OneBlood harnesses power of online education with Blackboard Learning Solutions

When three of Florida’s not-for-profit blood centers merged in 2012 to form OneBlood, Inc. there was a need to create a unified training program for all team members.

“We had three sets of standard operating procedures, three training programs, and three ways of doing business,” says Awilda Orta-Gerber, Vice President of OneBlood’s Regulated and Business Application Training (RBAT) team. “We needed a training program that would integrate our staff into one system.”

After researching various online learning platforms OneBlood was impressed by the cutting-edge training and educational technologies offered through Blackboard.

“We were looking for a new approach to train our staff in a highly regulated environment,” says Orta-Gerber. “Using Blackboard Learn and Collaborate, we’ve been able to offer standardized, compliant and focused training.”

OneBlood expanded its operational footprint in July 2015 when it merged with The Blood Alliance. Today, OneBlood employs more than 2,000 people, collects and distributes more than one million blood products annually, and serves more than 200 hospitals throughout Florida and parts of Georgia, Alabama and South Carolina.

Challenge: Integrating more than 2,000 employees into one system

“Typically, when blood centers merge, they continue to operate under their own systems,” says Orta-Gerber. “At OneBlood, we chose the path of complete integration so we could create operational efficiencies and a unified way of operating. That meant we needed a comprehensive training program.”

With employees located across four states, the company’s geographic footprint posed a training challenge.

“Before we started using Blackboard, we relied on field training,” says Paula Howard, Director of Training for RBAT. “Basically, it was a person in the field working in your department teaching you the job. If anything had to be introduced to the entire OneBlood team we would hold classroom sessions to train 20 people at a time and it was not an efficient system.”
The company needed a new approach.

“To fully integrate our employees into one system, we knew we had to establish a training program that would meet the geographic needs of OneBlood and reach a large number of people in the most efficient manner possible,” says Howard. “That’s where Blackboard came in.”

Solution: Online training modules that allow users to work at their own pace

OneBlood began using Blackboard Learn to offer specific courses in 2013. A year later, they introduced their entire training program online via Blackboard Collaborate.

“Blackboard changed our paradigm for learning,” says Howard. “Our training programs went from being trainer-centered to trainee-centered. Using the online Blackboard modules, our employees can work at their own pace. They can repeat modules as needed and move quickly through the modules they understand. We don’t move classes through our training programs anymore; we move individuals.”

OneBlood’s online learning modules offered through Blackboard Learn provide education and technical training in a standardized and consistent model.

“We were able to integrate more than 2,000 employees into one system with no delays,” says Orta-Gerber. “At this point, our staff is very familiar with our standard operating procedures and equipment and can experience the workplace environment with an expanded knowledge base.”

Results: Efficient modules cut training time in half

Since OneBlood introduced its online training modules, the company has seen a significant impact in terms of reduced travel, more efficiency gains, and less retraining.

“We recently analyzed some data from pre-integration and post-integration, and we’ve been able to reduce training time for a 12 week course to approximately a 6 to 7 week course,” says Howard.

What’s next? Continuing education modules to benefit hospitals and physicians

“We’re looking at the possibility of using Blackboard for our competency assessments, where we assess competency levels through a camera. This approach would reduce travel and help create additional efficiencies.

OneBlood is also looking at opportunities outside the company.

“We’re considering the development of continuing education modules for physicians,” says Howard. “Hospitals are looking at ways to become more efficient when it comes to blood usage, and we see an opportunity for education to ensure the purity, potency, and safety of the blood. That education piece is deeply rooted in our mission. In addition to training people, we want to educate them as well.