



Cricket Wireless Accepts the Challenges of a New Merger with Aio Wireless

When big corporate changes are made at the uppermost levels, big changes are inevitably in store at the HR and training levels. That's the challenge that Tad Kozak faced when what is now Cricket Wireless replaced the Aio Wireless brand due to the recent merger between the two wireless service providers.

Aio Wireless is a wholly owned subsidiary of AT&T, which offered its services using AT&T Mobility's nationwide networks. The new Cricket now works on Aio's AT&T wireless network while its previous LTE network will be merged into the AT&T nationwide network, and the CDMA voice network will be divested or dismantled over time. Additionally, Cricket customers now have the option of visiting retail stores to convert to new rate plans compatible with AT&T's LTE service.

Prior to the acquisition, Aio Wireless operated approximately 600 retail stores with approximately 5,000 employees. The new Cricket has approximately 4,000 stores and 15,000 employees.

The company's goal is to operate as one company. Kozak — Aio's training strategy manager — and his team designed an aggressive, three-stage training strategy for the approximately 10,000 Cricket retail dealer employees, which is now in the process of being rolled out. Kozak had seen AT&T through three previous mergers, so he and his team could apply many of "lessons learned" when designing this most recent training initiative. They also added a new mobile performance support tool.

The acquisition training program is designed to address these challenges:

>> The need to train approximately 10,000 Cricket employees in new Cricket technology, sales tools and culture.

- >> The fact that most employees work in small retail stores (one or two employees on the floor at the same time). Employees must quickly become self-sufficient in answering customer questions, completing systems transactions, and handling conversions.
- >> How to make training be cost- and time-efficient. Cricket operates on a dealer model; therefore, its front-line sellers are co-employees. For this training, there is no charge to dealers.
- >> Making resources and performance support available via employees' mobile devices.

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Because the SEC limits interaction between merging companies prior to acquisition, Kozak's team had less than 30 days to design and test the acquisition training program before rollout began.

The total dealer sales program, finalized after conducting two pilots, includes:

- >> One day of instructor-led training focusing on the new Cricket brand and culture. To supplement an internal instructor staff, Aio worked with Wounded Warriors and other veterans groups to hire 38 veterans as temporary instructors. "This day is primarily a celebration of the new Cricket," says Kozak.

- >> A suite of WBTs and simulations covering compliance and privacy issues, network and device training, point-of-sale system guidance, and customer support. All training resources have been optimized for mobile delivery.
- >> A performance support tool, also designed for mobile use, that employees can use on the sales floor to rapidly access (within three clicks) the information and guidance needed to handle real-time customer questions and issues. It also provides a step-by-step guide for all major systems transactions.

A three-pronged approach was used to solve potential problems ahead of time, using a budget of \$1 million:

1 The three-part training program had to dramatically condense the training time and costs required for past acquisitions and new hires. (ILT reduced from three days to one.) This program has more emphasis on ongoing performance support and just-in-time information.

2 As new Cricket employees become integrated into AT&T, the performance support tool had to provide rapid access to information and resources needed to answer customer questions or perform specific tasks (such as how to convert a telephone number to the new network) within minutes. In the future, this tool will provide just-in-time support for new hires.

3 All learning resources had to be optimized for mobile delivery, the presumed preference for access by the young workforce.

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