, as well, and certain sales representatives are tasked to go out and deliver the training they learned in those modules to the distributors. There are approximately 400 U.S. sales employees, and another 3,000 individuals in Steelcase’s distributor network.

But Steelcase doesn’t sell the exact same products in North America as it does in its other regions. The products Steelcase makes have to be modified in the different regions to comply with local regulations or codes. So the product training in North America can’t necessarily be used to train sales reps or distributors in other regions.

For that reason, Steelcase employees in the regions around the world use the template developed for Steelcase University to create their own local, customized training that fits the products that are being sold in their region. North American training is used as a model, but Steelcase’s worldwide employees have the freedom to put what they want and need into the developed template.

Translation also is handled locally, and Dutkiewicz says that decentralized approach makes the most sense. “It’s best to have it done by a local because they get the nuances of the language,” he says. “When they’ve taken content we’ve had translated for them, they often tell us, ‘Wow, this is really stiff and formal, and it’s not the way I would say it.’”

Dutkiewicz says more oversight may be necessary as the company goes more global, but he also points out that being a global company means being able to bob and weave with the needs of different countries. “It’s much harder to have oversight in Europe than it is in Asia-Pacific, for example, because in Asia many of the companies we’re working with are start-ups and

welcome the guidance we have to offer,” he says. “But in Europe, each country does its own thing and wants to be treated as an individual country, so they’re less receptive to that oversight. You have to be sensitive to differences country by country in this model.”

## INTEL CORPORATION

Intel manufactures microprocessor products and integrated circuits for computers. Its headquarters are in Santa Clara, CA, but it sells its motherboards, chip sets, processors, and other computer

components all over the world. Its five regions, or “geographies,” include the Americas, EMEA (Europe, the Middle East, and Africa), Asia-Pacific, China, and Japan. Approximately 30 to 35 percent of the company’s sales force operates in the Americas region, with the remainder operating in the rest of its geographies.

Sales employees receive product training in the different products Intel sells, but they also learn about the applications for those products so they can speak knowledgeably about how Intel’s products can support those applications. For example, they might be taught how Intel’s chips work, but they also might learn about their use in WiMAX, or mobile Internet access in devices such as PCs, handsets, smartphones, gaming devices, cameras, camcorders, and music players.

Subject matter experts (SMEs) design most of Intel’s product training, which is delivered in the sales and marketing group about three times a year. There are also weekly conference calls that deliver product training or updates to the Americas, EMEA, and a consolidation of the Asia-Pacific, Japan, and China geographies. There are frequent ad hoc requests for training from different product groups, as well.

Intel has been able to skirt the translation issue with its product training for a simple reason: Employees hired by Intel are required to speak English, regardless of their region. That doesn’t mean that no customization ever takes place, though. “We rely heavily on local training partners to take additional steps to tailor the content to the region, which might include local language versions of the training,” says Jim Huss, sales and marketing curriculum development manager for Intel. “But that happens relatively rarely.”

Instead, SMEs frequently go to the different geographies and act as trainers for local SMEs. Local SMEs then take responsibility for training their direct sales force. “There isn’t much local oversight after the training is delivered,” Huss says. “Basically, the oversight happens beforehand in the design phase. If bad information does get out there—and it does happen, once in a blue moon—our field representatives are good about recognizing it, pointing it out, and getting it corrected.”

Huss says that, far more than the cultural challenge, Intel’s real training challenge is making sure the right training gets to the right person at the right time, regardless of region or language. “Different parts of the sales force sell to different parts of the value chain, and they don’t all need the same level of detail or to hear about a given product at the same time,” Huss says. “Getting the right training to what the specific role requires is harder for us than keeping it consistent across borders.” **1**

## QUICK TIPS

- In addition to product training, provide training on product applications and/or customer markets.
- Utilize subject matter experts (SMEs) to design product training and to train local SMEs.
- Make sure the right training gets to the right person at the right time.

## QUICK TIPS

- Create a training template that can be customized for each region.
- Handle translation locally.
- It’s harder to have oversight in Europe than Asia-Pacific, for example, because many companies in Asia-Pacific are start-ups and welcome guidance, while Europe wants to be treated as individual countries.