



Thoughts & Perspectives from the Orkin Training Team About Implementing a Satellite-Based Interactive Distance Learning Solution

Is satellite interactive distance learning (IDL) the right learning delivery approach for your organization? After years of researching and benchmarking various methods of delivering training, the Orkin, Inc. training organization and its senior management are confident that satellite-based IDL is the right approach for Orkin University.

The following are thoughts and perspectives from three Orkin team members (of the seven-person team) who were tasked with evaluating the satellite-based options, based on lessons they learned, challenges they faced, key criteria they used and approaches they took to make their vendor selection.

David Lamb, VP of Learning and Media Services
Craig Goodwin, Director of Training
Ramiro Banderas, Director of Media Services

Hopefully, you will find their experiences and “lessons learned” to be of value to your organization if considering satellite-based methods to deliver training and facilitate student interaction.

Initial Thoughts & Perspectives

LAMB: “At Orkin University, we are focused on ‘blending’ technologies and delivering solutions to meet all of our training and communications goals. It’s not a ‘one approach does all’ mindset. Traditional classroom training will continue to be a significant part of the mix as well as web-based training and job aids which are reference materials to support performance.”

GOODWIN: “Because our employees are decentralized, work in multiple time zones across the country and are out of the office during the day, we needed a more cost-effective training solution that would be convenient for our field personnel. We also needed a more cost-effective approach that would permit more frequent training and have interactive capabilities.”

BANDERAS: “The satellite network is a simple solution...a good fit with the Orkin methodology. There is nothing to do with computers or complex systems. Bottom line, the system is hassle free and user friendly.” He added, “It will be a great tool to advance and promote the Orkin corporate culture.”

Define Objectives & Requirements

Clearly outline and define your learning and business objectives early in the process. This requires an analysis of training courses and learners. Understanding courses and

learners is an important prerequisite to evaluating delivery alternatives and selecting the right delivery solution for a given situation.

According to Lamb, "It is our goal to develop and provide 'best practice' approaches to fix problems – to give employees quick and easy access information, just-in-time and just-enough, that allows them to perform their jobs. We will continuously strive to find the right and best blended training and performance support approaches."

Orkin's defined needs and requirements, which were the basis for the cost/benefit and pro forma analysis of the business case:

- system configuration;
- functionality;
- cost;
- benefits to the company with a focus on the delivery of training via IDL.

Develop a list of key requirements for the technology solution, including:

- the ability to transmit training programs from Orkin University;
- viewing on video monitors – not televisions (with tuners) or computers;
 - live or on-demand
- synchronous audio interaction that emulates the current instructor-led sessions;
- authorization of targeted viewing locations and student;
- reliable downloading of program content for on-demand training;
- facilitate testing and polling of students;
- support course registration;
- track and measure test results;
- it must be as hassle-free, easy to use as possible.

Orkin objectives included:

- a reduction in training costs;
- an increase in the frequency of training sessions;
- leveraging the simulated service environments at Orkin University;
- leveraging Orkin's extensive video library and video production capabilities;
- centralized content management;
- uniform delivery of training using the best instructors.

GOODWIN: "With satellite, we are communicating at the 'speed of business'. All employees receive the same, unfiltered message."

When does Satellite Make Sense?

Orkin understood that there are many key considerations in justifying a satellite-based interactive distance learning network over other alternatives of delivery. Satellite is the right solution when there is a need to:

- train a geographically dispersed workforce;
- provide training to many locations, some in remote places;
- train and communicate on a regular, ongoing basis;
- have timely and consistent field communications;

- include live interactivity with instructors;
- have quality video as part of the program;
- easily manage network security;
- track and document training with a learning management system;
- reduce the cost of delivery;
- supplement the bandwidth of a terrestrial network;
- have a scalable delivery solution.

Due Diligence is a Critical Step!

Research, analysis, benchmarking and preparation is so important to avoid problems and unnecessary challenges when making decisions and vendor selections that will have a significant impact on the organization – especially, when they are multi-million dollar, long-term investments.

- Conduct extensive research and numerous benchmarking trips to companies using satellite and IDL solutions

GOODWIN: “We consider ourselves to be quite fortunate regarding the timing of our project. We saw where the industry was going with regards to IP delivery over satellite and the integration of satellite and IDL systems. We selected a solution that primarily consists of proven technologies but meets functionality that to this point is unique to Orkin.”

- Visit vendor facilities, meet their people, see their organizations at work
- Contact vendor clients – discuss their satellite and IDL solutions, their effectiveness and vendor service levels
- Attend industry conferences and user group meetings of prospective industry vendors

LAMB: “The benchmarking of other IDL users was a very important step in developing our understanding of the best practices - to learn about the available technologies and the satellite network service providers, as well as the programming. Our senior management team needed to be comfortable that the technology selected was proven and stable – not bleeding edge.”

- Conduct a proof-of-concept pilot if/when necessary

GOODWIN: “We found that a three-week pilot validated our interests and expectations for a satellite-based IDL solution. It confirmed Orkin University’s and senior management’s belief about how comfortable our instructors and audience were with the technology.”

LAMB: “We have determined that satellite allows us to continue to use the best elements of the classroom (Q&A and feedback) with the same access to our subject matter experts (SMEs). This is difficult to accomplish with other technologies.”

- Know your viewing environment
- Identify the viewing display – video monitors, flat screens, computer screens
- Are the students computer savvy?
- Are computers even available, a consideration?

- Consider your audience of learners – is satellite IDL a good fit?
 - Synchronous - Do they need live interactivity with the instructors
 - Asynchronous - Is on-demand better, more convenient, productive
- How much programming will be provided
 - Number of programs
 - How long
 - How often and when will the programs be live? Available on-demand?
- What other functionality is desired? Required?
- Identify what system configuration and solution is best for your organization?
- Is satellite a good cultural fit?
- The user experience must be easy to use, virtually hassle-free
- Understand the implementation time frames
- Identify potential challenges and areas of un-anticipated costs
- Understand what content is appropriate to deliver via satellite (all content is not best suited for satellite delivery)
- Get assistance and guidance from someone with expertise in the satellite-based delivery of video, interactive distance learning (IDL) and rich-media applications

BANDERAS: “We are enjoying the ease with which we are able to do network upgrades by merely downloaded software patches and updates over the network. The system is also very flexible, allowing us to quickly make it our own.”

Get Executive Buy-in and Support

Get buy in and support from senior management. Identify their specific areas of interest - each executive may have unique ideas and needs. In addition, they may provide insightful perspectives, and excellent guidance, as well as present demanding challenges. Any or all of their interests might be the element that leads to approval of a system.

Executives recognize the value to cost effectively and conveniently communicate on a regular basis to employees, strategic partners and vendors, customers, the news media and financial markets.

LAMB: “We expect corporate communications to present a big demand on the network resources. It is Mr. (Gary) Rollin’s (CEO) dream is to immediately touch every employee in the field.”

- Represent everything accurately to management!
- Set right expectations – Don’t over commit!

Establish a strong working relationship with the other functional groups in your organization including the IT and telecom departments. Their support can be critical to building the justifiable business case or successfully deploying the network.

Find Professional Guidance and Expertise

Engage with external resources for the knowledge, understanding and industry contacts that you don't have on staff. To obtain the best results, they should be considered as extended, trusted resources of your internal staff.

GOODWIN: "We did not have the technical expertise in house, and management quickly approved our engaging with a consulting partner (Enliten). Enliten's reputation as a thought leader in the satellite field was a significant factor in management's decision to move ahead with the major investment in a satellite network."

BANDERAS: "We realized at the time of our pilot, that we didn't know enough about satellite. We knew where we wanted to go, but not how to get there. We couldn't have done it without outside guidance and assistance.

Other Lessons Learned

Early on, the Orkin team faced a number of challenges with the technology associated with the satellite-based IDL network and a number of other issues, including those which had nothing to do with the technology:

- Everyone has to learn the system to get the maximum return – the instructors, the viewers, management, internal support personnel, and vendors;
- Mindsets will have to be changed – this is a new way of training, communicating;
- The time zone difference presents a challenge in scheduling;
- The design and development of program content requires a tremendous amount of time and resources;
- Set right expectations with all parties involved... including vendors!
- A network deployment of this size requires a significant amount of planning, coordination and management to be successful;
- Cooperation, communication and change management are essential;
- Work assertively with your IT department and the selected vendors to assure the success of the network: its implementation; and ongoing management and use;
- Develop a roadmap and timeline to address all critical components and possible points of contention or delay, including but not limited to:
 - local area network (LAN)
 - return channel for the audio interaction and polling/testing
 - installation of satellite receiver and distance learning systems
 - interfacing the distance learning system and learning management system
 - installation of head end and studio equipment
- Focus on staffing and resource issues and the conversion and development of its content;
- Determine how to implement and run the network in the most cost effective manner:
 - conduct preliminary phone and written surveys with the office managers
 - conduct third-party tests and analysis of the newly integrated system
 - coordinate the downlink installation and transmission plan.