Bentley University uses Saba Classroom to create interactive online learning environment for graduate students.

“Bentley University is placing an increased emphasis on global business, and I think Saba Classroom’s distance learning capabilities will be an important tool for expansion.”
– Ruth Horwitz, Manager of Online Programs, Bentley University

THE CHALLENGE
Provide greater flexibility to graduate students in a wide range of master’s degree programs to attend Bentley University’s classes either on campus or online, allowing them to deal with work commitments or other personal time demands.

THE BENEFITS
• Handles more than 1,000 enrollments in 91 hybrid classes, allowing master’s degree candidates to attend class physically or online in a highly interactive learning environment
• Serves a large population – one in five of whom say they wouldn’t be able to take classes at Bentley otherwise
• Achieves a break-even point for an online course at just two students – making courses with low registrations economically viable when offered online

“Today, Bentley uses Saba Classroom to help handle more than 1,000 enrollments in 91 graduate-level courses.”
Ruth Horwitz
Manager of Online Programs
Bentley University
• More than pays for itself, with an annual profit of $1 million after deducting for the technology investment and support expenses to offer students a quality hybrid learning environment

• Enables up to 85 percent of the students to play back recordings of online courses to make up for absences or to review challenging concepts

THE SOLUTION
Set on a beautiful 160-acre campus in the Boston suburbs, Bentley University is one of the leading business schools in the U.S. The university has an enrollment of just over 4,000 full-time, resident undergraduates, plus approximately 1,500 graduate students – including 40 Ph.D. candidates. Through its McCallum Graduate School of Business, Bentley offers an MBA, as well as seven other master's degree programs.

In the 1990s, Bentley had been using video conferencing to allow remote students to attend classes toward a master’s degree in taxation. Unfortunately, the scarcity of properly equipped video conferencing rooms and the technology’s high costs created obstacles to expansion.

In 1999, Bentley selected Saba Classroom – an online learning environment that includes an interactive virtual classroom – as the foundation for its innovative Hybrid Online Learning program.

“Today, Bentley uses Saba Classroom to help handle more than 1,000 enrollments in 91 graduate-level courses,” said Ruth Horwitz, manager of online programs at Bentley University. “This includes master’s programs in accountancy, financial planning, taxation, and human factors in information design – as well as some courses in our respected MBA program.”

GOOD REPORTS FROM PROFESSORS AND STUDENTS ALIKE
In most of Bentley’s “hybrid” classes, students can choose to attend class physically in a campus classroom or online – depending on what works best for them on a given day. This offers tremendous flexibility and convenience for students who must travel on business, are pressed for time during tax season or face life issues, such as a pregnancy.

Professors teach as usual in the classroom – with Saba Classroom transmitting real-time, two-way audio and visuals such as PowerPoint slides on the professor’s computer, web cam video, or electronic whiteboard images to remote attendees. All hybrid classes are recorded and up to 85 percent of the students use the recordings to clarify their notes or review topics.

“Students love the hybrid classes,” said Mary Jo Sanz, instructional designer for online programs at Bentley. “Almost all students surveyed say they want more classes in a hybrid format. And faculty members who frequently teach in the online learning environment are very comfortable with the technology.”

LEARNING BY DOING
Like a lot of other schools, Bentley initially had some growing pains with the hybrid classes. At first, professors taught the classes separately from their regular classes – which of course required extra time.

“One day, facing a time crunch, a professor combined his online class with his regular class,” Horwitz remarked.

“He found with the students present, he was much more animated than he usually was with online classes. Students both in the classroom and online found the class to be more involving.”

Today, Bentley has 13 classrooms equipped with the latest technology. Most classrooms have a podium PC, full audio system with voice-activated microphones and speakers, document camera, and lighting controls. Symposium electronic tablets are connected to PCs to allow professors to display screen images on SMART
board electronic white boards, where they can add notes using a digital stylus.

Students only need a PC or Mac, an internet connection and headset microphone. Nearly half of the students also have a web cam, so that they not only can see the professor and fellow students, but can also be seen by them.

**MAKING THE GRADE**

If Bentley’s Hybrid Online Learning program were being graded, it would clearly earn high marks. Over 75 percent of online students recently ranked their satisfaction as an “8” or higher on a 10-point scale. In addition, 22 percent of online students said they wouldn’t be able to take courses at Bentley otherwise.

Bentley has calculated its break-even point for the Hybrid Online Learning program as 13 courses – so at 91 courses the program is highly profitable for the university.

“Put another way, we only need 1.38 students per class to be profitable,” said Tamara Rabinovich, Ph.D., a research and learning technologies consultant with Bentley. “So, as soon as two people register for a class, it’s viable. That means a class with modest attendance may be profitable online when it wouldn’t be if offered in the classroom.”

Even after deducting for the investment made in the online technology and other expenses needed to support the hybrid learning environment, Bentley still estimates it generates profits in excess of $1 million from the program annually.

**SABA CLASSROOM PASSES THE TEST**

Bentley chose Saba Classroom because it’s highly reliable and has had a consistent look-and-feel over time. “Saba Classroom is very stable,” explained Horwitz. “We cannot afford to have it not perform when classes are in session, and we have never had a Saba Classroom-related server crash. In addition, it’s simple, professional, and easy for the professors and students to use.”

Bentley expects its Hybrid Online Learning program to continue to grow by 3-4 percent annually. “Bentley is placing an increased emphasis on global business, and I think Saba Classroom’s distance learning capabilities will be an important tool for expansion,” Horwitz concluded.

"Saba Classroom is very stable. We cannot afford to have it not perform when classes are in session, and we have never had a Saba Classroom-related server crash. In addition, it’s simple, professional, and easy for the professors and students to use."

**Ruth Horwitz**
Manager of Online Programs
Bentley University

---

**The Saba Experience:**
- 24/7 customer support
- Collaborative online customer community
- Value-added strategic services
- Regular user group meetings
- Standard or customized implementation services
- Dedicated customer success rep

**Your success starts here!**

---

© 2018 Saba Software Inc. All rights reserved. Saba, the Saba logo, and the marks relating to Saba products and services referenced herein are either trademarks or registered trademarks of Saba Software, Inc. or its affiliates. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.