This whitepaper discusses the exponential growth of global training initiatives and the opportunities to enhance business worldwide. By presenting a list of challenges, key considerations, and recommended strategies, this whitepaper can help organizations successfully expand their global training initiatives cross-culturally in an efficient, standardized way that is transferable throughout locations worldwide.
Fortune Global 500 Data

We are reminded daily in business that times have changed. Nowhere is that more evident than in the financial world. Consider that nearly half of the companies included in Fortune magazine’s “Global 500 List” from 2000 could no longer answer “present” during roll call in 2009 list. Almost as surprising is the declining representation of companies from G-7 countries.* At one time only 16 percent of Fortune Global 500 companies resided outside of these seven powerhouse countries, but by 2009 that figure had ballooned to 32 percent. Here at home, the number of U.S.-based companies on the Fortune Global 500 has declined from 176 in 2005 to 139 in 2010 — a stat that comprises a mere 28 percent of the prestigious list.

This ongoing paradigm shift in business has resulted in considerable impact across a range of functional areas, and is creating new opportunities and challenges in the international training field.

This whitepaper discusses training strategies and best practices for succeeding in the evolving new world economy. It is based on a webinar presentation made October 7, 2010. The webinar is available for On-Demand viewing. Click here to watch this webinar.

*Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, and United States.
Increased international demand for higher levels of training and performance is not only apparent in the proliferation of eLearning, but clearly evidenced by the worldwide growth in membership of such professional organizations as the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Inc. (SIOP). With a goal of enhancing “performance in organizational and work settings by promoting the science, practice, and teaching of industrial-organizational psychology,” SIOP has watched its number of member-countries triple over the last twenty years and seen a 450 percent increase in the number of members from non-U.S. countries.

**In 1991** there were 86 non-U.S. members from 17 different countries out of a total SIOP membership of 2556.

**In 1997** there were 203 non-U.S. members from 34 different countries out of a total SIOP membership of 3143.

**In 2007** there were 479 non-U.S. members from 47 different countries out of a total SIOP membership of 3945.

Yet another indicator of mounting international focus in the area of psychology and training is shown by the diversification of authors in professional publications such as the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. Over the past 30 years, the number of non-US-based contributors has grown exponentially indicating a significant increase in the worldwide interest and a growing base of professionals associated in this field.

**Percentage of articles with at least one non-US-based author:**

- **1977** – 10.2 percent
- **1987** – 19.4 percent
- **1997** – 23 percent
- **2007** – 43.4 percent
Going Global

Clearly the preceding statistics indicate the global nature of business is accelerating rapidly and so is the business of global training. More companies are doing more training, in more locations, than ever before and this trend is expected to continue. To address the challenges businesses face in delivering global training, this whitepaper discusses five areas that can determine an organization’s success.

The Five Challenges of Effective Global Training

1. **Organizational & Structural Challenges**

   HR executives generally recognize the need to have high-quality, consistent global training, but as with most international initiatives, the challenge of putting it in practice is a significant one. While a focus on content and delivery must be maintained, best practices in global training go far beyond the curriculum. A successful program requires coordination of multiple corporate functions and command over individual geographies.

   From a functional perspective, it’s common to see involvement from the C-suite as well as various other departments including, but not limited to, HR, legal, IT, finance, international operations, compliance and/or risk management. Obviously complexity increases with the number of entities involved, but realistically, it’s often necessary for success.

   The priorities of the headquarter staff need to be aligned as do the myriad regions being targeted. Because local operations are probably structured quite differently than the US operation, a series of questions should be asked before beginning any international training endeavor. For example, if the initiative is being driven from corporate HR, do the facilitators have the authority or influence to prioritize the program in the targeted geography? Who controls the budget? Will the existing technology support the strategy? Are there feet on the ground to make it work?
2. World-Class Content
The next challenge is high-quality content that truly addresses the need on a global basis. Training must not only be valid, but targeted and replicable over time. In addition, consideration must be given to relevance in all settings spanning multiple geographies, cultures and languages. Even when core concepts are valid, these factors have a tremendous influence over the effectiveness of global training and often require adjustment and reinforcement to achieve the desired outcome.

The inclusion of local language and culture goes a long way to reducing resistance to training. Objections to a training program are difficult when it’s proven to work locally and offered in a way that is linguistically and culturally appropriate.

Global Hospitality Training
One TRACOM customer is a major hotel operator with locations worldwide. As part of their customer experience program, they teach interpersonal skills based on the SOCIAL STYLE Model. Consider a French employee promoted to a position at a Berlin location. The employee prefers to complete his SOCIAL STYLE survey in his native French while his colleagues prefer their own languages of German, English and Spanish. Because the employee now works in Germany, his behavior is compared against German criteria while his actual training is conducted in English. Sound complicated? Because we have adjusted our platform to suit the various countries we serve, these operations are automatically selected by the administrators and facilitated seamlessly by TRACOM. For the end user, having choice made the experience more efficient, enjoyable and effective.

3. Systems (Data and Legal) — The Cost of Worldwide Compliance
Myriad regulations regarding data and privacy apply to such things as employee opinion surveys, learning management systems, and staff databases as well as individual training initiatives.

For example, in the US there is the CAN-SPAM law. The European Union has its own EU9546 regulation that limits data usage as do other countries. Typically such regulations focus on cross-border data flow, but some also address data within the borders of a given country.

Other technical considerations include setting minimal system standards for response times on a global or country basis as well as data backup systems. Protection of personal data is paramount. If the system includes Social Security or similar ID numbers, the rigor of security is critical. How are user names and passwords created and protected? Does the system feature robust levels of security to deter hackers? The same goes for security in systems with credit card processing or other financial transactions. Is the system vulnerable to viruses or other malicious technology?
The Five Challenges of Effective Global Training – cont.

The bottom line? While technology can be an effective training platform, it also creates numerous challenges to protect individual and organizational data in a legal and operationally efficient way. Meeting or exceeding all the established standards of a particular country is simply the cost of doing business.

4. Evaluating Outside Vendors
Companies that rely on outside vendors for training content, delivery or platform elements need to make sure that these vendors appropriately address all the issues outlined by this whitepaper. Evaluation of outside vendors should include international experience, language and cultural capabilities, technical infrastructure and legal compliance. These key factors can strongly affect compliance issues, service and ultimately training impact.

Often an inclusion of penalties or rewards for vendors is appropriate and detailed objectives should be created so success can be objectively evaluated. The conclusion? International partners can bring valuable content, delivery expertise and local market experience to training endeavors. However a thorough vetting to make sure outside vendors are strategically aligned and operationally capable of meeting designated needs is strongly advised.

5. Logistics—Planning for the Unexpected
While logistics may not be the most strategic part of a global training program, it can determine the ultimate success of the effort. International logistics are exponentially more complicated all the way down to the nuts and bolts of printing, shipping, taxation and customs. The need for highly detailed documentation is crucial and should include business continuity, disaster planning, appropriate system redundancies, and contingencies to ensure appropriate performance and response to meet client needs. Establishing what level of outages are acceptable and developing appropriate back-up provisions to address unforeseen circumstances is the key to a successful international training effort.
Benefits & Summary:

For those organizations that address the challenges previously outlined, there are some very positive benefits from a global training program. While the particular benefits of any training program depend on its specific purposes, there are five common advantages:

>> Organizations have an opportunity to institute and communicate a global culture and identity for the organization.

>> In some circumstances global training initiatives allow companies to create a common set of worldwide performance standards and expectations.

>> Related to this, standardized, efficient processes that are transferable across locations often result.

>> Developmental training internationally helps create a consistent and fair leadership growth process worldwide.

>> And finally, global training provides a means for different locales to have input into the design and implementation of the program. This is important because it improves the likelihood of success at each location worldwide.

The strategic global training initiatives offer companies a tremendous opportunity to enhance business worldwide. Although significant challenges exist, a well-planned, well-executed endeavor can yield tremendous rewards.