



ORCHARD SUPPLY HARDWARE [home improvement retailer]

OSH uses RG to create product training videos for its Product Knowledge Library. These videos have been a huge success: Retention rates are high, and employees even share the videos with customers. Check out one of their videos [here](#).

SUMMARY of SUCCESS

70

Product knowledge videos created by three trainers in only a few months.

4,000

Video views in Q4 2016 demonstrates increased employee engagement..

<4 hours

Time it takes for an OSH employee to produce an entire 60-second video.

1 minute

Time off the floor for an OSH sales associate to complete product knowledge training.

THE CHALLENGE

To meet customer service objectives, the management team at OSH needed to get retail Sales Associates up to speed on required product knowledge so that they can properly sell products to customers, while not taking them away from the store floor for extended periods of time.

Background:

Founded in 1931 as a purchasing cooperative for farmers, Orchard Supply Hardware (OSH) has blossomed into a thriving retail hardware company with more than 80 neighborhood hardware and garden stores located throughout California, Oregon, and most recently, Florida. With over 45,000 items in modern, easy-to-shop stores, Orchard prides itself on its “Legendary Customer Service.” OSH is a division of Lowe’s, a Fortune 50 organization.

To deliver that high quality of customer service, Orchard relies in large part on its store Sales Associates. For this critical role, the company looks for people who are not only inquisitive and energetic, but also have a desire to learn and a passion for serving customers.

But even if they come in the door with great customer service skills, OSH Sales Associates

are expected to continually build their product knowledge so that they can easily answer questions about a product’s features and benefits. They also need to understand related products. “We hire employees for their attitude and work ethic,” says Keith Anderson, OSH director of learning and store support center human resources, “but we need to close the knowledge gap. Our in-house opinion surveys show that sales associates are hungry for product training and want more of it.”

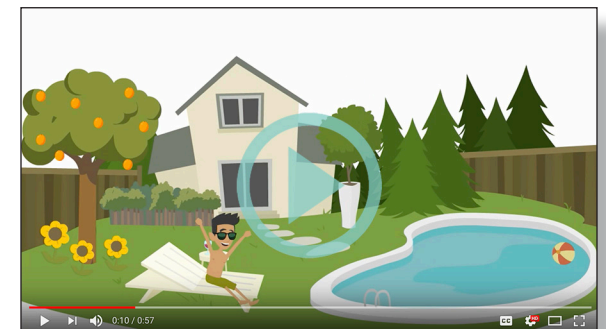
In retail, you can’t take people off the floor for hours to conduct training. We need to get information across quickly—and have it resonate.

That’s a tall order in a store that sells tens of thousands of different products. Anderson and his team realized that traditional e-learning techniques weren’t the best solution for the audience, two-thirds of which are young millennials. “Traditional e-learning, where you’re clicking through slides for hours, is boring,” Anderson

says. “People don’t retain the information. And in retail, you just can’t take people off the store floor for hours to conduct training. We need to get information across quickly—and have it resonate.”

And while live-action videos can be more engaging, they’re also more expensive. “We used to have to hire talent and shoot in one of our stores in the middle of the night,” Anderson recalls. “We could spend \$10,000 or more on a single shoot.”

Click for video:



THE SOLUTION

The tipping point came in mid-2015, when Anderson taught a six-week course to managers and discovered afterwards that retention was lower than expected. He knew he needed a compelling way to communicate new ideas, and his research had shown him that video had to be part of the solution. (Studies have shown that viewers retain 95% of a message when they watch it in a video compared to 10% when reading it in text.)¹

“You might forget 90% of what you’ve learned within one day, but video helps get past the forgetting curve,” Anderson says. “There’s an emotional tie-in, because as human beings we’re conditioned for storytelling.”

He was also struck by an animated whiteboard presentation shown in a marketing meeting. “Whiteboard animation reminds us of learning in school,” he says. “The research indicates that’s because writing on a board signifies that you’re going to learn something, and your mind goes into learning mode.”

After reviewing several animated video vendors, OSH settled on Vyond for its ease of use. “Most of the solutions we looked at were too clunky and way too technical,” he says. “We needed something intuitive.”

Using Vyond’s GoTeam subscription, Anderson and his team developed the Product Knowledge Library program, which blends several types of experiential learning in a four-step process:

- Step 1:** Sales Associates watch a short animated video that covers three key points about the product; then they study a printed Job Aid.
- Step 2:** Associates then discuss the video and Job Aid with their supervisors.
- Step 3:** They then return to the store floor and apply what they’ve learned with customers.
- Step 4:** Supervisors offer feedback to Sales Associates about their interaction with the customer.

“This type of training engages every part of the brain,” says Anderson. “Best of all, it takes 16 minutes and only takes employees off the floor for about one minute. And in 60 seconds, the Associate has learned the three things he or she needs to know about the product.”

For the pilot of the program, OSH tested 10 product-training videos at one of its stores and measured the results after four weeks. Early indications were that the product knowledge training had a positive impact on sales at that particular store, and that it helped flatten seasonal sales fluctuations. What’s more, employees asked for more videos.

Anderson says that to start, OSH identified 100 core concepts for which the company wants to create training, with more added in the future. Anderson and his team of four produced 70 videos within four months and deployed them to 23 iPod Touches in every store. They also posted the videos to YouTube so that associates can watch them anytime, on any device.

¹ Young, Matt, “[Looking at the Facts—Why Video Content Has the Highest Retention Rate](#),” Pop Video blog, June 6, 2016

THE RESULTS

The Product Knowledge Library has been a huge success, Anderson says. Anecdotally, retention rates are high, and employees—unprompted by management—have started sharing the videos with customers. Since most of the videos are public, they thus serve double duty as marketing channels for OSH.

“Employees like the videos so much that they sometimes want to binge watch them,” Anderson says. “We’ve had to limit them to two product videos per day to prevent content binging and to ensure retention.”

OSH is purposefully not tracking how many employees watch the videos; the company is more concerned about behavioral changes and increased engagement. To that end, they survey employees on their confidence in their product knowledge after they’ve watched the videos. To date, 100% of employees surveyed reported that they have more confidence in selling the products they studied.

“People learn because they want to,” says Anderson. “If you order them to do a training, they don’t get as engaged as they do if they themselves see a need for it.”

Another advantage of the Vyond solution is how easy it is for Anderson and his team to create the videos. Anderson, who had no previous video product experience before starting with Vyond a year ago, says that he can typically produce an entire video—start to finish—in less than four hours. He’s created detailed guidelines to help other trainers create videos that meet OSH standards and reflect current research on the best learning methods.

“The tool itself is crazy easy to use,” says Anderson. “If you can make a PowerPoint presentation, you can make one of these videos. The hardest part is teaching people how to deliver a powerful message in 60 seconds that looks presentable and engaging.”

The company is also using Vyond to create animated videos for group-learning environments to train employees in new stores. For example, OSH’s merchandising team is creating stop-action videos in Vyond to teach employees how to build store displays. Looking forward, OSH plans to expand the program to produce videos for teaching different selling techniques, leadership training, and more.

Meanwhile, Anderson and his team are constantly enhancing the Product Knowledge Library videos by adding new products and even importing images from actual stores to immerse learners in the mindset of the actual retail environment.

Says Anderson, “This program will never end!”

Click for videos:

