

Custom eLearning Development & Knowledge Sharing Software



Eric Harsh
CEO
Expand Interactive

CEOCFO: *Mr. Harsh, would you tell us the concept for Expand Interactive?*

Mr. Harsh: We started Expand about eight years ago as an eLearning content firm on the simple premise that eLearning is boring. My partner and I wanted to do something that made eLearning fun, and founded a turnkey content company handling everything from instructional design to animation and video. Over time, we realized there was a need for hosting this content online and measuring its effectiveness, and we occupy this unique position in the market. Today, we are a creative technology firm using eLearning as a means to an end—directly measuring its impact on the business as a whole.

CEOCFO: *How are you able to measure?*

Mr. Harsh: Every discussion we have with prospective clients begins with the question, “How do you know training works?” Industry reports indicate 80% of eLearning only measures completion and in 10% of all eLearning, nothing is measured at all. Expand uses a pyramid of criteria to answer that question, “How do we know?” The base of our pyramid is Satisfaction, Learning and Confidence. We go a step further to then measure Behavioral Change and, most importantly, Business Impact. “How does this course impact the organization’s performance objectives?” This top brick in the pyramid is our sweet spot.

CEOCFO: *Do you find that businesses are taking eLearning more seriously than they might have in the beginning?*

Mr. Harsh: I think they take the data we provide more seriously. More and more, companies are required to justify the investment in robust training programs. A challenge we face is showing potential clients if you invest in good training, it not only can have an impact on your business, but you’ll be able to prove its value.

CEOCFO: *Are people coming to you because they understand you can provide the result side or are they pleasantly surprised to find out?*

Mr. Harsh: Clients find us when they are looking for good eLearning software and/or fun engaging content, but discovering our love of data is an added bonus. Layering knowledge data on top of sales, safety, or other key performance metrics is what creates long-term partnerships with our clients.

CEOCFO: *Do you find any reluctance for companies to allow you access to some of the data so that you can measure the results?*

Mr. Harsh: It depends on what information they need to connect to the training data we collect. When it’s highly confidential, yes, of course. On top of the NDA and confidentiality agreements, we work to establish a level of trust that Expand’s products and services can actually move the needle. Our core clients trust in our ability to make that kind of change in their business.

CEOCFO: *How do you reach out to prospective customers?*

Mr. Harsh: Our sweet spot is organizations with a disparate set of locations or employees where the level of training can greatly impact the performance of that location or employee. Franchises, Dealer/Distribution Channels and Utilities are major verticals of ours.

CEOCFO: *When you are structuring a program for a company, what do you look at that others might not realize is important?*

Mr. Harsh: We align with how they measure KPIs, which is often based on a location, region and/or sales territory. Any activity happening within our system is associated with each location's KPI metrics. For example, if a client measures sales revenue by dealer locations, we track training metrics by dealer location. Our data can also be aggregated into regions or territories as appropriate.

CEOCFO: *Did you know that in the beginning?*

Mr. Harsh: No. When we started we made the same mistake the rest of the industry is still making – only measuring individual users and role-based groups.

CEOCFO: *Are there industries where you would like to have more impact?*

Mr. Harsh: We are doing a lot of work with a couple of major utilities that's having a substantial impact on their business. One of the reasons for that is most utilities are still paper-based. Instead, they use our mobile-optimized checklists and forms to audit substations in the field. As employees submit the completed checklists and forms, the data is summarized for each substation, providing a near-real time snapshot of the overall health of the substation. We're able to tell a story about the substations they've never been able to tell before. Replacing paper-and-pencil with smartphones and tablets is a bit of a slow go for many utilities. We have to connect with company leaders with the right mindset who is ready for that level of change in order to increase business performance.

CEOCFO: *Can you tell when you first start talking to a company if they are going to understand?*

Mr. Harsh: We are most effective when talking to business managers who have a larger responsibility than just training. We view training as a means to an end, and find most business managers think the same way. We are at the table to help that manager solve bigger issues, and our approach to solving common business problems is by increasing organizational knowledge. If the problem is, "we just need a training course to be done so we can check a box to say it's complete," then we most likely aren't the best fit.

"We look at eLearning as a means to an end. Data is key and changing a company's performance is what matters." - Eric Harsh

CEOCFO: *Expand Interactive was recently recognized with an NEO Success Award. Would you tell us about that?*

Mr. Harsh: Expand has experienced growth the last several years because we have a truly unique value proposition. We have a fun, high-energy team with a passionate focus on craftsmanship in everything we do and it's showing in our sales growth.

CEOCFO: *What might be different a year from now?*

Mr. Harsh: As we evolve, the star we are pointing towards is data. We love to capture data and learn from it. The more we learn, the more effective we can be for our clients. One year from now, we will be less of a traditional eLearning company and more of a business-consulting firm using eLearning as a tool.

CEOCFO: *Do you see making more of a complete transition at some point?*

Mr. Harsh: No, we are a creative technology firm and at our core, we like to do fun things. We have a good creative vibe here. The reason we are able to capture powerful data is by feeding learners with creative, engaging content. If we let that go a big piece of the engine goes away.

CEOCFO: *Why pay attention to Expand Interactive?*

Mr. Harsh: We occupy a very unique position in the market. While fundamentally an eLearning company, we view eLearning as a means to an end. Data is key and changing a company's performance is what matters.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine

For more information visit: www.expandinteractive.com
