

Axonified Employee

Gary Orona,

Director of Training and Development,
Northgate González Market



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Gary Orona is the Director of Training and Development at Northgate González Market, Inc., which owns and operates supermarkets across southern California. We chatted with Gary about his role and why he turned to Axonify instead of an LMS to help him train his staff:

Q: What is your role at Northgate?

A: My position here at Northgate is Director of Training and Development and I've been in this position for about two years now. Most of my background is in retail operations: store manager, district manager, buyer, merchandising and schematics. This is the first time I have been in training.

Q: What did Northgate's training program look like before Axonify?

A: We'd bring in managers and we would have a PowerPoint class and then basically it was talking heads. There would be people at the front of the class telling everyone, "Okay. Don't do this. Don't do that. Sign this paper that says you took the class. Now go back to work." The managers were then supposed to take the information to their employees. We have 240

department managers and there would be 240 different messages going out to employees. Now, with Axonify, we aren't dependent on one person to take it back to each employee. We aren't dependent on his or her knowledge or how good a teacher he or she is. It has really changed how we do things.

Q: Have you seen any other positive changes since you implemented Axonify?

A: We're blowing by our budgeted numbers for accidents. I think it's the fact that employees are more educated. We launched seven modules on safety in Axonify, including one on Worker's Compensation Fraud, that our managers loved. The reinforcement and the repetition is what's keeping the information alive in the consciousness of our staff so that they don't make the mistakes they did before.

One specific store manager implemented Axonify right away because he had some performance concerns. He used it first himself and then made sure all his employees used the platform. This store increased sales, reduced accidents, reduced customer accidents and increased awareness of the programs we were launching because of Axonify. This store performed well above the numbers we were asking them to hit.

Q: Do you offer your employees any incentives with Axonify?

A: Yes. Every month we spend about \$3,000 buying gift cards and divide them among our stores. Employees use the points they gain from participating in training on Axonify to bid on the prizes. Since not everyone wins a gift card, we also wanted to offer something positive for everyone that was participating. We developed pins that say, "Axonify Top Performer," and gave them out to the top 50% of employees. We've had phone calls asking why people didn't get pins and it's created even more awareness. We've increased participation from 22% to 63% in one year and in the last week alone by 4%.

Q. Can you tell us why you think Axonify works?

A: I'm a high school football coach. I coached for 22 years. I saw the power of repetition, doing the play over and over. Repeat it until it is perfect so that you can execute it on game day. I saw the same mechanics with the questions and games in Axonify. If you miss a question, the system asks you do it again. Same thing with football. If we mess up on a play, we just line up and run it again. The kids knew that they would continue to run the play until it was perfected. I saw the same mechanics and the same progression in the Axonify platform that I used coaching football.

Q: How do you see your partnership with Axonify evolving or changing in the future?

A: We are focused right now on getting high participation. We want to put so many more trainings on the platform. Not just trainings, but also the annual certifications. We will have follow through and track who has and who hasn't completed the training.

Q: Why did you choose Axonify and not a traditional LMS?

A: Axonify does everything that the LMS does and more. It has the repetitive questions for training that the people remember. You can access an employee's knowledge base or their knowledge scores and you can see whether there's improvement or see what you need more training on. For example, you can see that there might be a specific subject that people are scoring poorly on so you know you need to help people better understand it. I just thought it was wasting money to pay so much for an LMS. We would have to manually put in all the times and dates of when we wanted people to take training. With Axonify, the algorithm actually figures out who needs what training and when. There is no way an LMS is going to do what Axonify does.

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