

Speed to Proficiency Analysis: Social Security Administration

THE CHALLENGE: Get SSA Claims and Service Representatives up to speed faster

The Social Security Administration (SSA) annually hires and trains hundreds of Claims Representatives (CR's) and Service Representatives (SR's) nationwide to administer SSA's Title II (social security) and Title XVI (disability) programs. These are very complex jobs that entail skill in using SSA systems, policy knowledge and interpersonal skills. To bring a new person up to proficient performance typically requires between two and three years (24-36 months). The SSA calculated that if it could reduce this period of time, it could save millions of dollars per year in new hire and training expenses. Cedar Interactive was enlisted to help the SSA figure out how to do this, by accelerating the Speed to Proficiency.

FINDING THE SOLUTION

To help SSA identify how the proficiency cycle could be shortened, Cedar Interactive performed a Proficiency Analysis, which included:

- **Examination** of existing recruiting, training, and on-the-job coaching & support
- **Quantifying of potential savings** – ROI model calculation of over *ten million dollars* potential annual savings
- **Proficiency Benchmarking** – Establishing criteria by which proficiency would be measured
- **Speed to Proficiency recommendations**
- **Training and OJT Design**
 - Case-based blended learning: Learning activities delivered through a variety of methods including virtual meetings, self-study, video on demand, and online guided simulations. A learning management system guides trainees and facilitators through the curriculum, and is also used by SSA management to track training progress.
 - Structured On-the-Job (OJT) Coaching
 - Proficiency benchmarking

RESULTS: Pilot & Adoption

The recommendations were adopted and approved in the form of a Pilot project which, if successful, would serve as a model for revamping the entire curriculum. This pilot program (including the LMS) was developed by Cedar Interactive, and implemented by SSA, along with a control group for testing purposes. Results of the test were extremely favorable, to the point that the control group started using Pilot materials, to avoid wasting time with outmoded materials. It was also requested that the test period be extended to give ongoing access to the new materials. The Pilot test methods and approach were incorporated into SSA larger plans for ongoing curriculum revisions.

