



## Customer story



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Angie Branum, Service and Education & Training Manager

# The Toro Company aims to improve customer satisfaction with Absorb-powered certification program

[The Toro Company](#) is a global leader in solutions for outdoor equipment. Including a wide range of brands, the company offers solutions for turf and landscape maintenance, snow and ice management, underground utility construction, irrigation, outdoor lighting, and more.

The company's storied history began in 1914 as The Toro Motor Company, building engines for farming tractor company The Bull Tractor Company. Since then, through innovation and acquisition, the Bloomington, Minnesota-based company has grown into a world presence with more than \$4.5 billion in revenue.

## A new certification program

Among its marque customers, Toro boasts some of the most famous sports venues and historic sites. Its commercial division relies on a network of professional distributors, to provide its wide-ranging product portfolio to golf courses, groundskeepers, and more, in over 125 countries.

In 2024, Fortune Magazine named The Toro Company as one of the World's Most Admired Companies.

Recognizing the many business performance impacts of a certification program, Toro decided to develop one for its external customers in service parts and warranty at distributors.

Through certification, it was expected that Toro could differentiate its brand experience, improve FRFT (Fix Right the First Time) levels, and boost turnaround times and customer satisfaction — all contributing to profitable revenue growth in service and parts. In addition, it was expected that the program would improve employee engagement, retention, and recruitment.

“Our training team knew these potential impacts, and our distributors did too,” says Angie Branum, Service and Education & Training Manager at Toro. “They’d been asking for a certification program for several years. It was for the value of the program, but also to make sense of the large amount of content we had in our course library.”

# Creating a clear, flexible learning path

Branum says with the huge selection in their course library, distributors didn't know which courses to take, or which to have new employees complete and in what order. "Having that focused program of development throughout someone's onboarding can make a huge difference in their job satisfaction and decreasing turnover among service technicians."



The program, started in 2023, had several objectives and requirements including a structure to provide employees a path to follow, a consistent training experience, high standards, strong customer support, and clear reporting that helped support leadership and learners.

Since no two of Toro's distributors are identical, the program needed to be flexible and scalable to meet their specific needs. Finally, the program needed to include recertification and continuing education opportunities to ensure associates in the field were up to date on parts, products, and systems.

# A lot of little big decisions

Before moving ahead with the Absorb LMS for their new certification program, the Toro commercial training team knew they had a lot of decisions to iron out. Training would need to be delivered based on roles, so the team matched titles provided by distributors into general groups for course delivery. Levels of certification needed to be determined; the team went with Level I, II, III and IV certifications. For each role, what competencies were expected of them?

How would learners be recognized and rewarded? What should the tuition and fees be? Should they be based on levels? What should be part of recertification? Should it be annual, or biennial?

“Decisions were really hard because we had a nearly endless field of choices,” Branum says.



## Building the program with Absorb

Already an Absorb customer since September 2020 through its acquisition of eLogic, the Toro commercial training team decided to develop its certification program within the LMS. Already having Absorb in place as its Learning Management System made it easier for the team to develop its new certification program since Absorb LMS “checked all the boxes,” especially around ease of use.

“Even with the extensive amount of customization we have available, the system is extremely easy to use, and each piece of customization is easy to understand and put into place. We can do anything we need to,” Branum says.

Toro connected the SkillSoft course library to the Absorb platform in 2022. **“It was an amazing investment because it provided that much-needed customer service and professional development piece,”** Branum says. SkillSoft content and Toro custom content were categorized, sorted, and assigned based on the previously determined criteria.

Using Absorb’s ability to create competencies based on course completion, the team created “RED Certified” levels and badges for learners. To make the process smoother for distributors, the team used Absorb to create automatic enrollments into courses that logically followed. For example, once an associate completes Level I in a course, they are automatically enrolled in Level II, then III, and so on.

For control of access to certification courses, self-enrollment capabilities available in Absorb were turned off. Visibility for course administration was set precisely so that LMS admins at the distributor level could view specific course levels. Absorb’s [observation checklist](#) was added to the curriculum for the training team to establish tenure and completion attestations at the end of a learner’s program, as a final check.



The unique way Absorb brings structure to the courses, based on specific audiences, and with an ability to manage small details makes a huge difference in the learner experience, Branum suggests. Also, the ability for Absorb to ease the burden of reporting on admins, by distributors running their own reports and managing their own teams, is a significant time saver.

To meet its requirement of clear reporting, Toro uses [Analyze](#) dashboards to gather important analytics for leaders and see these within specifically filtered dashboards. The report manager within Analyze provides these filtered dashboards to appropriate individuals on a custom-set schedule.

Branum notes that the team is also using Analyze to assign SkillSoft licenses based on reported course enrollments. Achievement reports are also being used to determine recognition gifts.



**After only six months, more than three-quarters of applicable learners were enrolled in certification courses, exceeding the goal the company had set for itself. Also, all of Toro's distributors have personnel enrolled in the program, and all are active in the LMS.**

## Strong enrollments and successes

“I’m ecstatic. I’m thrilled to see that so many people are participating,” Branum says. “They’re excited about the program and enrolled.” More than 170 participants have leveled up their skills (for example, achieving Level I, II or III certification) within the first eight months of the program.

As was its goal, the certification program has contributed significant benefits. Several service metrics have been improved, for instance:

Technical assistance per case per month has dropped from 553 before Absorb to 450 after first implementing Absorb in 2020. Distributors’ customer satisfaction scores, already high at 9.2 out of 10, climbed to 9.3 out of 10. And, importantly, average turnaround time for repairs has dropped from 8.75 days to only 7.26 days. Utilization rate — Toro’s measure of service technician productivity and efficiency — has climbed over the three years of using Absorb from 69% to 72%.

“Absorb allowed us the opportunity to create a seamless, blended training program for a high-revenue product,” Branum says.

Toro has plans for the program's future to amplify functionality, processes, and metrics. Branum says the company plans to create a one-on-one alignment between online course pathways and the associated hands-on training. Observation Checklists will be used for skills reinforcement to improve retention.

Branum says the team is in the thick of better connecting its LMS data with business performance. “We are currently working on an [Absorb RESTful API](#) to take the LMS metrics out of Absorb into our Microsoft Power BI data warehouse to correlate that data with business metrics.”



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