

SAT Prep Academy Broadens Reach by Offering Courses Online

MyeAcademy adds classes, enters new markets, and improves instruction using web collaboration technology

Summary

Customer Name:

MyeAcademy

Industry:

Language and SAT instruction

Location:

Thousand Oaks, California

Number of Employees:

15

Challenge:

- Reach students beyond local area by supplementing onsite courses with live online classes
- Improve instruction through increased interactivity, customization, and instant analysis of test results
- Use proven teaching methods to extend academic offerings

Results:

- Increased teaching capacity by 200 percent, doubling class size while improving instruction quality
- Received “highly satisfied” ratings from 95 percent of students in online vocabulary training
- Poised to expand business into fast-growing language training arena

Solution:

- Online instruction extends reach and effectiveness of SAT preparation courses
- Instant test analyses provide powerful learning experience
- Guidance from expert consultants helps MyeAcademy define the right plan

Challenge

Since its 2004 founding, MyeAcademy has provided college-bound students with instruction to improve their scores on the SAT Reasoning Test, the standardized exams that represent a key component of the college admissions process in the United States. With more than 80 percent of its students improving their SAT scores by 200 to 450 points, MyeAcademy leaders knew that their teaching methods were working. They wanted to make their instruction available to more people, across a wider geographical area, and with even more effectiveness.

The 15-employee company based in Thousand Oaks, California, has developed an approach to SAT instruction that involves a battery of upfront testing on sample SAT tests, enabling instructors to assess student skill levels and tailor their lessons accordingly. Key to this process is an understanding that only by identifying the origin of students’ errors can instructors comprehend what’s missing in their knowledge. Until recently, the academy had been applying these teaching methods exclusively through onsite instruction. However, determined to stand out from the pack in an increasingly crowded test preparation market and eager to extend its proven teaching methods to areas such as ESL (English as a second language) and Chinese instruction, MyeAcademy began researching online teaching solutions.

“Over the last five years, we’ve developed some very effective teaching methods,” says MyeAcademy vice president De-Yin Jeng. “The feedback from students has been very good. Now, we want to use online technology not only to reach more students but to enhance the instruction as well.” The solution MyeAcademy settled on is Cisco WebEx™ Training Center.

Results

As MyeAcademy prepares to roll out its first full schedule of live online classes, students and teachers alike are already benefiting from the online teaching environment. According to MyeAcademy president Mindy Sun Li, participants in the academy’s free online vocabulary training sessions have responded enthusiastically to interactive vocabulary instruction based on the Cisco® solution that combines Microsoft Office PowerPoint presentations with video, pictures, and graphics to approach difficult words from multiple angles. Says Li, “Some of our students were saying they couldn’t believe they could learn 40 to 50 vocabulary words in an hour, but they did. WebEx® made the experience fun and engaging.”

In post-session surveys, 90 percent of the academy’s online vocabulary students rated the quality of course content as “very good.” “With Cisco WebEx Training Center, we can predesign the details of the teaching process,” says Jeng. “We replicate the proven teaching methods we’ve developed, and then customize them to individual classes and students.” The upfront work of preparing the online courses can be intensive, but once that work has been completed, instructors can easily modify and target instruction to suit individual students’ needs.

“The WebEx Training Center polling feature enables us to let students take tests online and then analyze those results immediately,” says Li. “We’ve written programs to pinpoint student weaknesses and instantly see where they need to improve. It takes much, much longer to accomplish the same task in an onsite course. I would say that, within the same timeline, achieving a similar level of customization and targeted learning is simply impossible offline.”

For its summer session (the first to include full online SAT preparation rather than only vocabulary classes), MyeAcademy is offering twice as many online classes as onsite ones. Online instruction has also enabled MyeAcademy to double its class sizes and increase teaching capacity by 200 percent. Already drawing students from across the United States and around the globe, MyeAcademy can now hire teachers from around the world as well. And some academy teachers already enjoy the convenience of teaching from their home base at UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles) rather than commuting to the academy’s Thousand Oaks headquarters, thanks to Cisco WebEx.

“We knew our teaching methods were working. WebEx Advanced Services showed us how we could make them work even better by helping us bring them online with WebEx Training Center.”

— Mindy Sun Li, President, MyeAcademy

Solution

When Li began to look into adding an online component to MyeAcademy’s tutoring services, she immediately thought of Cisco WebEx technology. Familiar with Cisco WebEx Meeting Center from her other business, Li needed no convincing of the quality of its video and VoIP (voice over IP) services. Add to that the solution’s powerful polling feature (which lets instructors view test answers instantly), modular capacity (which enables teachers to adjust their instruction according to students’ skill levels), and richly interactive environment, and the choice was easy.

That choice was made easier still by the availability of Cisco WebEx Advanced Services, whose consultants have been instrumental in helping MyeAcademy develop an online teaching system that uses Cisco WebEx Training Center to make its proven instruction available to a much wider audience. “We knew our teaching methods were working,” says Li. “WebEx Advanced Services showed us how we could make them work even better by helping us bring them online with WebEx Training Center.”

What wasn’t so easy was overcoming people’s reluctance to move from an onsite classroom to an online one. In recognition of this, MyeAcademy began offering free online vocabulary classes in 2008, hoping that by giving students a flavor of its online educational experience, they would grow to understand its benefits. So far, the plan seems to be working. With 95 percent of the online students declaring themselves “highly satisfied” with the online courses, students are interacting just as they would in an onsite class: posting questions, using the whiteboard to annotate discussions, and chatting with instructors and classmates. All of the courses are recorded, enabling students to review them at their convenience.

Next Steps

With a proven teaching methodology and the Cisco WebEx technology to deliver it in an interactive online environment, Li sees enormous growth potential for MyeAcademy. Not only does she envision drawing in students and teachers from around the globe, but she plans to broaden MyeAcademy's offerings as well. "Because of Cisco WebEx, we have the capability to expand our academic offerings, adding courses in ESL and Chinese," she says. "But first we're going to do the SAT instruction: we're going to do it right, and we're going to do it well."

Product List

Cisco WebEx Training Center

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco WebEx, go to <http://www.cisco.com/web/products/webex/index.html>.



Americas Headquarters
Cisco Systems, Inc.
San Jose, CA

Asia Pacific Headquarters
Cisco Systems (USA) Pte. Ltd.
Singapore

Europe Headquarters
Cisco Systems International BV
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Cisco has more than 200 offices worldwide. Addresses, phone numbers, and fax numbers are listed on the Cisco Website at www.cisco.com/go/offices.

CCDE, CCENT, Cisco Eos, Cisco Lumin, Cisco Nexus, Cisco StadiumVision, Cisco TelePresence, the Cisco logo, DCE, and Welcome to the Human Network are trademarks; Changing the Way We Work, Live, Play, and Learn and Cisco Store are service marks; and Access Registrar, Aironet, AsyncOS, Bringing the Meeting To You, Catalyst, CCDA, CCDP, CCIE, CCIP, CCNA, CCNP, CCSP, CCVP, Cisco, the Cisco Certified Internetwork Expert logo, Cisco IOS, Cisco Press, Cisco Systems, Cisco Systems Capital, the Cisco Systems logo, Cisco Unity, Collaboration Without Limitation, EtherFast, EtherSwitch, Event Center, Fast Step, Follow Me Browsing, FormShare, GigaDrive, HomeLink, Internet Quotient, IOS, iPhone, iQ Expertise, the iQ logo, iQ Net Readiness Scorecard, iQuick Study, IronPort, the IronPort logo, LightStream, Linksys, MediaTone, MeetingPlace, MeetingPlace Chime Sound, MGX, Networkers, Networking Academy, Network Registrar, PCNow, PIX, PowerPanels, ProConnect, ScriptShare, SenderBase, SMARTnet, Spectrum Expert, StackWise, The Fastest Way to Increase Your Internet Quotient, TransPath, WebEx, and the WebEx logo are registered trademarks of Cisco Systems, Inc. and/or its affiliates in the United States and certain other countries.

All other trademarks mentioned in this document or Website are the property of their respective owners. The use of the word partner does not imply a partnership relationship between Cisco and any other company. (0807R)