

CATCH COOCs: L&D'S RISING STAR



Vincent Belliveau considers the impact of wide-ranging opportunities created by Corporate Open Online Courses.

As an L&D professional you will have heard of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses). As they began moving away from being related purely to education and made their mark in business, we're now presented with a new type of learning: COOCs – 'Corporate Open Online Courses', whereby a company's partners and customers are able to access training provided, and in many cases designed, by an organisation. This is an emerging trend but goes to show just how quickly learning and development is adapting to the market's needs.

A COOC present a business with the opportunity to educate their employees, suppliers, customers and partners. It reduces the barrier between the company and the

world outside, helping to retain loyalty and improve the reputation of the company. For organisations looking for new ways to attract and retain customers and prospects, it's a strategy that can pay-off, especially when the competition is just one click away and creative marketing is needed to attract the browsing consumer.

What are the best ways to implement a COOC strategy and what are the benefits?

Similar to MOOCs, COOCs should ideally be delivered in a mobile or social format to get the best levels of engagement and adoption post-learning. This is mainly because as the training is for third parties and on a large scale, it's important that anyone can access the training, from anywhere, on any device, at

any time. The modules may also benefit from gamification, in which the trainee can earn points or rewards and go up in levels as the learning progresses.

Gamification is proven to motivate and encourage people to learn. The Talent LMS Survey recently found that 75% of people play games, highlighting just how engaged we could get in a competitive environment. The research also found that 89% of people would be more engaged with an e-learning application if it had a points system.

As the learning is delivered externally, organisations have little control over who completes it. So, the encouragement has to come from elsewhere. People have to enjoy learning rather than consider it a chore.

Content is still king and therefore needs to be relevant, timely and insightful. Some subjects will work better for COOCs than others, such as introductory training on products or services. In addition, if the content isn't presented well, people will soon switch off.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

COOCs should be seen as what they truly are – an opportunity for a company to leverage its expertise. In this way a firm can educate its partners, customers and third party suppliers and improve the productivity of its extended network of resellers, dealers and franchises. This concept of sharing training with established relationships is beneficial in keeping everyone on-message, expanding the customer base, improving the reputation of the company and retaining loyalty. It also positions an organisation as a forward-thinker and innovator in workplace learning. Additionally it enables revenue through creating a training-for-profit programme.

WHICH COMPANIES ARE DOING IT RIGHT?

It's interesting to examine where COOCs are already successful. There are some great examples of companies taking an innovative approach to learning. For example, the Bank

of America, which, in collaboration with Khan Academy, launched financial management training for clients. In addition, Aquent, opened a course called 'Gymnasium' which teaches digital designers and front-end developers today's most in-demand skills. Most famously, Microsoft launched the Microsoft Virtual Academy to provide free, on-demand courses to help people learn at their own pace, and when the time is right.

CAN COOCs BE COMPARED TO MOOCs?

There are clearly benefits of both COOCs and MOOCs. However, it's difficult to pick an ultimate winner as both are quite distinct. While MOOCs can cover a range of topics and are commonly linked to education, COOCs are specifically aligned with a business, its needs and what it wants its employees, partners and customers to learn. Both have a strong ability to target a mass market of people due to the fact they're easily accessible. This is extremely useful when competition is fiercer than ever. But does one come up trumps over the other?

While MOOCs are more established, COOCs are definitely an up-and-coming way to take training outside of the organisation. And there is a clear opportunity for these sorts of

courses to be monetised when the right approach is taken. For example, recruiters could offer courses on creating a good CV and covering letter, car companies could offer training for learner drivers and sports brands could even offer courses on the science of exercise.

ARE COOCs A GAME-CHANGER?

The fact that COOCs are still very new clearly raises questions regarding certification and accreditation. Until businesses begin using and trialling these training options, it's difficult to conclude as to whether or not they are the future of L&D. What we do know is that they are working well for some companies. If the success of MOOCs is anything to go by, then organisations must accept COOCs as an opportunity to get ahead with what could well be a game-changer in Learning and Development.

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