customer stories

At A Glance

- Avaya, a global provider of business collaboration and communications software and services, created a video library of resources for customers and employees.

- Using Camtasia Studio and Blue Yeti microphones, they produced 995 videos in 20 months.

- Avaya's video articles receive significantly more page views than their text-based articles.

Featured Product

Camtasia Studio®

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Taking the Lead

How Avaya built their own version of Khan Academy

Big numbers: 995 videos, 2,750 subscribers, 356,476 video views — all in just 20 months.

Those are the key stats around the Avaya Mentor program, the fast-growing set of how-to YouTube videos for Avaya products that Carl Knerr and his team have produced.

Knerr was inspired by the Khan Academy, the non-profit website with a free collection of more than 4,000 educational YouTube videos, surrounded by curriculum, quizzes, and incentives like points and badges. The topics range from simple addition, which has 1.7 million views, to the French Revolution with 400,000 views.

Knerr and his team found themselves asking, "Wouldn't Avaya employees and customers benefit from the company's own Khan Academy?"

The President of Services challenged Knerr and his team to make Avaya not just successful in the market, but successful as an organization that analysts would write about. Put another way, it was no longer good enough to be lean and efficient; Avaya needed to take the lead.

Going All In

Knerr decided to put together a version of Khan Academy geared toward Avaya products and services. He limited the scope to basic how-to videos designed to help those that install, maintain, and support Avaya products, be they customers, partners, or Avaya employees.

Knerr proposed that unlike Avaya's existing knowledge base, which is only available to Avaya customers with a maintenance agreement, the vast majority of videos would be available for free on YouTube. By doing so, search engines like Google would be aware of the content, making it much easier for an engineer to find the answer to an Avaya-related question.

The Tools

Knerr's team evaluated a number of video production software suites and settled on Camtasia Studio, the screen-recording tool from TechSmith. With Camtasia, the team could use templates, splice in video and audio, as well as special editing features to highlight or zoom to certain parts of the screen. The team also purchased high-quality USB microphones called the Blue Yeti.

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Knerr felt it was important to maintain a common look and feel to the videos, so the team built a template for Camtasia with legal and branding-approved intros and outros, while standardizing other aspects like transitions and video length.

Due to the team's high quality standards, the Avaya branding team gave Knerr a carte blanche to publish to YouTube without further oversight.

Quality Control

To reduce the number of errors made by video authors, Knerr frequently shared a list of common problems he encountered during review. Common errors included background noise or odd transitions within videos. While this was often a pain, end users noticed and complimented Knerr's team on the quality of their videos. After six months, Knerr transferred the approval process to one of the team's top video authors, Bhavya Reddy.

After a year of approving videos within the team, Knerr and Reddy transitioned the approval process to the company's formal knowledge management team where it could be better integrated into the other knowledge management processes. This also ensured that any videos the team published to YouTube would also be available in the standard knowledge database at support.avaya.com.

Getting the Word Out

"Building a knowledge base, or any tools, is pointless if you can't get user adoption," said Knerr. "I felt it important to delay the initial announcement until we had the first 100 videos published. I was concerned if someone came to the site and only saw 5 videos, they might never return."

Once the team reached 100 videos, Knerr had the President of Services announce the program internally, followed by similar announcements in external communications to Avaya partners and customers. To reinforce this in a more detailed way, Knerr wrote a blog post for the Avaya corporate site and created a Twitter account for Avaya Mentor, allowing people to receive tweets when new videos are uploaded.

At the next International Avaya Users Group Conference (held in Boston), Knerr and his team passed out materials to all the customers and partners they met. The IAUG even helped with advertising on all the plasma screens throughout the conference center. Knerr has also partnered with the Avaya product documentation teams to include references to the Avaya Mentor program directly in the product documentation.

The Results

After 20 months, Knerr and his team published nearly 1,000 videos on YouTube which were watched more than 350,000 times.

While the U.S. provides the largest set of viewers, Knerr happily notes that the Avaya Mentor program reaches 196 distinct geographies. Additionally, customers, employees and partners have watched more than 1,200 hours of Avaya Mentor videos per month, which equates to about 11 full-time support employees.

About Avaya

Avaya is a global provider of business collaboration and communications software and services, providing unified communications, contact centers, networking and related services to companies of all sizes around the world. For more information please visit www.avaya.com.

"Perhaps the most interesting metric is that we are seeing significantly more views per article than Avaya's text-based articles," said Knerr. "This is not an apples-to-apples comparison given that we used some of the company's most knowledgeable resources and posted our content publicly. However, I still think it is clear that video-enabled content is much more compelling than text alone."

About Carl Knerr

Carl Knerr is a Services Director responsible for offer management. Carl has 12 years of experience with Avaya in R&D, Professional Services, and Support, mostly focused in the Contact Center Portfolio. He has a BA in Computer Science from Duke University and is pursuing an MBA from WPI. Contact or follow Carl on Twitter @CarlKnerr.