



Global Learning Program Infuses IBM Partners with Cloud and SoftLayer Expertise

Industry

Cloud computing

Product Area

IBM, cloud computing

Training Services

- Needs Analysis
- Custom Solution Development
- Mentoring/Consultation
- Training Delivery
- Measurement/Evaluation

Client: IBM and SoftLayer

SoftLayer, an IBM Company, provides cloud infrastructure as a service (IaaS) from a global network of cloud data centers in all major geographies and financial centers connected by a private and secure network. SoftLayer's products and services include bare metal and virtual servers, networking, and turnkey big data and private cloud solutions, and its customers range from Web startups to global enterprises. Founded in 2005 and headquartered in Dallas, Texas, SoftLayer was acquired by IBM in July 2013.

Situation: Worldwide Technical Training Program Needed to Enable SoftLayer and IBM Business Partners to Deliver High-Value Cloud Solutions

Cloud computing is transforming the way that IT services are consumed and delivered and, according to a recent Gartner study, will account for the bulk of new IT spending by 2016. For IBM Business Partners specializing in streamlining integration and delivering value-added solutions, cloud presents an unprecedented opportunity to capture new revenue and enter new markets at exponentially faster rates, with vastly lower capital expenditure requirements.

IBM's acquisition of SoftLayer in July 2013 generated a lot of excitement and questions within IBM and its Business Partner community, because many CIOs who are reengineering IT are looking for outside help for new skills, capabilities and tools. Partners quickly wanted to know:

- “What capabilities does SoftLayer offer?”
- “How do I connect to SoftLayer?”
- “What are its backup and recovery capabilities?”
- “What security options and compliance are provided?”

IBM's January 2014 announcement of a \$1.2 billion investment adding 15 cloud data centers worldwide increased the interest in capturing the local cloud demand. Business Partners drive a significant amount of the SoftLayer business revenue, and as reported in Forrester's “Cloud Channel Trends, 2013 to 2014,” technical training is the number one program that partners value from a managed services provider. Educating Business Partners on SoftLayer's IaaS capabilities and how it can help organizations move to cloud computing was a key area where IBM could help partners tap into and drive SoftLayer Business Partner revenue.

IBM and SoftLayer needed a training provider who could help them implement the training program, taking their SoftLayer fundamentals content delivered in the first quarter and building a scalable, world-class program — and they needed it in three months or less.



Solution: Global Managed Skills Program Including Expert Instructors and Hands-On Labs

Ultimately, IBM and SoftLayer chose Global Knowledge to manage and deliver this monumental skills program because of our proven ability to put world-class expert instructors in place and deliver training worldwide.

Global Knowledge's status as an IBM Global Training Provider validated our global quality, and the fact that we were named the first ever IBM Global Training Provider of the Year did not go unnoticed. In addition, they were impressed with our strong cloud training programs and knowledge of market competitors, as well as our proven commitment to excellence evidenced by the number of partner awards Global Knowledge has consistently received from industry leaders that represent core technologies used by SoftLayer, such as Cisco, Citrix and VMware.

Through several assessment sessions, the Global Knowledge sales, product and program teams worked with the SoftLayer Integration Channel Enablement Lead to refine and set the project requirements.

Global Knowledge has more than 3,000 instructors worldwide and is a leading provider of cloud and technical training, so finding a cadre of expert cloud computing instructors was relatively easy. These instructors had to be subject matter experts on multiple technologies, architectures and approaches, and they had to know the competitive landscape and where SoftLayer fits into a world of competitive solutions. To scale globally, meet SoftLayer's aggressive schedule and ensure consistent and effective delivery was no small feat.

Global Knowledge's Practice Director for Cloud Solutions developed metrics by which to measure instructors' SoftLayer expertise, performed a worldwide search and enlisted only the strongest candidates to participate in technical briefings with SoftLayer. As a final quality check before teaching, each instructor had to successfully complete "auditions," which included both IBM and SoftLayer experts.

Meanwhile, Global Knowledge IT experts developed an enrollment portal that would house a worldwide schedule and enable students from anywhere in the world to register for those sessions. The portal was developed and went live within weeks of being started.

Global Knowledge's labs team created a lab environment that would ensure rapid skills development and enhance students' retention of the course content.

By May 2014, the two-day "SoftLayer Fundamentals – Infrastructure as a Service" course was being delivered to IBM partners in 21 cities in 14 countries around the world.

Results: Worldwide IBM Partner Education Is Enabling SoftLayer Skills Development and Maximizing Cloud Investments

In less than 90 days, IBM and SoftLayer Business Partners are gaining the skills necessary to sell competitively in the fast-growing and highly profitable new marketplace, seizing the opportunity presented as IT spend shifts to cloud computing solutions like SoftLayer.

Enrollment opened to Business Partners in April 2014, and the demand for seats quickly exceeded supply. By the end of the first half of 2014, more than 2,000 members of IBM Business Partner companies will have built skills around "SoftLayer Fundamentals – Infrastructure as a Service."

"Prior to this class, I was only knowledgeable of AWS, Google, HDS and Rackspace. I did not know anything about SoftLayer or that it even existed. I now have a complete overview and feel comfortable to engage with my customers to sell SoftLayer."
– student in Australia



Case Study

At the outset of the training, a goal for a Net Satisfaction Index (NSI) of 87 was established for the overall class. After 16 classes delivered, the goal has been surpassed. The NSI for the class overall is more than 90, with the instructor index reaching 95.

“Having been on lots of IBM training courses, it is nice to have someone that is energetic and engaging and actually knows the subject as opposed to knowing and reading a slide deck. Superb presenters. Best I’ve seen.”

– *student in London*

The instructors’ real-world cloud computing experience and subject matter expertise, along with dynamic, engaging and effective presentation skills, is arming the SoftLayer and IBM Business Partners with the skills they need capture the cloud opportunity.