

SyberWorks LMS e-Learning Implementation Podcast Transcript #37

Interview with Norm Howe, Senior Partner of Validation & Compliance Institute (Transcript)

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Mary Kay Lofurno: Welcome to the next edition of the SyberWorks LMS e-Learning Implementation podcast series, where we look at real-world learning Management System implementations and e-learning program roll-outs. SyberWorks specializes in custom e-Learning solutions, learning management systems, and e-learning development for corporations, governments, and non-profit institutions. My name is Mary Kay Lofurno. I'm the Marketing Director at SyberWorks and your host today. Today we're talking with Norm Howe of Validation & Compliance Institute, Inc. about their use of the SyberWorks Hosted Learning Management System to sell online compliance training.

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Mary Kay: Good afternoon, Norm. Thanks for coming to talk with us today.

Norm Howe: Hi. How are you doing, Mary Kay?

Mary Kay: I'm doing very well. Thank you. All right, Norm. Tell us about yourself and what you do for Validation & Compliance Institute.

Norm: Well, I'm the senior partner at Validation & Compliance Institute, and basically I am the marketing figurehead for the company. That's a little bit of an odd role for me, as somebody who has started out life as a research chemist. I moved into manufacturing and basically have been involved on the technical side of things for most of my career. So going out and trying to convince people to buy our product, well, it's been a work in progress.

Mary Kay: That sounds good. All right Norm, can you describe the business factors that drove your company to investigate and ultimately purchase a hosted learning management system as an e-learning solution for your organization?

Norm: We got into training as a sideline from our normal business. We help companies to comply with FDA regulations, and what we found when we would be called in to help a company out... We do things like validation, which means ensuring that their processes reliably produce the product that they're supposed to make. We also help them with their quality systems, SOPs, and things like that as well. What we found was that in the course of doing our work that we kept explaining to the employees at the customer site what we were doing over and over again, the same explanation over and over again.

So we said to the management at the customers, "Geez, why don't we just give one seminar, and we'll go through the whole thing and allow everybody to ask questions and everybody come out with the same answers? Then we can do it once and be done."

The seminars turned out to be very successful for us and turned into a whole business line in and of themselves. Now what we're doing is bringing that into the 21st century with online learning. We're trying to take that face-to-face seminar experience and as much as possible convert it into an online learning experience for people. I'd have to say our relationship with SyberWorks has worked out very well.

Mary Kay: That sounds great. Why did your company pick the SyberWorks LMS to create your training portal?

Norm: Initially it was cost. We looked at several other options. One thing we knew, we didn't want to do it ourselves. It's not something that we had as a core expertise, so we knew right from the get-go that this was something that we were going to outsource.

Then what we found is SyberWorks just offers so much power in the platform. We found everything that we want to do, there's a way to do it with SyberWorks. Our contact with technical support has been great in that they've always been able to find a way to accomplish what we need.

Mary Kay: That's great. How are you using the SyberWorks Hosted Learning Management System to offer compliance training? What features and functionality are you using at this time?

Norm: I think as of right now we're fairly early in the learning curve. I don't think that we're using nearly, I don't know, a third of the power that SyberWorks offers. But we have normal e-commerce, where people can get in individually and buy our training courses using any one of three different credit cards. We're also offering it to companies in a bulk-load type of system.

We also have some situations where we have people that are distributing our courses. They have a link set up on their website, and they're able to offer our training to their members, for instance. One of the being MichBio, which is the Michigan Biotech Company Association. We're a member of it, and we offered them, "Hey, do you want to offer or training to your members?"

They thought that was a real good relationship for them, and something additional that they can offer to their membership. And we get exposure for our training. So that's worked our pretty good.

The nice thing about it is that MichBio can look at the SyberWorks site as a level one administrator. And they can tell how many courses they've sold, and how much money has moved through the system. And they're kind of doing that independently of us. Not that they don't trust us, but it's just nice to know exactly how much revenue has been generated, independently.

Mary Kay: OK, well that sounds great. So who works with SyberWorks Hosted LMS at your company?

Norm: Mostly it's the people that are generating the training. We have a group of people that are working to generate the training on Articulate. We just load it into the system. I've become mostly the one that does the interface with SyberWorks. Most of the other folks are concentrating on actually generating the content.

Mary Kay: OK, well that's great. You mentioned that the course authoring tool you're using is Articulate. That's good, the audience always likes to know that. You say you have a team of people working with you to develop the content. So, maybe you could tell the audience a little bit more about the training content itself, and the reference material that you put up in the system. Just to give them a flavor of the type of courses that you are providing.

Norm: All the courses that we provide are related to compliance with the FDA, or other regulatory agencies' requirements. So for instance, good manufacturing practices, as required by FDA for the medical device, pharmaceutical, or the food industry. We have that kind of training up there.

There's also training on what's called corrective and preventive action. Which is another requirement that the FDA has of companies that make any of those kind of regulated products.

Another one is medical device submissions. In other words, if a company wants to develop a new medical device, we have a training course that walks them through the decisions that they need to make in order to determine what the regulatory pathway should be for marketing a medical device.

Mary Kay: OK. For the e-learning developers and the instructional designer people out there, can you tell us a little bit about... Just give us some information about the planning processes you go through to develop a course.

Norm: Well, the first thing we do is we put together a storyboard. A lot of times, for us, it's pretty simple because the storyboard has been developed initially for our on-site face-to-face seminars. So we have a PowerPoint presentation, and a bunch of material that we've developed for the seminars that pretty readily comes together to make an interactive training course.

Really, the interesting part, I would guess you'd say, for us is: How do you take that face-to-face learning experience, and put it into something so that you can really reach out and grab somebody emotionally, if that's possible, in an online experience?

People learn only when they're paying attention. If they're just clicking through a training course, they're not learning anything. Somebody once said the best learning occurs if you can make them laugh, or you can make them cry. Because that's when you know that they're paying attention.

Mary Kay: All right, that makes a lot of sense. So, just in closing, can you tell us anything more about your customer experience with SyberWorks? Or anything more you'd like to share with the audience, before we finish out?

Norm: Just that we've had good feedback on it. It seems to be working for people. They like the fact that the employees can take the training on their own time, whenever they want to. And that the administrators have the ability to track that training, and know based on the tests we have as part of the training, that they've actually learned something.

Mary Kay: OK, well that sounds great. I know you're a busy guy, and I'm going to let you go. So thanks for joining us today, Norm. And have a good afternoon.

Norm: You too, Mary Kay.

Mary Kay: This is Mary Kay Lofurno, Marketing Director at SyberWorks. Thank you for joining us today to listen with our interview with Norm Howe of Validation Compliance Institute, on the SyberWorks LMS e-Learning Implementation Podcast series. Talk with you next month.

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