



## Case Study

# Air Force High Performance Training at the Air Force IT e-Learning Program

### Profile

The United States Air Force employs more than 700,000 active, guard, reserve and civilians worldwide.

### Challenge

The Air Force needed to provide the ongoing training of Air Force personnel responsible for establishing and maintaining Air Force networks and network security and to support mandatory training and licensing of all Air Force network users.

### Solution

The Air Force delivers 2,000 business and IT courses, more than 300,000 Books24x7 licenses and 22 custom courses to a global audience. The solution is mapped to Air Force Job Qualification Standards for targeted crew positions and delivered on a combination of platforms.

### Results

The Air Force has achieved exceptional usage and return on investment, with nearly 700,000 licenses as of March 2005 and a recognized cost avoidance of more than \$37 million.

Training is a mission-critical activity for the United States Air Force. Air Force network professionals charged with establishing and maintaining networks and network security have faced an increasingly important and complex mission over the last few years as they set up technical environments in remote, sometimes hostile locations.

The Air Force IT E-Learning program ensures network professionals are equipped to work effectively and productively. Additionally, it provides ongoing training covering Air Force network and related desktop applications and offers personnel a combination of structured training, opportunities for certification and professional skills development, and instant access to specific answers when needed.

The Air Force program manager and the IT E-Learning team are responsible for delivering training to the Air Force's active, guard, reserve and civilian members, including mandated training for 86,000 Air Force Communications and Information (C&I) personnel. To accomplish this monumental task, the Air Force contracted with SkillSoft (formerly SmartForce) in 1997 and has evolved its program into today's highly successful Air Force IT E-Learning program.

To address mandatory personnel training and licensing, the Air Force and SkillSoft

mapped hundreds of hours of courses into NOSC/NCC crew position training paths that correspond to each of the Air Force's 13 critical network skill sets, delivering 2,000 IT and business courses, along with 22 custom courses. In June 2003, the team delivered the organization-wide rollout of Windows® and Office® XP online books from Books24x7® and later added 300,000 OfficeEssentials™ licenses and 14,000 ITPro™ licenses.

### Air Force and SkillSoft

The Air Force has faced a number of challenges in deploying a training solution of this magnitude and complexity.

**Challenge:** The Air Force's global work force has complex deployment, access and security concerns.

**Solution:** Learning is delivered on a combination of platforms, making training available to Internet users, intranet users and disconnected users at more than 350 locations worldwide.

**Challenge:** Expedite the process of having users' profile data update automatically when they move, when their rank (or grade) changes or when other changes occur such that their profile data must be updated.

**Solution:** Link the IT E-Learning, SkillPort® system to the Air Force Directory Services database through the Air Force portal. User profile data changes automatically



# Secure, Worldwide Access

transfer to the IT E-Learning system so that each user does not have to manually access different systems across the AF enterprise.

**Challenge:** Communicate across multiple networks to AF members about the benefits of e-learning.

**Solution:** Connect through aggressive pursuits by establishing relationships with MAJCOMs, CINCs, key DOD agencies, field operating units, and outlying air national guard and reserve units.

**Challenge:** Security clearance issues prohibit SkillSoft application engineers from working on-site in certain Air Force locations.

**Solution:** SkillSoft application engineers trained Air Force personnel to install SkillPort without on-site assistance.

**Challenge:** The Air Force has an unparalleled usage magnitude and complexity of implementation needs.

**Solution:** SkillSoft supports a liaison within the program management office to cultivate requisite business processes between the government and prime vendor. The associate is responsible for quality assurance and incorporates Kaizen technology constructs to continuously improve processes and products.

**Challenge:** The Air Force desired custom course completion certificates for its user personnel.

**Solution:** The Air Force worked with SkillSoft to implement certificate customizations that were later adopted as standard product features within SkillSoft's platform.

**Challenge:** The Air Force has critical and advanced reporting needs that are complicated by performance challenges from the vast amount of Air Force student and usage data.

**Solution:** With SkillSoft Custom Solutions, the Air Force has launched a customized, external data warehouse solution

supporting its significant audience size and unique reporting requirements.

## Exceptional results

By overcoming deployment complexities, the Air Force has developed a model e-learning program and has accomplished remarkable results and return on investment. Today, the Air Force delivers training to personnel in more than 350 locations worldwide, including personnel on secure and classified networks and with no network access. As of the migration in March 2005, the Air Force has had more than 96,000 registered users per month.

Research by the Air Force Communications Agency has demonstrated outstanding results from the Air Force E-Learning program. To date, Air Force personnel passed more than 1,314,800 information awareness courses and 450,000 business and IT courses. Examining the cost of equivalent instructor-led training, at a conservative \$30 per hour per student, the Air Force estimates it has saved \$39 million in delivering training using e-learning.

The Air Force vision explains that an important part of the Air Force's character is derived from the principle that "real transformation is not the result of a one-time improvement, but a sustained and determined effort." This belief is exemplified by the dedicated effort of the Air Force and SkillSoft to overcome challenges that have transformed the Air Force IT E-Learning program and have consequently transformed the industry standard of excellence for successful e-learning programs.

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