HARBORTOUCH

Training Moves VARs
To The Head
Of The Class

Harbortouch boosts investment in multilevel, multivehicle POS training for VARs.

How much value can a VAR add by taking advantage of a vendor's technology training program? One point of sale vendor believes the benefits of education are well worth the investment.

Multilevel, Multivehicle Training Programs

Harbortouch has developed a multi-level training program that delivers a comprehensive foundation for success. It includes:

● The initial Harbortouch welcome call, which covers all the company's products, services, and sales programs
● Harbortouch University, an online training course that provides sales partners with a strong foundation of knowledge about Harbortouch POS systems and the company's free POS program
● Regularly scheduled webinars with the National Sales Trainer, providing additional information about products and services
● A variety of on-site POS certification courses at the 9,000-square-foot corporate headquarters training facility:
  ▶ Basic certification, which covers all three Harbortouch software types and lasts one week
  ▶ More in-depth courses on each software type, each lasting one week and covering everything from hardware installation, networking, and programming to troubleshooting and support
● On-site training at VARs

When sales partners have completed the on-site certification course, Harbortouch provides them with "Certified Harbortouch Reseller" logos to add credibility and authority when marketing themselves. The company also coaches VARs on how to leverage their expertise to provide truly consultative sales.

Harbortouch has put significant resources behind its belief in the power of knowledge, offering comprehensive, multilevel training that ranges from POS basics to in-depth courses on individual software programs. Some of the company's investments in training include the recent creation of a 9,000-square-foot educational facility at its Allentown, PA, corporate headquarters, on-site visits to VAR clients, and online courses offered through its Harbortouch University. The training is also offered to internal Harbortouch staff, including its sales force and technicians, as well as to those responsible for sales, installation, and support at client VARs.

(See "Multilevel, Multivehicle Training Programs" for more details.)

Because every POS system is different, Harbortouch believes it's important for VARs to be well educated on each of the systems they offer. Its entire training curriculum is designed to provide:
● thorough knowledge of all Harbortouch POS hardware and peripherals
● ability to set up and troubleshoot Harbortouch networks
● thorough knowledge of all software functions
● understanding of basic POS logic and efficiency rules.

"Since detailed training is not typically offered by most POS providers, VARs usually need to figure out this information on their own," says Sean Berg, Director of POS Training for Harbortouch. "We've taken a much more proactive approach to ensure that our sales partners have access to all the training resources that they will need to succeed." *(See "Voice of a VAR" on the following page for Lynn Skurla's real-world take on the importance of training.)*

Using a variety of vehicles to deliver training is also an important part of the company's approach. Online training offers cost-effective ways to deliver basic knowledge, but on-site training is recommended for achieving more extensive levels of expertise.

Harbortouch's service-based business model, which derives its revenue from credit card processing and other ongoing revenue streams rather than initial sales of software and hardware, is a key reason for the company's focus on training. "We have an inherent interest in our product being stable, because the more knowledge our customers have, and the more money they make, the more we make," says Berg. "This increases our need to continuously improve their training levels."

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Emphasis On The Logic Behind POS Software

Harbortouch's range of programs run the gamut from POS and technology basics to achieving an in-depth understanding of specific software programs. Two of the most important overall lessons Berg likes to impart revolve around POS logic and design. These encompass not just the design of the programming itself but also how hospitality workers actually interact with the user interface. Berg notes that often, sitting down and talking with users — even those who believe they are familiar with the systems — can yield ways to reduce the

number of touches for a function, make it easier to do inventory tracking, and overall make the program easier for people to remember. In some cases, an action as simple as being able to rename an onscreen button for something specific to the restaurant can produce a marked improvement in business operations.

The right kind of training can also smooth what can often be a difficult time – the installation and go-live processes for a new system. "The install is the most stressful time, so training can help our people explain why a system is as efficient as it is. Customers have their concerns and doubts, and they need to learn how best to handle them and optimize the system," says Berg.

Voice of a VAR: Lynn Skurla, Owner, Skurla's POS Solutions

Lynn Skurla is a big believer in the benefits that training brings to her POS business, based in Anchorage, AK: "With vendor training, you're more comfortable with the product, and it gives you more confidence when having a conversation with potential customers. It's the way I like to sell a product. Anyone can fire up a screen and do a demo, but if you have a lot of training, you can have an in-depth conversation to really flesh out what they need, and then present a great solution."

Skurla, who has used a variety of Harbortouch's training offerings, gave a real-world example of the impact they have had: "We had a prospect come in, and we were trying to figure out a creative solution for their business, which was a retail store and a pizza delivery business combined into one. They needed to find some way to handle both of those applications. My salesperson went to our lead programmer, who had taken the training, and the programmer was able to come up with a great solution for the salesperson to present to the prospect."

The need for VARs to be well-trained in the products they offer has actually become more acute, even with the wealth of information available via the Internet.

"Many of our customers believe they can learn what they need to know themselves. Certainly some can, but a lot of our customers realize that their strengths aren't in knowing a lot about their POS system," says Skurla. "They are relying on us as their vendor to provide that knowledge for them, and we in turn rely on our vendors to get that training and provide it to our customers. I would say that being trained gives us a competitive advantage in the marketplace."

Skurla is also a big believer in the benefits of on-site training: "We have used a lot of online training because of the distance [to Alaska], but really the most effective training is in person," she says. Earlier this year, Harbortouch sent two of its trainers to Skurla's headquarters for a week of intensive one-on-one training. "We were able to bounce ideas off of each other, share best practices, and ask them questions. That interaction, and the little tips and hints that you wouldn't get with an online course, is key." She added that while other POS vendors have made on-site trips for training and demos, "most come up in the summer," notes Skurla. "Harbortouch came up in the winter, in January 2014. That shows dedication."

Training can also streamline customization processes. "Every POS system has countless settings and functions, but typically no one is shown how to use them," notes Berg. "No user wants to go through pages and pages of back-end settings, so our training can let a user know which settings are important for their business type, and which they can safely ignore. For example, a bar doesn't need a function to identify how many people are sitting at a barstool — it's always just one person. What they do need is something that helps them identify the customer, e.g., a man in a black shirt, a woman in a red dress. With training, we can help users customize their interface, and the entire system, to most effectively benefit their business environment."

Continuous Improvements
To Training Curriculum

Harbortouch has taken a strategic approach to the development of its training programs. The recent addition of its in-house training facility, which can accommodate as many as 150 to 200 students, serves as both classroom and lab. "It's a location for trainers and training managers to develop educational initiatives with the goal of improving the curriculum every month," says Berg.

In developing its programs, Harbortouch brought in external technicians from across the country to review key elements of hardware and software offerings as well as typical usage patterns. The company will also bring in representatives from its top-producing sales offices to review the most effective ways to support merchants through their go-live processes.

Other plans include creating a comprehensive curriculum just for Harbortouch's internal staff, offered at basic, intermediate, and advanced levels, covering topics such as POS programming basics and hardware troubleshooting. The plan is to offer a constant rotation of classes to cover all the knowledge available throughout the company.

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"One of the main reasons we built the facility was because we have a number of channels, including sales, external technicians, internal technicians, and others, who all need the same basic information, but tailored and delivered in different ways. A sales agent doesn't need the same information as that of a technician working on-site," explains Berg.

Rather than keep its extensive knowledge base stored in different areas and accessed in various ways, resulting in duplication of efforts and inconsistency, "we can now create a single hub of knowledge and then tailor it for each channel's needs," says Berg. It's another example of the kind of efficiency that comes from a deep understanding of the products, and people, that Harbortouch works with every day.

About Harbortouch

Harbortouch is a leading national provider of touch screen point of sale (POS) systems and payment processing services. As pioneers of the "as-a-Service" model, Harbortouch offers an unprecedented "free" POS program that allows the company's sales partners to offer a full-featured POS system with no up-front costs. For more information about Harbortouch, visit www.isoprogram.com.