

LearnKey Weapons Training Solution Helps U.S. Navy Reduce Number of Small Firearms Mishaps

--As the U.S. Navy changes its force protection posture to guard against terrorist attacks, LearnKey ensures that sailors have adequate weapons training--

Background:

On Oct. 12, 2000, as the U.S.S. Cole docked at Aden, Yemen for a brief refueling stop, a small boat loaded with explosives rammed into its side. This terrorist attack killed 17 of the crewmembers on board, injured 39 others and severely damaged the ship. Less than one year later, on the morning of September 11, 2001, terrorists hijacked two commercial jets and flew them into the World Trade Center Towers, killing thousands. Shortly thereafter, two other hijacked planes crashed into the Pentagon and in Somerset County, Pennsylvania.

The attack on the U.S.S. Cole and the events of 9/11 compelled the United States Military, including the U.S. Navy, to significantly change its force protection posture. The frequency and effectiveness of terrorist attacks necessitated a new doctrine of anti-terrorism, accompanied by force protection procedures that had not previously been in place. Consequently, the number of armed sailors in the Navy increased rapidly and significantly.

Problem:

As the number of sailors carrying small arms rose, the number of injuries due to inadvertent firings grew, as well. In 2002, the average number of monthly injuries caused by small arms mishaps doubled from the previous year. Although all sailors were technically qualified to operate the weapons, many lacked experience handling them on a daily basis and were not adept at doing so. The result was an alarming increase in the number of small arms mishaps.

The Center for Anti-Terrorism and Navy Security Forces (CENATNSF) was established with the mission of developing and delivering individual learning solutions to meet Naval Fleet anti-terrorism and Navy Security Force readiness requirements. To this end, the Center trains Navy personnel worldwide in security and anti-terrorism measures and procedures. The Center reports directly to Naval Personnel Development Command (NPDC) and is part of the Naval Education and Training Command (NETC).

Shortly after its creation, the Center took on the task of addressing the problem of inadvertent firing mishaps among Navy personnel. The situation obviously called for training in the handling of small arms for new security forces, but the cost and time-consuming nature of such an effort seemed daunting. The Center sought an "out of the box" learning solution that would provide effective training without draining time or financial resources.

The Center awarded a contract to Alpha Solutions Corporation, an approved GSA FSS contractor and provider of consulting expertise, learning programs and IT design and development, to help launch its training efforts.

Anthony Walker, founder and President of Alpha Solutions, immediately thought of LearnKey, a company he had been introduced to only a few months earlier. LearnKey, a premier global provider of self-paced training courses, e-learning technology and online learning solutions for corporate, education and government users, seemed able to offer a solution that met all of the criteria.

The Solution:

Alpha Solutions, feeling confident that LearnKey could play a vital role in providing the Navy with the optimal learning solution for small arms training, hired the company to direct the process of scripting and shooting a preliminary version of the weapons training courses. LearnKey, with its strong track record of creating customized multimedia learning solutions, was able to guide Alpha Solutions through the development of a storyboard, the initial video shoot on a firing range and the creation of a preliminary product.

When LearnKey and Alpha Solutions presented the preliminary product to the Center's personnel, the response was overwhelming and unanimous.

"Although that first version using civilian instructors was not ultimately everything CENATNSF wanted, everyone who saw it immediately knew that it was the answer to the problem of how to provide sailors with small arms training," said Walker.

The Center contracted Alpha Solutions and LearnKey to rewrite the storyboard using the input of government subject matter and small arms experts and re-shoot the video using government firearms instructors. The finished product, a custom training course for the M-9 9mm Beretta handgun, was made available to the sailors anytime, anywhere via either interactive CD-ROM or the Navy's online learning environment, Navy Knowledge Online.

The training courses created by LearnKey provide a user-friendly solution that allows sailors to learn by:

- Seeing rich, animated graphics, visual examples and diagrams in full-motion video that demonstrate complex topics related to small firearms
- Hearing firearms experts communicate concepts
- Validating learning through pop-up quizzes and a final examination

In short, the LearnKey solution offers sailors a technically accurate, intuitive learning system that communicates the information in an efficient and successful manner.

"The LearnKey training courses have been a real success story for the Navy," said Walker. "Thousands, literally thousands, of sailors have completed their weapons training using the CD-ROM and/or the same product online. The Navy has implemented this training tool from boot camp and throughout the continuum. It's being used for initial training, as well as remedial training."

The incredible success of the M-9 training solution led to the development of courseware for the M-11 handgun, M-14 and M-16 rifles and the M-500 assault shotgun.

By 2004, the number of injuries resulting from small firearms mishaps had fallen to less than half of what it was in 2001. In the second and third quarters of 2005 the number of small arms explosive mishaps decreased by 50 percent, with every indication that it would continue to fall. This clear evidence of training success led the Chief of Naval Operations, the four-star admiral responsible for all facets of the U.S. Navy, to sign a directive in October 2005, requiring that all sailors complete LearnKey's training courses prior to attempting to receive their weapons qualifications at the firing range.

"Out of all the people that have seen and used the LearnKey weapons training CD-ROM or the online tools, we have not received – and I'm not exaggerating – any negative feedback whatsoever," said Walker. "It's a really good news story and we at Alpha Solutions feel proud that we were able to create this solution with LearnKey."

Conclusion:

In much the same way that LearnKey helped reduce the number of small arms mishaps in the Navy, it can help organizations of all sizes and styles accomplish their goals. Large corporations, mid-market companies, government agencies, schools and districts nationwide depend on LearnKey to deliver a customized training solution that successfully instructs and guides, while keeping the subject matter interesting and appealing.

LearnKey's long-term commitment to the learning industry, combined with its record of customer satisfaction and years of experience, make it the leading provider of expert learning solutions today.