

American Water Opens the Training Floodgates to Employees



AMERICAN WATER

Industry – Water/utilities

Established – 1886

Corporate Headquarters –
Voorhees, NJ

Products – Services for water and wastewater systems

Footprint – Nearly 7,000 employees with operations in 35 states, as well as Manitoba and Ontario, Canada

Business Challenges

- Working out possible employee limitations based on position
- Communicating benefits to numerous employees in multiple locations
- Technology and IT stability, security, and compliance

Solution Results

- Cost savings by packaging training to meet company needs
- Positive experience and added benefit encourages employee retention
- Stronger, more educated work force

Executive Summary

American Water, the largest investor-owned water and wastewater utility company in the United States, was founded in 1886 as the American Water Works & Guarantee Company. American Water's regulated businesses currently provide water and wastewater services in 20 U.S. states with a vast network of treatment plants, pumping stations, storage facilities, and approximately 45,000 miles of main and collection pipe.

Constructing the Educational Pipeline

American Water is a very education-oriented company, and its educational department is always looking to expand training options for its employees. So when Marianne Taylor, education and development manager for American Water Shared Services Center, was attending a speaker symposium and NST announced its STAR12 Digital Solution for online training and free public seminars, she knew it would be a great fit. According to Taylor, "Our goal was to give people other avenues for learning opportunities. The STAR12 program was extremely affordable, plus offered live and online training sessions. Signing up for STAR12 was a really easy decision and offered a great opportunity to pack in a lot of learning."

To gauge the response and fit of the program in the organization, American Water offered STAR12 to 50 office employees. When the initial period was began to expire, the educational department wanted to offer it on a larger scale, especially since it received positive feedback from those who used the program, but it also had budgetary constraints to consider. Taylor took American Water's needs to her sales representative at NST, and they worked together to come up with a training package that fit Taylor's needs and their budget. American Water renewed its participation in the STAR12 program and expanded it to 3,500 employees throughout the organization.

Positive, Sparkling, and Clear Results

The STAR12 program has been met with positive feedback and responses from American Water employees. “We have seen very tangible, positive results from the STAR12 program,” said Taylor. “People have voiced their appreciation of these different opportunities and have really embraced and utilized them. We have received emails from employees, and during a recent survey, many people directly referenced STAR12 in a positive way, which is always great to see. We have only seen positive responses to the program.”

Floating Past the Challenges

American Water faced challenges in bringing the STAR12 program to its employees. Those challenges were easily overcome by working together internally and with NST. Nearly 7,000 employees work for American Water scattered in 35 U.S. states plus Manitoba and Ontario, Canada, and they are a mix of union/nonunion and exempt/nonexempt employees in various roles throughout the company. The challenge with nonexempt employees was how they would be compensated if they took advantage of eLearning after hours, so the educational department worked it out with supervisors to ensure those employees could still participate. The challenge with many of the union employees was that they are in positions where they don't have a physical office or desk. To ensure they could participate, the educational department offered the program across the company to employees who had a valid email account. According to Taylor, “Our biggest challenge was accurately providing all of the email addresses National Seminars needed to set up the user accounts.”

Taylor also stated, “Communicating the program and all applicable log-in information to employees was also a large challenge, especially because we are so spread out over the country.” To let the 3,500 verified employees know about the STAR12 opportunity, the educational department used email messages along with in-house education and notification efforts throughout the year to drive home the program and encourage use.

Technology did not create a large problem, but systems were reviewed and tested by American Water and NST IT teams to ensure security and compliance with American Water regulations. “We also encountered a few issues with video streaming, but both of our IT groups worked together to resolve the problem,” said Taylor. “When putting together a program of this scale, you have to expect challenges like these, but by working together with an experienced company like NST, we have smoothly cleared each hurdle.”

Why Choose STAR12 and NST?

In the end, American Water chose NST STAR12 Digital Solution for online training and free public seminars because of the program affordability and benefits, along with a willingness to work together to conquer any challenges.

“Overall we are very pleased with the variety and quality of the topics offered through STAR12, and the website is very user-friendly, which has been key in ensuring participation. You can have the best program, but if your employees can't use it, the benefit is lost,” said Taylor. “Honestly, the best part of STAR12 has been my account representative. She has been so responsive to my every need, whim, and request, and she's just been on top of it all. It's huge to have a great relationship with your account rep like that. She and everyone at NST make it all work.”

About STAR12 and NST

The STAR12 program offers unlimited access for an entire year to every live seminar produced by NST. In the last year, more than 11,000 seminars were offered in more than 350 locations throughout the United States and Canada, and members can attend seminars in their immediate area or anywhere training is provided in North America. Members also receive unlimited 24/7 access to the STAR12 online learning collection of training tools, videos, skill assessments, and more.