

April 2019

# Corporate University

LEADING PRACTICES



## Featured Case Studies



## Introduction

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When it comes to training, Brandon Hall Group recognizes that every organization has its own way of targeting its offerings to meet the needs of both the business and its learners. One way of doing this is by implementing a corporate university, which allows companies to approach learning delivery in a strategic manner, emphasizing the alignment between L&D and organizational outcomes.

In this report we profile three companies — North Highland, Amer Sports and the U.S. Air Force’s Air University — that implemented successful corporate universities. Each of these companies is an award-winning organization in the Brandon Hall Group Excellence Awards program, an international competition among hundreds of organizations in which entries are judged by independent subject matter experts and practitioners.

### Why Have a Corporate University?

Here are three key ways that corporate universities can drive performance:

- **Organizational fit.** One of the main reasons companies take the time to develop a curriculum specifically for an internal corporate university is because of the “fit” of the training. Imagine for a moment that you’re a business paying for your junior executives to get an MBA from a local college. After several of them complete the program, you realize that they did not pick up some of the critically necessary skills to be equipped for the next level of advancement within the organization. This is the reason many organizations create corporate universities — to have the right fit the first time. The fit of the training, both technically and to the organization’s culture, is something that can’t be purchased off the shelf.
- **Business alignment.** In addition, the link between the organization’s objectives and the corporate university is critical. Brandon Hall Group’s research shows that high-performing organizations have a high extent of linkage between learning objectives and organizational goals 41% of the time, yet only 30% of other organizations are doing this. Linking the corporate university’s curriculum to the business goals and objectives increases the likelihood of positive outcomes for the program.
- **Employee retention.** According to a Brandon Hall Group Employer Value Proposition Study, the most important factor in an individual’s decision to stay with an organization was opportunities for growth and development. Offering a corporate university allows employees to grow in their roles, providing a sense of accomplishment while keeping them engaged.

## North Highland's L&Dv3 Has Employees Embracing Chance to Grow



### Company At-a-Glance

<b>Headquarters</b>	Atlanta, Georgia
<b>Year Founded</b>	1992
<b>Revenue</b>	\$352.4 million
<b>Employees</b>	1,255
<b>Industry</b>	Management Consulting
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.northhighland.com">www.northhighland.com</a>

**The Challenge:** In its 2016 engagement survey, North Highland received the resounding message that employees were hungry for more robust skill development as only 39% of the firm's employees felt that their career development was satisfactory.

**The Solution:** Fund a completely new talent development function, an initiative called L&Dv3, to align with a larger transformation of the firm using enhanced technology, revitalized content and enhanced staff.

**Implementation:** A communication strategy was executed to engage employees, policies and procedures for consistent expectations. Expectations were published on the corporate intranet site, baseline metrics were established and a monthly dashboard for tracking was developed. The delivery methodologies and options for learning included classroom training, webinars, videoconferences, eLearning, video learning, social learning, mobile learning, an Electronic Performance Support System, job rotations and shadowing, mentoring and coaching, books, abstracts, articles, case studies, simulations, podcasts, conferences and external courses/certifications, job aids and tuition assistance.

**Measurable Benefit:** With North Highland's globalization of the delivery offering in 2017, 91% of the audience voluntarily consumed their development opportunities and as a result, the company now has a proven product to offer, an increased associated revenue stream and the workforce in the delivery has grown by 30% within a year. Consumption hours have doubled and employees completed five times the courses in 2017 versus 2016. This resulted in a 250% increase in learning efficiency.

**Access to full case study:** [North Highland L&Dv3 Has Employees Embracing the Chance to Grow.](#)

## Amer Sports Knowledge (ASK) Inspires through Organized Learning



Company At-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Helsinki
Year Founded	1950
Revenue	€2.685 billion
Employees	8,607
Industry	Retail/Sporting Goods
Website	<a href="http://www.amersports.com">www.amersports.com</a>

**The Challenge:** Structure, develop and generally modernize training and to create an engaging learning environment and solutions for Amer Sports’ people.

**The Solution:** Create a corporate learning university called ASK (Amer Sports Knowledge) to address the various needs and priorities of each business area, including sales operations, field operations, marketing, commercial, Human Resources and IT.

**Implementation:** ASK’s eLearning modules are built into blended learning paths where managers or subject matter experts deliver face-to-face training or coaching or the user is encouraged to do a field activity to build on their theoretical knowledge of a topic. Learning modules are easily accessed either via users clicking on a “Channels” widgets or by using key words in the search bars throughout the platform. When a course is created, a communication is sent out to the relevant users informing them about the new content, its importance and the deadline for completion. In addition, the course is hyperlinked into the email for easy access.

**Measurable Benefit:** Users rated the ASK platform 4/5 stars, saying that they felt more valued, supported and enabled. The platform reporting features showed Amer Sports that approximately 30% of the users access ASK on a weekly basis to learn, and approximately 50% on a monthly basis. In total, 87% of users are active in ASK. One of the biggest ROIs has been the amount of time saved for the company’s management team. With the introduction the newly created “Sales Tools” courses, Amer has been able to take this onboarding “basic” training off their plates, enabling them to focus on the crucial soft skills and selling skills.

**Access to full case study:** [Amer Sports Knowledge \(ASK\) Portal Inspires Employees through Organized Learning.](#)

## U.S. Air Force eSchool Offers Flexibility for Demanding Schedules



Company At-a-Glance	
<b>Headquarters</b>	Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama
<b>Year Founded</b>	eSchool of GPME, 2015; Air University, 1946.
<b>Revenue</b>	N/A
<b>Employees</b>	20 to 25 employees, 35 to 40 SMEs and 175 contractors and 150-plus adjunct professors.
<b>Industry</b>	Department of the Air Force
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.airuniversity.af.mil/eSchool/">www.airuniversity.af.mil/eSchool/</a>

**The Challenge:** Provide Air Force officers the opportunity to pursue higher education while simultaneously meeting service needs.

**The Solution:** Bring the distance education programs of the Air War College, Air Command and Staff College and Squadron Officer College together and eliminate redundancies between programs.

**Implementation:** The establishment of the Air University eSchool offers a wide range of more than 65 on-line self-paced, blended and instructor-facilitated courses that are tailored for a mixture of primary developmental education (PED), intermediate developmental education (IDE) and senior developmental education (SDE) students worldwide. The curriculum is based on the five core areas central to all levels of professional military education — leadership, profession of arms, warfighting, national/international security and communication studies — and focuses on strategy and security, airpower, leadership, joint operations, research/graduate skills and faculty development. All programs and courses are delivered via a learning management powered by BlackBoard.

**Measurable Benefit:** With the eSchool program, the U.S. Air Force’s Air University was able to take some of the stress off airmen warfighters embroiled in overseas operations by creating an accredited, cost-free online master’s degree. To date, 3,323 students have earned an accredited master’s degree in military operational art and science.

**Access to full case study:** [U.S. Air Force eSchool Offers Flexibility for Demanding Schedules.](#)

## Contributors

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**Pat Fitzgerald** compiled this report. He is an editor and writer with 30 years of experience in print journalism, including starting and selling his own successful weekly community newspaper in Branson, Missouri.

**Richard Pachter** ([richard.pachter@brandonhall.com](mailto:richard.pachter@brandonhall.com)) edited this report. He is the Content Manager at Brandon Hall Group, responsible for editing research assets and other content. He has experience as a journalist, copywriter, editor and marketer, and served as the Miami Herald's internationally syndicated business books columnist for more than a decade.

**Mike Cooke** ([mike.cooke@brandonhall.com](mailto:mike.cooke@brandonhall.com)) contributed to this report. He is CEO and Principal HCM Analyst at Brandon Hall Group. Mike has more than 20 years' experience in human capital management and the research, software and technology industries. Before running Brandon Hall Group, Mike was co-founder of AC Growth, a research and consulting firm, and VP and General Manager of Field Operations at Bersin & Associates, a global analyst and consulting services firm in all areas of HCM.

**Michael Rochelle** ([michael.rochelle@brandonhall.com](mailto:michael.rochelle@brandonhall.com)) contributed to this report. He is Chief Strategy Officer and Principal HCM Analyst at Brandon Hall Group. Michael leads a wide range of advisory support and strategic engagements for Fortune 1000 and small-to medium-sized organizations as well as leading and emerging solution providers across the HCM industry. Michael has more than 30 years' experience in HR, IT, sales, marketing, business development and strategic and financial planning in Fortune 500 and venture-backed start-up organizations.

## About Brandon Hall Group

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Brandon Hall Group is an HCM research and advisory services firm that provides insights around key performance areas, including Learning and Development, Talent Management, Leadership Development, Talent Acquisition, and HR/Workforce Management. With more than 10,000 clients globally and more than 25 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations, and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

### Inspiring a Better Workplace Experience

Our mission: Empower excellence in organizations around the world through our research and tools each and every day. At the core of our offerings is a Membership Program that combines research, benchmarking and unlimited access to data and analysts. The Membership Program offers insights and best practices to enable executives and practitioners to make the right decisions about people, processes, and systems, coalesced with analyst advisory services which aim to put the research into action in a way that is practical and efficient.

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For more information, contact us at [success@brandonhall.com](mailto:success@brandonhall.com).