

## Customer Spotlight

# Soft Computer Consultants Strengthen Customer Service With Train the Trainer and Support Professional Course



### The Company

Since 1979, Tampa, FL based Soft Computer Consultants (SCC) has offered advanced solutions for general laboratory, microbiology, anatomic pathology, blood bank, radiology, and pharmacy departments. SCC has established itself as the de facto LIS standard and was ranked number one in a 2004 LIS evaluation conducted by Health Care IT Research in both the overall and features/functionality categories.

SCC's complete line of advanced clinical information systems includes SoftRad (radiology), SoftRx (pharmacy), SoftDonor (blood donor management), and SoftWeb (a new Web-enabled outreach connectivity solution) providing all the tools necessary to expand laboratory and outreach services.


### The Challenge

SCC's goal is to achieve the highest level of patient care through their products and solutions. To realize that goal, support staff must provide external customers with nothing less than service excellence.

When SCC experienced growing pains, maintaining customer support consistency became a key issue. Service Strategies conducted an audit of the support operations and identified key areas for improvement. A lack of communication between employees resulted in workflow bottlenecks and duplicated efforts. E-mails and telephone calls were not returned in a timely manner and follow up was inconsistent. As a result, SCC's clients often felt a lack of rapport with support staff members.



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Additionally, prior generic employee training did not address customer service representative (CSR) related issues. It was clear there was a need for newer, job-focused training materials and a consistent approach to support staff training. "We needed to fine-tune and polish the CSR skills and make sure everyone was doing everything the same way," said Mary Kay LaBrie, SCC's senior trainer/course developer.

Before implementing Support Professional training, Blasquez recalled that his employees had little interest in attending support service classes because they were not specific to their jobs. As a result, service quality lacked uniformity and specific guidelines, and communication between staff and clients suffered. "We often had client interactions that didn't go well because we had difficulty delivering the message. We didn't take ownership (of the problem)," he explained.

## **The Solution**

Soft Computer Consultants already offered top-rated products. But to deliver top-rated service, they needed to arm their trainers with an arsenal of effective teaching tools. After researching various options, SCC chose and implemented Service Strategies' Train the Trainer program. "I really wanted our people to learn how to teach (the classes) because once you teach it you know it," said Don Keller, director of education.

With their strong educational foundation, SCC was not interested in outsourcing the teaching process. Working with SCC's director of educational services, director of customer service, and the senior trainers, Service Strategies integrated a Train the Trainer program into the Support Professional course.

Service Strategies provided SCC trainers with an intensive program that familiarized them with the components of teaching the Support Professional course. SCC's trainers learned all aspects of the program from both teacher and student perspectives. By attending and teaching classes, using the detailed instructor's guide, taking tests and being evaluated, SCC trainers became in-house Support Professional course experts.



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Jesus Blasquez  
Soft Computer Consultants  
Director of Client Services

"We (trainers) sat through a class and participated as students and that was really helpful. We saw the material firsthand and were able to see how people reacted, whether they had problems comprehending or if they grasped it right away," said LaBrie.

## **Benefits**

One of the primary benefits for SCC was employee enthusiasm and buy-in. Support staff viewed the class as personal value-add and a positive message from management. As a result, classes were well attended, morale improved significantly, and support staff attained a newly realized synergy. Subsequently, confidence levels increased allowing for easier problem resolution.

"The enthusiasm for attending the Support Professional course is spreading beyond the customer support department. Employees from other parts of the company are asking to attend because they've heard such good things about it," said Jesus Blasquez, director of client services

## **Service Excellence Begins With Effective Training**

The foundation of any support organization includes good communication skills, fast and efficient follow up, and the drive to resolve every problem to the client's satisfaction. SCC's 41-member support department had the desire to succeed; they just needed the tools to achieve that success.

"The Support Professional program provided the roadmap to where we want to go," adds Blasquez. "Prior to implementing this, there had been a lot of trial and error. This program works."

Keller is pleased that the Service Strategies Train the Trainer program offers his staff access to comprehensive service quality training materials. "We had 100 per-



cent attendance which is unusual for any company. It was unusual from an education perspective to get so many people to buy-in so quickly," he explained.

Keller continued to say he was very impressed with the Service Strategies trainers as he observed them working with his staff. "Service Strategies did a great job. The trainers enjoyed the program and they really connected with the people that were sent here to train them."

LaBrie added that many of the problems and issues noted on the initial customer service survey were directly addressed in the training materials, giving the trainers an opportunity to quickly adapt solutions to actual scenarios. In fact, the curriculum needed very little tailoring, and LaBrie and her staff were easily able to pepper the classes with specific examples to suit their needs.

Overall, Soft Computer Consultants is very satisfied with both the Train the Trainer and the Support Professional programs. With the knowledge, skills, and tools to assess performance shortfalls, SCC's trainers successfully educated and certified 99 percent of their technical support staff. This resulted in improved employee morale, better internal communication, and a highly team-focused mentality.

"It would have taken us a year or more to develop a class that's this specific," LaBrie explained. "Jesus (Blasquez) was sold on (the Train the Trainer course) from the beginning and after I researched it, I realized that all of the elements (we needed) were there."