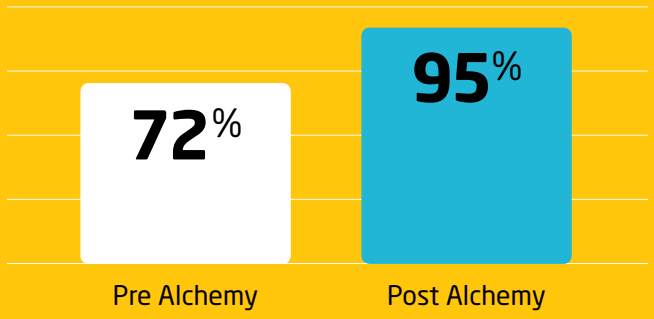
Intertek Alchemy Case Study

Improved Quality & Customer Satisfaction

> The reduction in downtime equals an increase in production of 1,600,000 tea bags. That's a lot of tea!

— Sari Trompke, Training Administrator, Bigelow

Employee First Pass Rates



Challenge

- Inconsistent training across locations
- Operations specific training
- Multiple languages

Solution

- Interactive classroom training
- Multilingual content
- Authoring tool for course customization

Result

- **50% reduction** in customer complaints
- **20% fewer** quality holds
- **Zero lost time** incidents
- **30% reduction** in downtime

About Bigelow

BIGELOW® FAMILY TEA BLENDERS SINCE 1945

Bigelow Tea, a family owned company, has been making specialty teas for over seventy years. The company grows, blends, and packages hundreds of varieties of tea for distribution across the nation. Today, the company boasts the only industrial tea plantation based in the U.S., as well as three packaging sites that employ hundreds of workers.

The Challenge

Building on a legacy of excellence, Bigelow Tea continually strives to improve safety and quality, starting with their frontline workforce. "We're in a competitive market and we need to raise the bar each year. So, it is critical that our employees benefit from as much development as possible," says Bruce Ennis, vice president of human resources.

As Bigelow expanded across multiple sites, consistency with employee training and meeting operations specific goals became a challenge.

"We had four facilities, but we didn't have a constant approach to safety, quality, or GMP training. So, it created inconsistency in performance," says Ennis.

Bigelow needed multi-lingual content to ensure uniform messaging to all employees. "About 70-80% of our employees speak Spanish. We need to be sure that they receive the same quality training," says Mildred de los Santos, HR manager.

Additionally, Bigelow wanted to streamline business objectives corporate-wide. "We needed a diverse program which covered all of our needs, both for mandatory training and also for meeting specific goals. We looked for a training system with enough flexibility to serve our plant employees, our tea plantation, and our corporate offices." says Ennis.

The Solution

Bigelow Tea turned to Intertek Alchemy to help structure their employee training and development programs. Over three million workers at 50,000 locations use Alchemy's training, coaching, and reinforcement solutions to reduce workplace injuries, safeguard food, and improve operations.

Bigelow implemented Intertek Alchemy programs to build both the knowledge and confidence employees need to consistently work at expert proficiency. A new approach to classroom training incorporated interactive remotes, gamification, and quizzes to engage employees and test comprehension.

All responses are recorded and securely stored electronically for 24/7 audit-readiness.

"Alchemy enables us to manage training across all three packaging sites and our tea plantation from one central location," says training administrator Sari Trompke.

Bigelow also leveraged Alchemy's multi-lingual training options to reach all employees. "I can deliver training sessions in English with Spanish subtitles or play courses exclusively in Spanish," says de los Santos.

Once Bigelow established a consistent training platform, they looked to meet the unique needs of each operation. "We use Alchemy Creator for so many departments," says Trompke. "We even tailored it to our agriculture and retail workers at our tea plantation. We also use Alchemy training for our corporate employees, so everyone at Bigelow understands the importance of each step in the production process and how to uphold our quality commitments."

The Result

Bigelow saw alignment across locations with objectives for safety and quality. The standardization enabled employees to connect with Bigelow's safety and operational goals.

"Last year, we had a great overall year," says plant manager Jim Gilday. "From having no lost time safety accidents, to reducing our quality complaints in half, to reducing our quality holds by 20% overall. **We have seen positive effects that I can attribute to well-trained employees.**"

In addition to operational improvements, Bigelow also benefitted from Alchemy's expertise in adult learning. "With Alchemy, we have been able to increase **our first pass rates from 72% up to 95%**," says Trompke.

Bigelow has also seen a significant impact on efficiency in training. "Previously, if we took all mandatory training it would entail a complete shut-down," says Trompke. "Alchemy's modules have packaged all our mandatory and operations training into only 12-14 hours per year. **The reduction in downtime equals an increase in production of 1,600,000 tea bags**. That's a lot of tea!"

Finally, improved employee proficiency has made a culture impact. "Creating programs for each environment with the same message — whether it be retail, our tea plantation, packaging, or our corporate employees — enables Bigelow to draw everything together. **That way, everyone knows how they are critical to Bigelow's success**," says Ennis.

For More Information

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