

..... HOW TO

CREATE A MARKETING PLAN

FOR ONLINE EMPLOYEE TRAINING



Two Peas in a Pod

I bet you didn't think you'd need marketing skills when you joined the learning and development industry. No worries, we're here to help.

Ultimately, both marketers and learning professionals want their audience to take some specific action. Whether you're trying to sell a product or convince an employee to use a new skill, you're trying to persuade someone to do something.

POINT A



POINT B



Often, that something involves change.

As the manager of your online training program, you likely spend a significant amount of time thinking about how to increase overall usage to ensure impact, value, and return on investment. What is often most challenging and yet most important is marketing.

How do you boost your learning program participation?

Market-savvy training and HR Professionals use various marketing techniques to communicate the benefits of the training program and increase the adoption rate.



In this eBook we'll provide:

An overview of the implementation process of a new online employee training program

How to develop a marketing strategy

How to develop target audiences

How to create a marketing plan

Sustaining your efforts and ongoing management

Implementing a New Program

Well, not really. It takes some effort. There are 5 key steps when you're implementing a new online training program.



Identify Key Stakeholders



Establish Program Goals



Determine Measurement and Metrics for Program



Create a Marketing Strategy and Action Plan



Determine Rollout and Ongoing Management of Program



STRATEGY AND ALIGNMENT

Alignment with organizational goals is the single most fundamental element of every learning strategy.

What's needed today is a sharper focus and clarity of thinking on the specific way our employee learning efforts align with and support organizational goals.

Linking of organizational goals with the employees' personal goals requires common understanding of purposes and goals of the organization, and consistency between every objective and plan right down to the incentive offers.

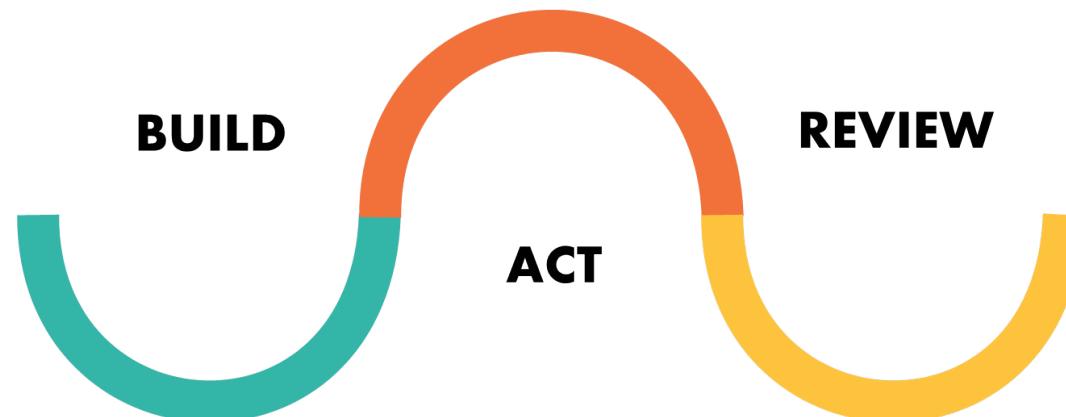
Developing a Marketing Strategy

In developing your marketing strategy, you'll want to begin by examining the goals and success criteria you established for your learning and development program. What are the strategic and business objectives you'll want to accomplish? What success criteria have you set for your program? Let your goals and success factors help guide you through the steps of designing, planning, and executing your marketing/communication strategy.

Build: Design your strategy and remember to reflect the culture of your organization. Consider your business. Address cultural variables within launch, initial activities, and ongoing efforts.

Act: Tell your story, send your message and set the foundation for ongoing success. Work from the top down. High-level communication is key, for it sets the example for the ranks. Identify available corporate resources. Communicate who, what, when, where, and why.

Review: Evaluate your efforts to understand the changing work environment, share information, keep users energized, and determine if you met your objectives.



TARGETING YOUR MARKETING EFFORTS

The advantages of targeted marketing are:

The attention is focused on one specific group or audience, which is likely to result in the marketing campaigns being far more cost and time efficient.

An interest is shown in the targeted groups own field, which will allow you to build a reputation as being a resource for their learning needs.

Your promotional material is highly relevant to learners needs, and is less likely to be discarded.

Developing Your Target Audiences

Your target markets for marketing typically parallel the target audiences of your learning program. Consider these possible target markets:

- Executives
- Managers
- Human Resources
- IT Professionals
- Sales/Marketing Professionals
- Customer Service Employees
- Administrative/Support Employees

What's up with WIIFM?

One of the key components of driving adoption of your learning program is targeting the right audience with the right content, at the right time and in the right way. Sound simple? It can be but it starts with knowing what you need to accomplish and who you need to reach. From there, developing a marketing plan is defined by these parameters. When you think about online learning promotion, it truly is the who, what, why, when and how that will drive engagement and adoption of learning.

Consider these questions to define your learning audiences:

- Who do you need to reach to achieve your goals?
 - What are their needs? Interests? Motivations?
 - What potential resistance factors or barriers can you pro-actively address?
 - What has been the eLearning experience among a given audience?
 - What are their work styles and work environment?
- Answering these questions will not only give you a clear idea of 'What's In It For Me' but will also provide you with flexibility in how you target them and what medium of communication you may use to reach them.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE:

How to Motivate Employees

Keeping employees motivated isn't always easy. We all fall victim to the humdrum, going through the motions, bored to tears moments in our jobs. This video introduces how to get employees motivated to put as much focus and enthusiasm into work as they do with their favorite sports teams, or TV shows, social media sites or hobbies.



Developing a Marketing Plan

Your marketing plan is a timetable to design, produce, and distribute your communication methods and materials. Keep in mind that your marketing plan should be comprised of events as well as deliverables. One example of this is the planning and delivery of a kick-off event. This event is a great way to communicate the processes surrounding your program and should be included in your Marketing Plan.

Your marketing plan can be divided into the following phases:



Pre-Launch

pre-launch communications and events to build excitement

Kickoff Planning

launch communications and events to create awareness

Post Launch

reminder and follow-up communications and events to drive utilization



PHASES AND PURPOSE

Pre-launch: purpose is to build excitement

Launch: purpose is to drive utilization

Process/Instruction: purpose is to communicate processes and instruct on system navigation

Reminder: purpose is to sustain utilization and expand audience if needed

Follow-up (every 3 months minimum ongoing): purpose is to re-energize the program, drive utilization and encourage/drive feedback. Provide means for feedback even if that is only referencing the existing course evaluations.

Developing a Marketing Plan

For each item on your marketing plan, you'll want to define the following components, in addition to the target audience for the item:

Purpose

Inform, remind, instruct, create buy-in, increase awareness, improve participation

Method

Newsletters, flyers, posters, web pages, Intranet banners, email, presentations

Timeframe

Pre-program start, program start, performance review period, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly

Different timeframes and frequencies of repetition will be appropriate for different types of marketing communication.

The timeframe and frequency will likely change over the course of the execution of your marketing plan based on the type and amount of course usage you're seeing.

You'll want to vary the method of communication to keep your program marketing fresh and interest.



POTENTIAL BARRIERS AND SUCCESS STRATEGIES:

No Help:

Create an advisory committee

Ask managers and supervisors for support and provide them tools.

Not Enough Time:

Focus on just-in-time learning, search and learn, job aids and easy access

Blend learning with meetings or other events
Host learning labs

Fear and Anxiety:

Nurture safety and trust with perceived freedom of choice

Focus on individual needs and help employees see the benefits of having online learning available

Not Relevant:

Emphasize on-the-job application

Understand the goals of others and ask questions: "how can you use this to meet your goals?"

Sustaining Your Efforts

Development of your marketing strategy and plan is an important component to a successful learning program. Just as critical is a periodic review of your marketing strategy and efforts to help keep your program on track.

Stop and consider your program objectives and whether or not your marketing plan is helping you reach those objectives. Ask the following questions:



Did the marketing work?

Did the techniques work?

Was it worth the effort?

What did we gain from this marketing effort?

Track the success of various techniques. Did you find a spike in usage following one of your marketing efforts – if so, great! If not, consider why this particular effort was not effective. Perhaps it was not appropriate for your culture?

Have there been changes in your work environment that could have hindered your efforts? Have fun and continue to brainstorm fresh marketing ideas to achieve your learning program objectives!

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Let's Talk