



POWERED BY

California Community Colleges

## Unit 2 – Marketing Contract Education to Employers

### Contents

- Learn how to prepare a message to potential industry partners (another term we use for industry partner in the following Units is client and a client can be an existing client – they have purchased before or a potential client – they have not yet purchased), in their language
- Understand best practices for connecting and collaborating with industry partners
- Appreciate the important role of lead generation and find out how to generate leads

### Why Contract Education?

Why are businesses interested in training and the other development activities and services you offer? After all, even a free training takes an employee away from daily work and therefore costs the company the participant's daily wage and benefits. So, what's the point—and what's the payback for an employer who sends their people to Contract Education programs? Knowing the answer to this and being able to articulate it to potential industry partners is key to selling Contract Education and to creating successful relationships with business and industry partners.

First, you must see it from the client's perspective. As educators, we know that learning is essential to human development, a person's general overall satisfaction, and is — almost without exception — a good thing. But we must learn to see it from our client's point of view. Being able to lay it out clearly will also help our clients explain to others inside their company when they 'sell' the idea of training to decision-makers.

In addition to these reasons, your industry partners share with you the goal of improving local communities, the general local economy and their own bottom line. Skilled workers keep a company in business and workers whose skills are up to date keep a company, a community and a region competitive.

Contract education is critical to the success of any community and you should be proud of the services you are providing. Remember – your job is to help people get jobs, help people improve in their present jobs, and help companies stay in business so people do not lose their jobs.

## **Marketing CE to Employers –**

### **How to Prepare a Message to Potential Industry Partners, in Their Language**

The first step in marketing in a language that will convince industry partners is to understand how they think about training and employee development.

Remember — we're an educational institution, they're a business. Our missions have different intentions, so the way we express our values and preferred outcomes are not the same.

To start, let's define training and development, from an industry perspective:

#### *Training and development*

'Training and development' describes the intentional, continuous efforts made by organizations to improve the performance and well-being of their employees through a mix of educational methods and programs.

Today, the mix includes a wide variety of initiatives and events — from instruction in highly specific job skills to long-term professional development charted out in partnership with educational institutions.

In recent years, training and development are framed as a formal business function, an integral element of strategy, and a recognized profession with distinct theories and methodologies. More and more companies of all sizes embrace continuous learning and other aspects of training and development as a means of promoting employee growth and acquiring and maintaining a highly skilled workforce. In fact, the quality of employees and the continual improvement of their skills and productivity through training are now seen as vital factors in ensuring the long-term success and profitability of businesses.

For the most part, the terms "training" and "development" are used together to describe the overall improvement and education of an organization's employees. However, while closely related, there are important differences between the terms that center around the scope of their application. In general, *training programs* have very specific and quantifiable goals, like being trained to better operate a

particular piece of machinery, understanding a specific vital process, or performing certain procedures with great precision and safety. *Developmental programs*, on the other hand, concentrate on broader skills that are applicable to a wider variety of situations, such as decision making, leadership skills, and goal setting.”

*Selling business partners on the idea of training and development*

Whenever you’re selling something, or trying to convince someone of its value, your best approach is to know what’s in it for them. So, ask yourself, “What benefits do our potential industry partners get when they send their employees to us for Contract Education? Why would they be motivated to engage with us? How do they see this as an investment?”

To know what’s in it for them, you have to understand how they measure success. Most companies measure success by two main metrics:

1. Profits made
2. Costs reduced

Anything that contributes to success in either of those areas will be considered *useful*. Something that contributes to both will be considered *essential*.

*The kinds of topics training and development might include*

The following are examples:

- a. Communication skills: The increasing diversity of today’s workforce increases the need for more sophisticated communication skills at every level.
- b. Computer skills: Computer skills of all kinds are relevant to nearly every job in today’s workforce.
- c. Customer service: Increased competition in today’s global marketplace makes it critical that employees understand and meet the needs of customers both face-to-face and in increasingly more circumstances, online.
- d. Diversity: Diversity training usually includes learning different perspectives and views and includes techniques to value and leverage diversity’s role in the workplace.

- e. Ethics: Today's society has increasing expectations about corporate social responsibility, including attention to a diverse relationship to ethics based on diversity in the workforce.
- f. Human relations: Today's worker lives in a stressed and demanding workplace (not to mention their personal lives). They face an increasingly complex number of situations in which they will profit by having skill and experience in human relations.
- g. Quality initiatives: Initiatives such as Total Quality Management, Quality Circles, benchmarking and so on require basic training about quality itself, guidelines for incorporating quality into work and standards for quality, and so on.
- h. Safety: Safety training for work-related tasks and for interactions with others are essential in the workplace.
- i. Sexual harassment: Sexual harassment training usually includes careful description of the organization's policies about sexual harassment, especially about what are inappropriate behaviors — and helps expand employees understanding of what the company considers work-appropriate and not. Sexual harassment training also addresses the complexities of cross cultural and gender identity related
- j. Company-centric training: Every company will also have areas of training and development that are unique to its business. These might include things like these:
  - Machine or job-specific knowledge and skills
  - Industry or job-specific knowledge, skills and processes
  - Company culture that shapes tasks, knowledge and processes
  - Company values that shape approaches to the way work is done
  - Industry, company or job-specific knowledge
  - Industry or job-specific credentialing

*What models of training and development methodologies might be employed, for example?*

In an article on Training and Development in *Inc.* magazine<sup>1</sup>, several kinds of training and development are mentioned

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<sup>1</sup> [INC.com encyclopedia - Training and Development](#)

### Orientation

Orientation training is vital in ensuring the success of new employees. Whether the training is conducted through an employee handbook, a lecture, or a one-on-one meeting with a supervisor, newcomers should receive information on the company's history and strategic position, the key people in authority at the company, the structure of their department and how it contributes to the mission of the company, and the company's employment policies, rules, and regulations.

### Lectures

A verbal method of presenting information, lectures are particularly useful in situations when the goal is to impart the same information to a large number of people at one time. Since they eliminate the need for individual training, lectures are among the most cost-effective training methods. But the lecture method does have some drawbacks. Since lectures primarily involve one-way communication, they may not provide the most interesting or effective training. In addition, it may be difficult for the trainer to gauge the level of understanding of the material within a large group.

### Case Study

The case method is a non-directed method of study whereby students are provided with practical case reports to analyze. The case report includes a thorough description of a simulated or real-life situation. By analyzing the problems presented in the case report and developing possible solutions, students can be encouraged to think independently as opposed to relying upon the direction of an instructor. Independent case analysis can be supplemented with open discussion with a group. The main benefit of the case method is its use of real-life situations. The multiplicity of problems and possible solutions provide the student with a practical learning experience rather than a collection of abstract knowledge and theories that may be difficult to apply to practical situations.

### Role Playing

In role playing, students assume a role outside of themselves and play out that role within a group. A facilitator creates a scenario that is to be acted out by the participants under the guidance of the facilitator. While the situation might be contrived, the interpersonal relations are genuine. Furthermore, participants receive immediate feedback from the facilitator and the scenario itself, allowing a better understanding of their own behavior. This training method is cost effective and is often applied to marketing and management training.

### Simulations

Games and simulations are structured competitions and operational models that emulate real-life scenarios. The benefits of games and simulations include the improvement of problem-solving and decision-making skills, a greater understanding of the organizational whole, the ability to study actual problems, and the power to capture the student's interest.

### Computer-Based Training

Computer-based training (CBT) involves the use of computers and computer-based instructional materials as the primary medium of instruction. Computer-based training programs are designed to structure and present instructional materials and to facilitate the learning process for the student. A main benefit of CBT is that it allows employees to learn at their own pace, during convenient times.

### Self-Instruction

Self-instruction describes a training method in which the students assume primary responsibility for their own learning. Unlike instructor- or facilitator-led instruction, students retain a greater degree of control regarding topics, the sequence of learning, and the pace of learning. Depending on the structure of the instructional materials, students can achieve a higher degree of customized learning. Forms of self-instruction include programmed learning, individualized instruction, personalized systems of instruction, learner-controlled instruction, and correspondence study. Benefits include a strong support system, immediate feedback, and systematization.

### Audiovisual Training

Audiovisual training methods include television, films, and videotapes. Like case studies, role playing, and simulations, they can be used to expose employees to "real world" situations in a time-and cost-effective manner. The main drawback of audiovisual training methods is that they cannot be customized for a particular audience, and they do not allow participants to ask questions or interact during the presentation of material.

### Team-Building Exercises

Team building is the active creation and maintenance of effective work groups with similar goals and objectives. Not to be confused with the informal, ad-hoc formation and use of teams in the workplace, team building is a formal process of building work teams and formulating their objectives and goals, usually facilitated by a third-party consultant. Team building is commonly initiated to combat poor group dynamics, labor-management relations, quality, or productivity...

### Apprenticeships and Internships

Apprenticeships are a form of on-the-job training in which the trainee works with a more experienced employee for a period of time, learning a group of related skills that will eventually qualify the trainee to perform a new job or function.

Apprenticeships are often used in production-oriented positions. Internships are a form of apprenticeship that combines on-the-job training under a more experienced employee with classroom learning.

### Job Rotation

Another type of experience-based training is job rotation, in which employees move through a series of jobs in order to gain a broad understanding of the requirements of each. Job rotation may be particularly useful in small businesses, which may feature less role specialization than is typically seen in larger organizations.

### *Why do companies train? – The benefits to the employer*

Every dollar spent on training must yield a benefit back to the company in the long run. The benefits may be monetary or otherwise — but even a non-monetary return like ‘a boost in morale’ must be agreed upon as valuable. Contract Education is an investment. It has to compete for value with investments in more people, technology and other forms of advancement.

Some of the benefits to companies who train are:

- Improved employee performance – the employee who receives appropriate training is more able to perform in their job, and to perform it better with less supervision and re-work. Training also gives the employee a greater understanding of the responsibilities within their role, and this knowledge builds performance-boosting confidence. Confident employees are stronger leaders and strong leaders are one of a company’s competitive edges.
- Improved employee satisfaction and morale – A company’s investment in training proves that the company values its employees and that the company understands the link between employee success and a stronger bottom line. A company with a strong Contract Education partner program can help employees gain access to training they wouldn’t have otherwise known about or felt entitled to pursue. Employees who feel appreciated and challenged through training opportunities may feel more satisfaction toward their jobs and a satisfied workforce is likely to be more productive and long-lived.

- Addressing weaknesses – Excellent, consistent training and development programs help employees find and strengthen performance weaknesses or gaps in knowledge and skills. Company-wide, this creates a more consistently skilled employee base. This consistency keeps employees growing and engaged and the consistency allows employees to help each other across job-titles and other silos as the company grows.
- Consistency – A robust training and development program ensures that employees have a consistent experience and knowledge base. This creates consistency in process, product and productivity and therefore quality.
- Increased productivity and adherence to quality standards – Improved quality, when paired with increased productivity is the foundation of progress and profit. Employees who remain up-to-date with new technology often reach higher levels of both quantity and quality, thereby boosting profit.

Examples of cost savings as a result of training and development. –

- Increased innovation in new strategies and products – Training and skills growth of the workforce encourages a more robust understanding of the company’s work and this understanding becomes the foundation of innovation in both product and processes. Expert thinkers become expert workers, resulting in higher profit, and less waste, error and other forms of cost.
- Reduced employee turnover – Training is key to confidence and a sense of forward momentum for employees. When a company invests in training employees, employees are more likely to feel valued. The employee knows the training enhances their success inside the company and keeps the employee’s skills current and marketable. Staff are retained and costs of employee turnover go down.
- Enhancement of company reputation – Companies known for strong training programs are known as good places to work. This attracts top graduates from industry-related programs and also helps the company capture new recruits mid-career. A stronger workforce means less turnover and;
- Reduction of errors and accidents – Most workplace errors occur because employees lack adequate knowledge and skills required for doing a particular job at a level required to be both safe and productive. Continuous



training and development gradually improves each employee's ability to stay productive and safe, thereby reducing costs.

- Enriched talent pool – Creating a pool of cross-trained employees helps to bridge gaps when someone unexpectedly leaves the company, their department or their position. This consistency in staffing helps stabilize workflow. Cross-training also fosters team spirit, as employees appreciate the challenges and opportunities encountered by co-workers.
- Uncovered employee potential – Most companies overlook hidden talents of their employee pool. Training and development programs are one of the places that employees and the company itself can discover such wasted potential. When employees train together in cohort groups, hidden and under-developed leadership skills can emerge or be enhanced, helping managers find tomorrow's leadership within the current workforce, thereby saving money.
- Improvement in employee weaknesses – A well-organized training and development program helps employees grow skills and knowledge and company-supportive culture, while helping each individual grow. This keeps employees embedded in the company and growing as the company grows. This creates a more long-lasting, more engaged workforce and creates better leadership at every level.
- Increased consistency – A well-organized training and development program gives employees consistent knowledge and experience, saving money by reducing problems in error rate, waste, lost time and so on; which require training. This mostly includes administrative procedures and ethics during execution of duty.
- Reduction in learning time – Well-constructed, well-taught training with timely delivery from a Contract Education unit that partners closely with a company through long-term planning and strategic implementation means that training takes less time to be effective and such an approach reduces the time away from jobs to master essential skills and knowledge. This creates a reduction in several training-related costs. Furthermore, employees who learn how to learn can in some situations teach themselves and others for even further cost reductions. Similar training can also help them learn to spot and solve more problems, earlier, saving even more.

- Optimum utilization of key human resources – Training and development helps in understanding and carrying out an organization’s key goals – thereby developing leadership skills, motivation, loyalty, productive attitudes, and other qualities that successful companies typically seek.

## **Best Practices for Collaborating with Industry Partners**

LERN recommends that you consider some or all of these best practices:

- Form focus groups with partners and other interested parties. Use focus group members who understand and appreciate your efforts and your success. Use them sparingly by being prepared with simple and short agendas for gathering their advice. Never give them decision making power over programs for which you are held responsible.
- Communicate often with industry partners. Use all the median channels your partners read to keep them abreast of your success, others’ success and new program opportunities and services.
- Make sure you become part of the strategic planning cycle for your STAR (best) industry partners. Try to get a seat at the table during planning cycles by being actively engaged with either HR or the company’s training department or staff.
- Communicate through multiple channels with integrated marketing. What do they read? How do they like to connect and get new information? Use those channels in a coordinated effort to spread your key messages and get new and repeat business.
- Encourage active referrals. Ask for referrals. Make it easy for people to give them. Treat the referrals well — follow up! Let people know you followed up and when you get a new client, think of ways to express your gratitude to whoever referred the client to you.
- Educate yourself about Training and Development trends for industry each year. Many associations — including LERN — produce industry trends reports. Your state and many agencies and government entities write these reports.

- Connect with other Contract Education units to trade questions, tips and strategies that work. Association conferences are great for this. Why re-invent the wheel?
- Get to know the leaders in your top 5-10 industry partner businesses. Who comes the most often and spends the most with you? These are your STARS. Communicate with them often and invest your networking time here for the greatest payback.
- Stay apprised of industry changes in licensure, accreditation, and safety requirements. This is a sure-fire sale for new business. Get in the loop!
- When a partner recommends a change or influences change in how you do business, let them know you took their advice and that it worked!
- Gather testimonials from partners and use them. Use testimonials in every form of media you use for marketing. Be sure to get permission to use a testimonial. If you can, use actual names and photos and job titles.

## **Lead Generation**

Lead generation is the action or process of identifying and cultivating potential clients for your products and services. While a prospect is every potential client you can contract, a lead is a potential client who shows interest by asking for example for a visit or proposal.

In Contract Education it normally takes four leads to generate one contract, thus the importance of lead generation actions.

In Contract Education the norm is to spend 5 percent or less of your budget on marketing. Contract Education is all about relationship building and not as much integrated marketing activities. You need a website, you need to do email marketing, you need to post on social media, but most important, you need to sell.

Ideally 50 percent of your sales should be to clients who bought the previous year, 25 percent from existing client referrals, and 25 percent from new lead generation.

### *Sales kit*

Although your sales kit will not generate sales, you must have one to leave with or send to potential clients. The best sales kits are folders allowing for inserts that follow the AIDA Principle.

A (Attention) – The cover of the sales kit should get the potential client’s attention; one reason to use pictures related to their business-type.

I (Interest) – The information inserts must provide general information outlining the types of products and services you provide.

D (Desire) – Including unique inserts highlighting industry trends or general training trends highlights your areas of expertise.

A (Action) – Include ways to contact you.

Most sales kits include: business card, general information sheet, service and product sheets, client testimonials, key instructors and sheets demonstrating your areas of expertise. You want to tailor your contents to each client you work with.

Your sales kit serves three key uses:

- #1. Capability to serve. You know and can do what they need.
- #2. Credibility. You have been successful with others.
- #3. Customized approach. You will tailor what you do for them.

The same can be said for your website, that also should be designed following the AIDA Principle.

### *Lead generation best practices*

The following are lead generation strategies that work:

- Always ask your current and best clients for referrals.
- Analyze open enrollment student registration data to determine which businesses, government agencies and organizations are sending staff to open enrollment classes.
- Offer free speaker events, webinars and breakfasts.
- Stay engaged with chamber of commerce and other association gatherings.
- Use email and social media to offer free content that captures potential client contact information.

- Offer consortiums where present and potential clients spend \$X a year to send employees to monthly half-day training sessions.
- If staffing resources allow, add an inside salesperson who is dedicated to lead generation and nurturing.

## **Summary**

Doing more business with industry partners means communicating more often and being a regular part of their business life and work-cycles. Build relationships for the long run. When your numbers tell you that your way of doing business is a good match for a company, you will see numbers of increased frequency in business together and in higher numbers of dollars spent or people participating.

When 50 percent or more of your business is coming from repeat participants or contracts, and 25 percent is coming from referrals from existing customers and partners, you know you're on the right track.

Your success will depend upon having an honest and up-to-date dialogue. You'll produce the best results by being in touch with partners' needs and fulfilling as many as you can. Be inquisitive. Follow through. Look for win-win opportunities at every turn.

Long-term relationships with people interested in partnering are worth the time and energy it takes to build them. Work with the willing. Enjoy the rewards.