

TECHNOLOGY AND TRAINING

How can Technology help us get more people trained faster, cheaper and work around the crazy busy schedules of a customer-oriented propane business?

If technology helped us get people to the moon decades ago, create self-driving cars, and empower companies like Amazon, Apple, Uber, Facebook and Airbnb to become billion dollar companies “overnight” then what can technology do for our industry?

In the Propane industry we have required training CTEP and many other vital training courses needed to run plants safely, perform various basic and advanced installations, manage our bob-tails safely and keep customers and fellow employees safe. Our training is really good and that is why our industry is a safe alternative to Natural Gas, but has the way we do our training changed much, has it improved much over the last several decades?

For example, if a company wants to get their employees trained they often need to ship them to a central location sometimes miles away, sometimes pay for hotels and meals just so an em-



ployee can go to critical training. Sometimes that critical training is unavailable due to either not enough students or too many. Sometimes it can get canceled due to weather issues. Or sometimes it is simply out of reach due to a tight budget, conflicting vacation plans, unavoidable illnesses or due to the company being short-handed.

These challenges used to be considered normal business challenges and “just the cost of doing business”. Is that still true today?

In the last few years, my wife started teaching English to children in countries around the globe in different time zones and all from the the comfort of our home. She does live online English language training all via her laptop and internet connection making personal language coaching which used to be only affordable to the wealthy now affordable to the regular working class around the globe.

So what can we in our industry do to harness technology to improve our training and what is already being done?

After searching the entire industry in N.America we came across one company that has a booming business doing live distance learning for the propane industry and interviewed them. The company is Silverback Consulting aka Propane University

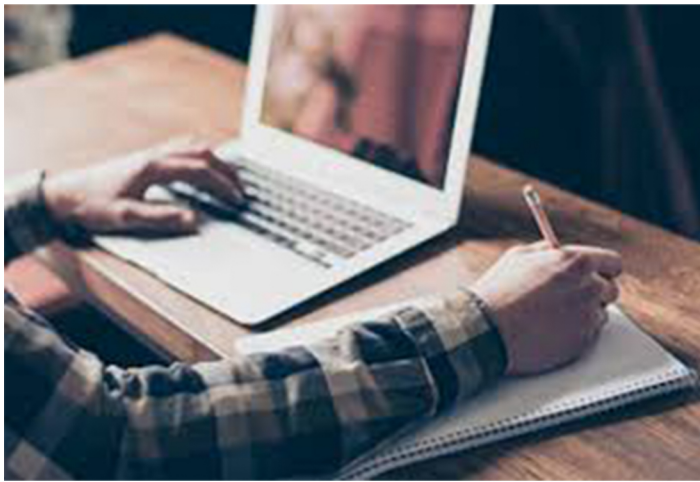


Bill Stomp is a partner along with 5 other consultants in PropaneQuarterback.com, who specialize in the propane industry, as well as a partner with TankSpotter.com, this sector's first and only complete propane app.

headed by Mike Digiorgio a 40+ year Propane Safety expert who saw years ago that there was a major hole in our safety training internationally so he created a Live Interactive Online Training University aimed at making Safety Training Faster, More Flexible and More Affordable for the small to medium size businesses.

As he states it “Our goal was to get training to people who missed or could not attend local training sessions a more affordable and flexible live online training option with a consistent, interesting, fun and complete training experience all from their office or home computer.”

When asked what inspired this Mike refers back to his days running safety for a large regional propane company and he quickly noticed that it was simply impossible for all the 100+ employees to get the required training needed so he had to do multiple training sessions at multiple locations and even then some employees had to travel and take extra time away from their office and family to get the training they wanted and needed.



More recently he had a winter meeting with 10 people in an intensive 3 day online Designing and Installing exterior vapor distribution systems... on the second day, he got a call that 4 of the 10 could not attend the meeting due to the snowstorm... No problem he said, let them stay home, be safe and take the training over a laptop online with Mike and the class. They did not miss the course, did not jeopardize their safety on icy roads and they completed the course on time with no additional costs.

Often companies contact Propane University because the classes they were scheduled for were canceled due to lack of attendees. Or because they missed a class due to vacations or sick days and were desperate for the required CTEP training.

Today's new era of online digital training, connecting, learning, and transacting though different provides a gold mine of time and cost savings for a very busy and time constrained industry like ours. For more ideas on what online training, learning and an opportunity to connect with hundreds of vendors visit VirtualPropaneExpo.com. Learn how you can save money and time in today's digital world.

Companies that use the service love it because they can get multiple locations of employees trained without those people leaving their local office. One company Sol Petroleum has propane offices on multiple islands in the Caribbean and they wanted to get all employees certified. With his live online training, not one employee had to leave an island to go to a training facility for the necessary training so all 225 employees could be completely trained and certified in Basic, Bobtail and Cylinder delivery training including location engineers on CTEP Plant Operations saving them Tens of Thousands of dollars in travel costs, overnight hotel bills, the cost of meals in addition to cost of lost work hours due to travel time. Technology-driven Training saves companies Thousands of dollars and recovers critical and now preventable lost time.

The technology allows companies to have Mike do their Monthly Safety Meetings, and helps Insurance companies do CTEP certification for the companies they insure saving at such a significant discount that some insurance companies cover the cost of the training.

The technology also allows him to work hand in hand with companies to be an extension of their company and outsource their safety department to him. It allows him to assist companies with safety and compliance programs in a virtual meeting room. Rather than have a full time 40+ year safety and compliance Propane and DOT expert on staff with all the costs associated with a high-level expert via today's technology companies can tap into his knowledge for literally a fraction of the cost. The technology is so powerful that he can even watch and coach drivers on post-trip inspections virtually and coached fuel company owners through major issues.

A regular call to Mike might be a call from an owner that someone ran into the back of their propane truck – how do they handle it. Instantly Mike has them in his virtual training room with live coverage of the scene via the drivers' smartphone camera he can assess and coach live remotely and instantly.

Mike's company continues to look for ways to save their customers time and money via technology. They have recently begun to

suggest to all their clients an app based technology called the Propane Safety App by TankSpotter.com. As Mike says it, “the app makes our clients much safer, much more efficient, reduces their costs, has all the service tech tools and even has tools to help propane companies get more customers and sell more propane...it’s the new direction every company will be doing instead of old paper forms and documents”.



Technology is moving Propane forward in ways and places many did not expect. Mike Digiorgio and Silverback Consulting are helping the propane industry make training easier to get, more affordable and are showing us a new way forward where our employees no longer have to travel to training but rather can do it all from the office or from their home saving travel costs, travel time and making for a happier, and better trained workforce.

So, what do you think, can technology make us a safer better-trained industry? Mike’s propane company customers would say a resounding YES!