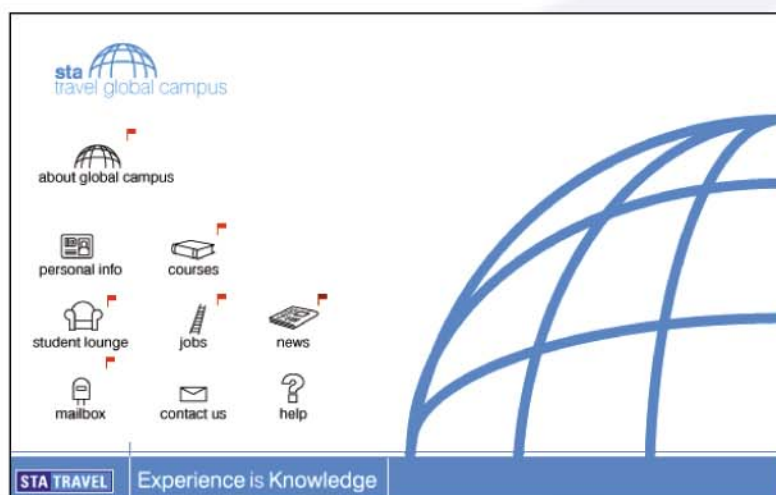connect • communicate • learn

FIRSTCLASS®

Case Study

Travel Agents in Cyberspace
Flying FirstClass with STA Travel Global Campus

"*With STA Travel Global Campus students can complete their studies at their own pace, after hours, and graduate with a nationally recognised qualification.*"

Sue Smith, Managing Director
STA Travel AUST/NZ Division

STA Travel Global Campus

Are there travel agents in cyberspace? Certainly – however, they aren't virtual tourist guides but student travel agents training online at STA Travel Global Campus. Developed by the New Zealand School of Travel and Tourism (NZSTT) and managed by its Internet Learning Business School (ILBSNZ), STA Travel Global Campus delivers the same curriculum that STA Travel Australia – part of the worldwide STA Travel organization – offers through face-to-face training. Like its classroom counterpart, the virtual Campus offers accredited travel and tourism courses approved by the Australian Travel Training Review Panel (ATTRP) and leading to an Australian Level 3 Certificate in Tourism (International Retail Travel Sales).

As Sue Smith, Managing Director of STA Travel Australia/New Zealand Division, points out, "…many conventional travel courses are cost and time prohibitive, particularly for people making a career change." Online courses, on the other hand, give students the chance to study at their own pace, in their own environment. Patrick O'Keeffe, a student at the Campus, concurs: "I have a full-time job, so I do all my studying after hours."

A FirstClass training environment

Cyber-schools face the challenge of preserving the human element in a virtual setting. STA Travel Global Campus has done a good job of making students feel they're part of a community with a common professional goal. An Intranet environment with private and public areas, the Campus is powered by FirstClass, a groupware product from Centrinity, the Canadian-based global software developer.

FirstClass is a robust, highly scalable software solution that enables educational organizations and businesses worldwide to communicate, collaborate, publish online and deliver distance training using state-of-the-art client-server technology and application development tools. Groups can customize FirstClass, making its seamlessly integrated Intranet/Internet environment into an online home. Like all FirstClass Intranets, STA Travel's virtual Campus is structured around *conferences* (online forums) and a private mailbox. Conferences contain the course curriculum, assignments, group tutorials, detailed information on courses and jobs, plus a network of newsletters, notice boards and chat rooms. Additionally, FirstClass enables users to post and manage multimedia-enhanced documents and customized forms. Students can also visit the Student Café for a real-time chat. STA Travel Global Campus is a veritable one-stop solution offering student travel agents both training and guidance – a simple way to click-start a career.
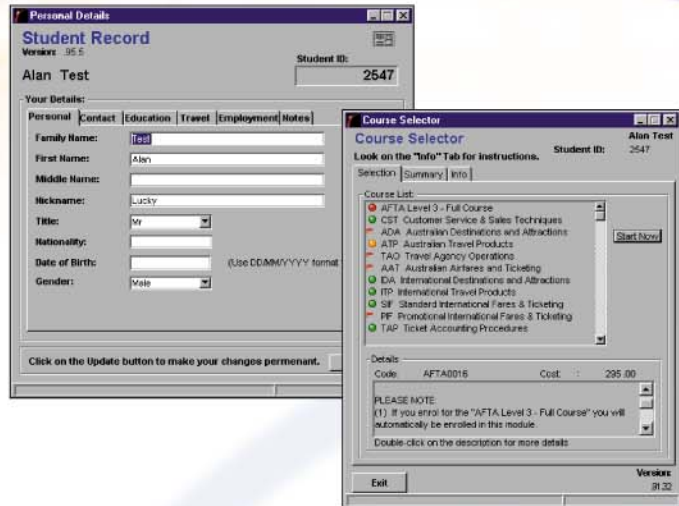
Training by modules

Once they register, students receive a user ID and password, a CD-ROM with software resources, an STA Travel Global Campus manual and access to a Mentor, a designated person who is their guide and helper on the Campus. They then select the course they wish to study and purchase the modules as they go. For instance, the AFTA qualification is comprised of 10 modules, including popular fares and ticketing modules internationally accredited by IATA/UFTAA. Students focus on three modules at a time. Once they register for a module, they're automatically given access to the module's content, which

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has been posted to a Campus *conference*. Each module takes about 30 hours to complete successfully. A gradebook application is used to track the students' progress, and another application is used for online testing. At the end of the course, STA Travel considers all participants for the position of STA Travel Adviser.
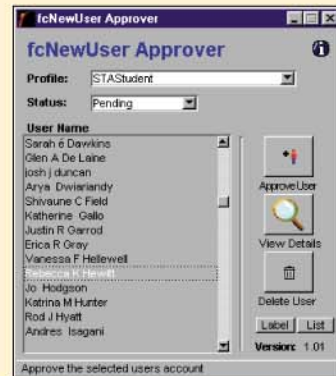
Online learning today and tomorrow

"There are times when you like to upgrade your skills or continue learning…but it may not always be possible – and this is where …the Campus is a life saver," comments Milton Batres, a student at STA Travel Global Campus. When time is of the essence, training in cyberspace may just be the ticket to an exciting future in global travel.

Registration with Centrinity's fcNewUser

fcNewUser, an application created with the help of server-based FirstClass Rapid Application Developer (FirstClass RAD*) tools, automates the online registration process. Students complete a customized application form, attach their photo and submit the application electronically. They receive immediate confirmation by email. Course selection is also automated using another FirstClass RAD-based application. All kinds of Intranet applications and powerful database interfaces can be built with FirstClass RAD, a tool that's part of a single, comprehensive integrated system based on proven FirstClass core architecture. FirstClass RAD has a sophisticated object-oriented, event-driven interface, which makes building applications easy enough for non-programmers, yet fulfills the needs of seasoned professionals.

* RAD is part of the latest version of FirstClass.

What does it take to be a virtual student?

• A computer with at least 10MB of hard disk space free (5MB for the client software and 5MB for file storage) running Windows 3.1, Windows 95 or later, or an Apple Macintosh system 7.1 or later
• A modem connection to the Internet via an ISP
• A CD-ROM drive
• Dedication

For more information on STA Travel Global Campus,
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Visit STA Travel Global Campus at
www.statravelcampus.com
and the Internet Learning Business School at
www.ilbsnz.com

Centrinity Inc. develops communication, collaboration and unified messaging software to enable corporate and education sectors worldwide to build online communities by sharing information and knowledge.

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