



at home

The Home Décor Superstore

## AXONIFY CASE STUDY:

# Powerhouse home décor retailer, At Home, boosts sales by investing in the right kind of associate training

**How do you scale employee training across multiple stores at an accelerated pace to ensure everyone—from the store associate to the store director—has the information required to drive profitability and growth?**

That's the question that faced retailer, At Home, as it underwent a complete transformation from a tired pottery warehouse (formerly known as Garden Ridge) to a powerhouse home décor brand—in less than 24 months.

### Searching for an effective training solution

Chief People Officer, Valerie Davisson, knew that the right kind of employee training program was integral to At Home's successful transformation. The company needed to align more than 3,000 employees across 100 stores, in 28 U.S. states, while continuing to expand its store presence. But, with a lean training team and limited budget, Davisson faced the additional challenge of finding a way to train employees quickly and effectively without breaking the bank. "I needed a very simple solution that could easily scale, was easily understood and was flexible enough to meet my needs. And, if it hit all that criteria, I could also afford it," said Davisson.

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### Company:

At Home is an American home décor retailer with more than 100 stores across 28 states in the U.S.

### Industry:

Retail

### Key Challenges:

- Find a lean training solution that was easy to use, flexible, and would scale with the company as it expanded
- Create a consistent onboarding process across all store locations
- Engage associates in training ongoing
- Reduce safety incidents
- Comply with certification requirements
- Tie learning to business results

### Solution:

Implemented Axonify in 100 stores across the U.S., to more than 3,000 associates.

### Results:

- Increase in sales among stores with the highest knowledge levels
- 36% drop in safety incidents among associates on the platform
- 90% reduction in onboarding time
- 98% voluntary participation on the platform
- Faster compliance (78% of employees completed annual PCI compliance training within 2 weeks)

Axonify™

## Taking a fresh approach to employee training

Unlike many retail organizations, At Home didn't have a learning management system (LMS) in place to provide universal learning to its employees. In fact, because training was virtually nonexistent in the old Garden Ridge days, Davisson had to start from scratch. Instead of simply going down the LMS route, which she knew wouldn't engage associates or help them truly build their expertise around At Home's new way of doing business, she decided to search for a tool that would better meet her needs.

"The LMS is not something that lends itself to the world we're living in, and the retail business that I'm in," said Davisson. "Tracking whether or not people went to training and that whole kind of framework, as well as the amount of resources and support it requires you to have in place, doesn't fit where we're at and where we're going. It's like shoes that don't fit. I wouldn't go out and buy shoes that don't fit, no matter how nice the shoes are. So, the LMS doesn't fit. It doesn't strategically fit our business model."

Davisson knew she needed to take a fresh approach to employee training that would align with the company's modern transformation. Specifically, instead of pushing out large volumes of content and hoping that it would stick, she knew it was critical to find a way to build associate knowledge ongoing to ensure this customer-facing workforce would take the right actions on the job to ensure the company's success. She chose Axonify.

Simply put, Axonify is a microlearning platform that helps employees build, sustain and share knowledge in a fun, engaging and gamified way. It personalizes learning to target and close individual knowledge gaps, giving employees the confidence to perform their role to the best of their ability. A confident, knowledgeable workforce helps organizations achieve their potential, because employees take the correct actions that ultimately drive real business results.

Davisson believed Axonify's revolutionary methodology was just what At Home needed to make a cultural shift that would place employee learning at the forefront of achieving organizational objectives. So, she initiated a 6-month pilot with Axonify in 2014.

Each day, associates logged on to Axonify through kiosks in the breakroom to answer three to five questions about safe work practices, while playing a fun game. Then, based on their answers, Axonify identified areas where each associate needed more training and delivered learning to fill those gaps. The platform also reinforced the material they already knew, so they would keep it top of mind. This approach helped improve long-term memory around safety topics and build additional knowledge over time. It also helped store directors identify where employees needed coaching so they could give them the assistance they required to be successful.



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CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER,  
AT HOME

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### Using a continuous learning approach to create significant business impact

The results of the pilot were incredible! At Home identified a 14% average increase in employee knowledge for critical safety topics, which contributed to a 36% drop in safety incidents among associates who were learning on Axonify.

Armed with this proof, Davisson then proceeded with rolling out the new training initiative to At Home stores across the U.S. and hasn't looked back. In fact, by using Axonify, she was able to train 2,500 associates (with no field support) in 4 weeks, which would have previously taken 6 months—contributing to an overall 90% reduction in onboarding time and time-to-capability.

“Axonify helped me learn a different way, with little questions and games,” said Ryan Porter, a store associate who has been with the company for a year and a half. “By the second week, I was really getting into the flow of things. Axonify helped me to not only learn what I needed to know, but remember it, too.”

Today, At Home employees not only receive daily learning on safe work practices, but also get training on leadership, customer service and support, company mission and values, and Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS). The results continue to impress. In addition to current employee knowledge levels averaging 92%, there is also a 98% voluntary participation rate on the platform. And, within two weeks of rolling out the annual PCI compliance training, required by almost all retailers, 78% of At Home's existing 3,200 associates had completed the certification—a phenomenal turnaround rate for this type of initiative. Associates even take extra training sessions at their own will, almost doubling their additional training between June and August 2016!

Stores with higher associate knowledge levels also show an increase in performance drivers such as sales and conversion. On average, these stores have 10% higher associate knowledge levels and achieve greater sales per week.

The difference that Axonify has made to At Home's operations can be felt from the top floor to the store floor. Everyone from senior executives to middle management to the associates themselves are seeing the business impact firsthand.

“Axonify has really helped me reduce turnover,” said Demond Winfree, a store manager in Richmond, VA. “The average turnover rate in retail, if you're decent, is 100%. Last year, my turnover rate was only 25%. So I've seen firsthand how, if Axonify is utilized correctly, it can absolutely help keep associates on the payroll. I think it's because they're learning on an ongoing basis and have more confidence in their role.”

Anecdotal results are also significant. A robbery took place in one of the stores on a Saturday in mid-September 2016. One of the operations leads later received an email from the store director thanking her for Axonify. Every employee who was in the store during the robbery said they knew how to respond correctly because of the training they received through the Axonify Microlearning Platform.

“I'm thrilled with the decision to use Axonify,” said Davisson. “But it's more important to say that my field operations people are thrilled with the decision. We've been able to deliver them an end-to-end solution that will evolve and grow with our business, scale with our business, and require very little of their time and attention from a day-to-day standpoint. And, yet, we've given them very engaging tools to help support the development of their teams.”