

# case study

## Amazon.com

### Saba Empowers Employees Across the Organization

#### Solution Overview

#### Industry – Retail

#### Challenge

Improve efficiency across five distributed fulfillment centers during a time of high growth and exploding holiday sales

#### Benefits

- Increased employee productivity
- Improved operational efficiency
- Increased consistency of knowledge across fulfillment network

#### Solution

Saba Learning Suite

Amazon.com opened its virtual doors in July 1995 with a mission to use the Internet to transform book buying into the fastest, easiest and most enjoyable shopping experience possible. Today, Amazon.com seeks to be the world's most customer-centric company, where millions of customers in more than 220 countries can find and discover anything they might want to buy online.

The Operations Division at Amazon.com is composed of fulfillment and customer service centers. It has six fulfillment centers nationwide totaling more than 3,000,000 square feet and four international centers totaling more than 1,200,000 square feet. Amazon.com built its fulfillment infrastructure to meet projected long-term growth, provide customers with fast, reliable shipping, and manage the amount of merchandise kept on hand for shipment to customers. Amazon.com also has three customer service centers nationwide totaling more than 70,000 square feet and three international centers totaling more than 22,000 square feet. Amazon.com designed its customer service centers to enable customers worldwide to reach a customer service representative 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

*“ Saba3 Release4 helps us increase our laser focus on what is most important to the execution of our business strategy – the satisfaction of our customers and operational efficiency. ”*

Garrett Stokes, Senior Project Manager, Global HR Solutions  
Amazon.com

#### The Challenge

In 1999, Amazon.com's main challenge was managing its exploding growth. That year, the retailer grew its fulfillment centers from two to five, resulting in a dramatic increase in employees and merchandise. Scalability became a key focus for Amazon.com and impacted all aspects of its business, including delivering training to new employees, managing records, tracking who was trained in which operating procedures and deciding which people were right for which jobs.

Amazon.com also needed a process for sharing learning content and best practices across its decentralized facilities — each with its own training department. To meet these challenges, it required a single system to manage learning, content, employee data and training records.

Another area of major growth for Amazon.com was sales, especially during the holiday season. 1999 fourth-quarter sales for Amazon.com totaled more than \$650 million, more than two and one-half times 1998's fourth-quarter sales of \$253 million. To ensure the successful execution of business operations during this busy season, the retailer needed a system to deliver the right knowledge and skills to the right employees at the right time.

### The Solution

Recognizing the need for a single, globally scalable learning management system, Amazon.com selected Saba Learning, Enterprise Edition. With Saba Learning, Amazon.com could take a course curriculum developed in one location and leverage it as a unified curriculum across its operations. Courses covered topics such as safety, CPR, first aid, standard operation procedure (SOP) certification, IT, human resources, legal compliance, management and new hire orientation. By consolidating learning in a single system, Amazon.com could standardize and audit these learning processes in the field to increase employee accountability and performance.

During the holiday season, Amazon.com used Saba Learning to increase cross-training efforts and preparedness for its contingent workforce. It also built virtual teams and deployed them to holiday sites with the correct knowledge and skills for how to use tools and procedures — topics that were standardized and delivered on Saba Learning.

Saba Learning made it easy for Amazon.com to launch and track all forms of learning including instructor-led training, Web-based training, streaming media titles and self-paced CD-ROMs. The Saba ecosystem of partners enabled the retailer to easily integrate tools and content from leading providers with Saba Learning by using learning technology standards such as SCORM and AICC.

### Results and the Future

Saba Learning has successfully helped the Operations Division support Amazon.com's operational excellence initiatives, which included delivering on customer promises and ensuring operational efficiencies. Amazon.com has achieved content fluidity and a consistency of knowledge across the fulfillment network. This focus on learning has empowered Amazon.com employees with the skills required to increase performance, productivity, quality assurance, compliance and safety — all required to assure the execution of its business strategy.

The success and value of this learning solution resulted in the Amazon.com decision to upgrade to Saba3 Release4, begin to implement competencies and expand access to the Saba platform across all departments companywide, including Human Resources, IT, Marketing, Corporate and International.

“We are very excited about the new functionality of Saba3 Release4, which will give our instructors more flexibility, control and browser-based access to just-in-time data,” said Garrett Stokes, Senior Project Manager of Global HR Solutions with Amazon.com. “Saba has been very responsive in adding powerful new features that address the customer's needs.”