

Connecting the dots between employee training and business results across regions, languages and departments at Almarai



Food and beverage manufacturer and distributor [Almarai](#) already had a sales training team testing employees' general job behaviors and industry knowledge. But when it came time for depot supervisors to showcase expertise in technical, systems-oriented topics, the outcomes didn't always meet Quality Standards' expectations.

"What was happening in the sales division was the follow-up was not there," explains William Samuel, Head of Learning & Development, Sales Division, at Almarai. "We'd finish with a classroom session, then they'd go back and that's it. We weren't following up, so we didn't understand whether they'd implement [the knowledge] on the job."



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So when the company set out to improve team knowledge and retention on a new ordering and forecasting system—one that came with a desired 90% accuracy rate across a 2,000-strong learner base—it was clear that a big challenge lay ahead.

This led them to leverage PARADIGM (Almarai's internal name for Axonify), led by Abdulrehman Mohammed, Technical Training & Content Development Manager, to achieve meaningful and measurable change.

"We wanted to find out how to keep what we learned and [help] to retain it among our audience," says Samuel. "We thought Axonify was a tool we could use, and then we discussed how and what our expectations were with the team."



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The key challenges

As a large company headquartered in Saudi Arabia with multiple divisions spanning nine regions across the Middle East, getting supervisors to pass on a very specific set of key learnings to their sales teams was not only extremely difficult—it limited the company’s agility.

“Most of our learners are localized, so we have both English and Arabic [programs] running in parallel,” adds Samuel.

Training had to overcome significant land, department and language barriers to achieve a measurable change in lost sales and order accuracy. In 2019, PARADIGM was introduced to a select group of frontline leaders as a solution to ineffective training.

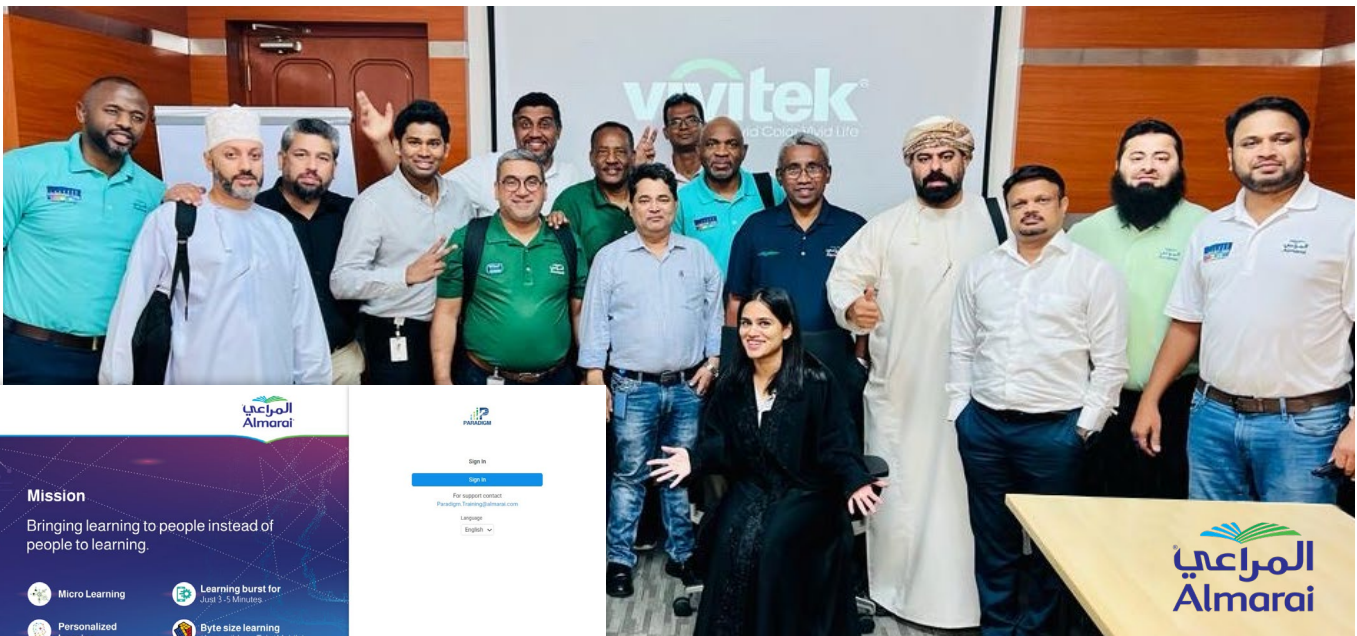
“What we did was start with the supervisors. We trained the supervisors and the supervisors

trained the salespeople. That’s the model we are still following.”

The success of Almarai’s pilot program began to inspire other departments to follow in their footsteps and embrace bite-sized, mobile learning the following year.

“We marketed this concept to other people within Sales and everybody started to embrace it,” he says. “The Quality Standards team took up Axonify first and they wanted to train the driving instructors, then the Health and Safety cooks and then the Accommodation officers. After that, we also gave it to the merchandisers, promoters and some Food Service supervisors.”

“The learning culture within our [departmental] training has changed immensely,” adds Ali Naeem Puri, Head of Sales Operations, Sales Division. “Axonify was able to tie knowledge to behavior and maximize productivity with bite-sized learning.”



“It was really exciting”

By 2022, those most active in Axonify were able to lift their knowledge scores by 23% to reach an impressive 92%, connecting participation in the platform to better performance. The level of engagement, knowledge growth and learning was unprecedented for Almarai.

“[Axonify] is a unique experience in Saudi Arabia because there are no other apps like it at the moment,” reveals Samuel. “It was really exciting to have an app that could help us so easily. Otherwise, following up with 2,000 people would be very difficult.”

“Another thing is how easily the app can give us data: the level of engagement in a week, how people are accessing and learning the [information]. We can see numbers in terms of knowledge and compare where they started versus where they have grown. Then, we can compare knowledge to what they’re actually doing.”

Based on the analysis conducted for the Gulf region, Almarai was able to link employee participation in PARADIGM to impactful results, including:

✓ **47% reduction in Lost Sales compared to 2021**

✓ **2% improvement in Order Accuracy compared to 2021**

Depot supervisors have also grown more comfortable on the platform, requiring only occasional scenario-based question support and getting more attuned to what PARADIGM can do.



Building a generation of new leaders

According to Samuel, the Almarai team hopes to develop new sales training next.

“Our Sales Technical Training team is in the process of starting our Sales Academy in Riyadh, KSA, where we will train new salespeople who are coming on board and then give them access to the platform. They’ll do a full, 360-degree round of training. Every three months, once the reinforcement is finished, we assess them. So we do examinations and then certify them to see if they’re fit for the job, and then they have to renew the certification every year.”

The goal is to create a larger pool of highly skilled workers across the company and continue to leverage Axonify to roll out learning.

“We want to create experts [instead of] general salespeople. Bring them in, do competency mapping and see, ‘Okay, you’re good for poultry, you’re good for dairy, you’re good for bakery.’ Then once they come to the academy, they’ll have 40 days of full-fledged training, from driving to managing an outlet, outlet ordering, the seven steps of sales calls, customer relationships, product handling and chain management.”

“There are a lot of big subjects that they’ll have to fully cover to get our certification. That’s the standard we’ve outlined for the academy.”

With a clear vision for how to keep developing staff and deepening expertise, Almarai is eager to explore other ways to level up internal teams and dig into Axonify’s AI and communications functionality to see what else is possible on the road to continued success.