

## **Background**

The IT and Operations teams within a complex, international manufacturing company has been working on a multi-year effort to introduce a new product lifecycle management (PLM) system into the organization. For the first time in the company's history, this system has the capabilities and functionality for managing and storing key product design data for all products manufactured in North America. It allows users to access, manipulate, and manage product related data, such as 2D and 3D drawings, measurements, and bill of material for all relevant product models.

The system replaces standalone legacies systems scattered and managed independently by various company functions such as procurement, manufacturing operations, research and development, and logistics. It also enables engineering teams to see product and part design changes as soon as they are released by R&D, which facilitates smoother coordination across all functions that work with product data, as well as with suppliers who will manufacture the component parts. One of the biggest ongoing impacts will be on industrial engineers, who will be expected to leverage this data to design safer production processes and procedures, and train associates in the manufacturing areas with more lead time than ever before.

## **The Challenge**

As is common on software implementation projects, the new system was expected to drastically change the nature of associates' jobs by automating functions that they had previously done manually. In addition, the power of having a common, centralized database of product information would create the expectation that associates' jobs change as well to exploit the capabilities of the new system. Associates would be conducting more testing, predictive modeling, and planning to minimize pre-production start-up delays, material waste, and quality problems. A sub-team on the project was formed to specifically tackle the challenge of developing remediation training programs to raise associate proficiency to the desired levels of performance to be successful using the new software.

## **Members of The Change Collaborative helped the PLM project team do the following:**

- Design and implement custom "job know-how assessments" that measure the critical skills associates will need to have mastered as a set of pre-requisites for learning how to use the new software
- Create an engagement plan for involving associates in the change process
- Weave software training activities and ongoing communication into a common strategy
- Devise strategies for educating senior managers on the impact of the technology on future jobs, skill sets, and cross-functional collaboration across work groups

## **Organizational Outcomes**

The job know-how assessments were used to screen associates' readiness for the system implementation and to diagnose the level of remediation training that they required. The results were also used to confirm the learning objectives that formed the remediation training programs. In the future, the criteria on the assessment may become a part of new trainees' development and performance management plans.