



AXONIFY CASE STUDY:

Bloomingdale's saves millions by investing in associate knowledge-building

How do you strategically and consistently build the knowledge of thousands of associates, across multiple store locations, to ensure they take the proper actions at work that will drive the business results you need?

That's the million-dollar question most retail executives struggle with...unless they're someone like Chad McIntosh, Vice President of Loss Prevention and Risk Management at Bloomingdale's. McIntosh knows exactly how his revolutionary approach to associate training is impacting employee knowledge and behavior as well as the bottom line. And he's saving the company big bucks—while creating a safer work environment.

bloomingdale's

Company:

Bloomingdale's is an American chain of luxury department stores owned by Macy's. Founded in 1872, the company has more than 10,000 employees in 12 states.

Industry:

Retail

Key challenges:

- Reduce safety claims
- Improve employee knowledge and retention about safety practices
- Provide consistent safety training across departments and stores
- Generate enthusiasm around safe work practices

Solution:

Delivered safety training to 10,000 Bloomingdale's employees using a fun, engaging, and gamified approach.

Results:

- Saved the company \$10 million in safety claims
- Reduced claims by 41%
- 90% voluntary employee participation in learning via Axonify
- 72% of employees said they prefer Axonify to other forms of learning
- 86.6% employees reported an increase in job confidence
- 83% employees said Axonify helped reduce shortage and prevent accidents

Confronting a universal problem

Today's organizations, regardless of industry, face a common problem. Simply put, employees today often lack the knowledge they need to take the right actions on the job, resulting in huge costs to the business.

In the case of Bloomingdale's, McIntosh identified an opportunity to reduce employee knowledge gaps around safety. Although the company already had a low rate of safety incidents, McIntosh wasn't satisfied with simply meeting the company's high safety standards. He was genuinely concerned about increasing employee safety and he knew status-quo training methods just weren't cutting it.

Like most retail organizations, the company relied on a handful of standard training approaches—awareness posters, classroom training, LMS technology, and pre-shift morning rallies—which were getting stale. (Let's face it. Safe work practices isn't exactly a topic that gets people excited). And, like virtually every large retail chain, Bloomingdale's found it hard to provide consistent store-to-store training, let alone figure out which associates understood the information and knew how to apply it correctly.

While this challenge was overwhelming, to say the least, it wasn't something McIntosh was willing to ignore. He understood that there was an unmistakable link between effective and continuous safety training and the likelihood employees would follow proper procedures, which would reduce injury rates. And he knew that it all started with employee knowledge.

Searching for an unconventional alternative

Without question, McIntosh recognized he needed to step outside of the traditional training box. He had to find a progressive learning solution that would not only solve his current challenge but could be applied to any part of the Bloomingdale's business to boost employee knowledge and performance. After all, risk management training approaches in general hadn't kept pace with the times. The company boasted a workforce that was tech-savvy, multi-generational, and facing higher demands to learn more information than ever before. And he knew there had to be a better way to reach this modern group of employees in a manner that would excite them about learning, help them retain information longer, and increase the likelihood of translating that learning into action on the job.

Although McIntosh wasn't sure if the type of cutting-edge approach he envisioned even existed, he identified four other must-haves. The solution had to:

- Integrate into employees' regular workday without taking them off the floor
- Appeal to a diverse workforce that was multi-generational
- Offer flexibility to meet the unique challenges in different departments and stores
- Provide a way to measure learning progress and tie it back to the business

Bloomingdale's delivers active shooter training in 24 hours

In light of serious terrorist threats in New York City in November 2015, Bloomingdale's turned Active Shooter Training around within 24 hours. Using the Axonify Microlearning Platform, the training was shifted to the highest priority. When employees arrived for the morning shift, they immediately received their active shooter training. This not only reinforced the knowledge or introduced it to new employees, but also gave them the confidence and peace of mind they needed at a particularly unnerving time.

“Axonify is giving us the ability to educate associates, make them aware and demonstrate changes in behavior to really make a safe environment.”

Chad McIntosh

VICE PRESIDENT OF LOSS PREVENTION
AND RISK MANAGEMENT



Pushing beyond the boundaries of eLearning

It was during a chance meeting that McIntosh learned about Axonify and, from the moment he saw it, he knew it was just the product he needed to help bring his vision to light. Not only did the solution meet all of his criteria, but he knew once employees tried it, they would keep coming back for more.

In a nutshell, Axonify is a microlearning platform that helps 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. And this helps organizations achieve their potential because employees take the correct actions, which ultimately drive real business results.

At Bloomingdale's, Axonify helps deliver safety awareness training to more than 10,000 employees. Employees participate in 3-5 minute training bursts during their shifts—either through POS systems or tablets on the store floor—so learning can happen every time they're at work, instead of only during formal training events. Employees learn about everything from ladder safety to how to clean up broken glass to the correct way to use box cutters and more. And because employees participate in training on an ongoing basis, the information they learn is reinforced so it is embedded in memory and they can apply it in their real work environment. All of this learning progress is also tracked in Axonify so McIntosh can measure the direct impact it is having on safety.

Proving the value of this new approach

What started out as a personal mission for McIntosh to solve a specific safety training issue has evolved into a corporate poster child for increasing employee knowledge and performance at Bloomingdale's.

Early on in Axonify's implementation, two chief executives were walking in one of Bloomingdale's stores. They noticed some broken glass on the floor, so they began to clean it up.

As they were doing this, an associate stopped them in their tracks, saying “You, gentlemen, aren't following the correct procedure. Let me show you how to clean up this glass properly. I learned on Axonify how to perform this task.” The two executives were astonished. From that point forward, all skepticism vanished. There was no question that the revolutionary learning program McIntosh implemented was having a direct impact on safety improvement in the workplace.

Proof of Axonify's impact is also evident in hard data. McIntosh measures safety performance month to month and he has identified consistent improvement. In fact, McIntosh reports Axonify has helped save the company \$2.2 million this year alone by reducing safety claims by 41%.

Besides this, associate survey results confirm Bloomingdale's employees are embracing Axonify just as much as management: 86.6% of Bloomingdale's associates reported their job confidence increased; 83% said they believe Axonify helps reduce shortage and prevent accidents; and 72% said they prefer Axonify to other forms of learning. On top of this, more than 90% of Bloomingdale's employees participate voluntarily in learning through Axonify.

McIntosh says the company is always looking for ways to enhance its safety programs, which are all part of the matrix in understanding store performance. He doesn't believe the company would be as strong as it is or as safe as it is today without Axonify and his vision is to see the knowledge platform implemented in other aspects of Bloomingdale's as well.

“In my 40 years of experience, this is probably the most innovative program I've put in place in any of the positions that I've been in for retail safety and loss prevention,” says McIntosh. “Axonify is giving us the ability to educate associates, make them aware and demonstrate changes in behavior to really make a safe environment.”