

# 8

# Requirements for Creating & Growing

## A Successful Corporate Training Division

A Guide For Higher Education Administrators & Executives



# 8 Requirements for Creating & Growing A Successful Corporate Training Division

*“Serving the corporate market is crucial for today’s higher education institution; whether it is through programs geared toward professionals or relationships with strategic corporate partners. The extent of pursuit of that market is dependent on the size and focus of your particular institution.”*

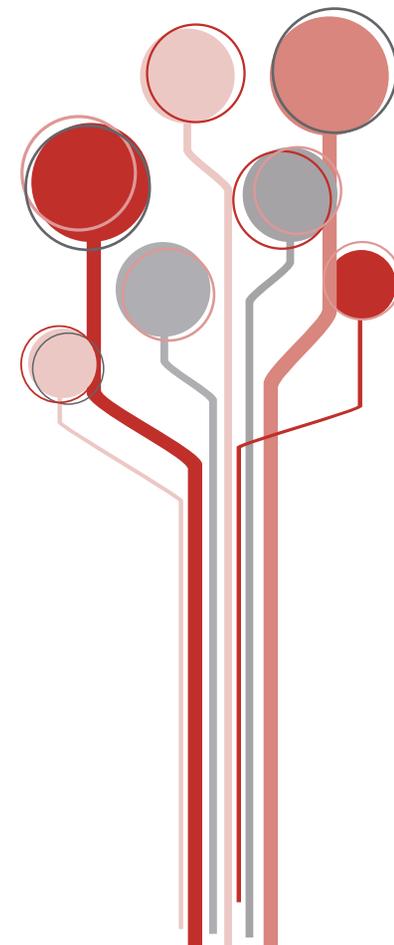
— Hunt Lambert, Dean of Continuing Education and Extension, Harvard University

---

The higher education marketplace is generally overcrowded, but corporate training offers an underdeveloped niche for institutions looking for an additional revenue stream. Corporations in the US alone annually spend \$164 billion training their employees, but only nine percent have partnerships with colleges or universities.

On one hand, there is a huge opportunity for institutions to move into the market. On the other hand, there is a clear disparity in market maturity that disadvantages higher education institutions. Corporations have been dealing with employee training for a long time. For the most part, though, many universities are fairly new to the market and are still learning how to bring in new clients, maintain existing relationships and create the right programs.

The following list provides eight key criteria that universities must consider in order to launch or grow a successful corporate training division.



# 1

## Define Your Value Proposition

Before a university can successfully market their corporate partnerships, they must know what value their institution brings to the table. Keep in mind that, in addition to the 6,900 accredited higher education providers in the US, there are numerous private companies and international schools also competing in this space. Universities must know what makes their program stand out and they must be able to communicate their specialties well.

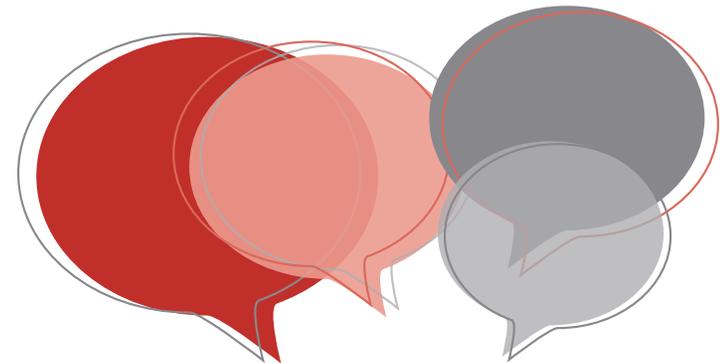
### The EvoLLLution community comments on value propositions for corporate partners:

“ [Universities] have the pedigree; that’s a stunning thing in a more traditional brick-and-mortar company, and franchise training providers may not have that. ”

Bob Mosher, Chief Learning Evangelist, Apply Synergies

“ Aside from becoming recognized as an educational leader in the workforce, universities have the opportunity to provide professionals with pathways to new certifications and make an impact on individuals’ careers and the organizations they work for. ”

Paul Marca, Executive Director of the Stanford Center for Professional Development, Stanford University



# 2

## Act Before The Market Is Conquered

In the past, corporations have run training programs internally or hired private companies for their educational needs. However, more and more higher education institutions are making headway in this space. As a steady stream of big players begins to compete (consider, for example, the partnership between The American Public University System and Walmart), others are following their lead. Institutions wishing to succeed have a rare opportunity to get into the market before it has fully matured, but only if they move quickly.

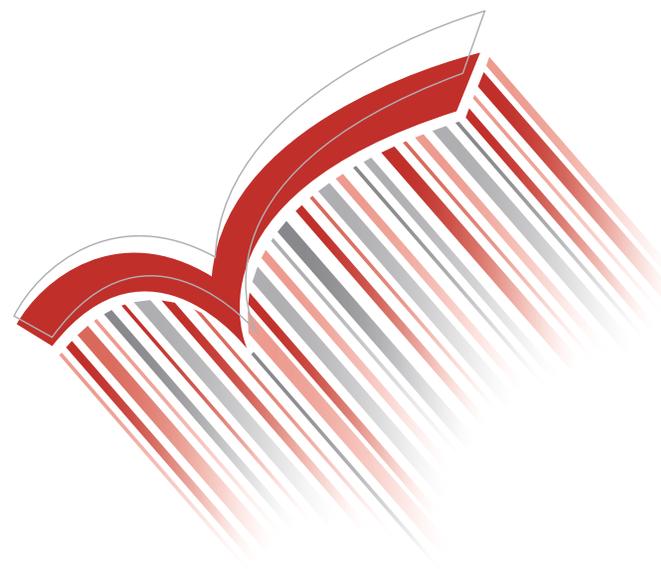
### The EvoLLLution community comments on the urgency of the market opportunity:

“Two trends have come together to provide a once-in-a-generation chance for institutions of higher learning, career and vocational schools, and workforce training centers to boost their market share and improve student outcomes.”

Christine Chmura, President and Chief Economist,  
Chmura Economics and Analytics

“Corporate clients need to be an important component of a healthy and sustainable client base for any higher education continuing education organization, maybe even more critical during tight budget times.”

Manuel Lopez, Senior Director of Continuing Education at the  
University College, University of South Florida



# 3

## Jump In With Both Feet

Institutions cannot dip a toe into the water and still expect to achieve success in the corporate market. Institutions planning to make headway must instead go all-in with all the necessary staff, resources, systems and processes required to plan, market, monitor and manage the division.

### The EvoLLLution community comments on the importance of going all-in:

““ Finding opportunities for corporate education/training should be simple, right? Just cold call some companies and/or answer some inquiries. Before you pick up the phone, ask yourself: who will take the project through to completion? Maybe you should hire staff dedicated to calling on corporate clients. Won't this result in ongoing distractions for the academic staff? ””

Jeff Pallin, Director of Business and Management, UC Berkeley Extension

““ I think it's incumbent upon higher education to reach out and partner with organizations as opposed to 'build-it-and-they-will-come' syndrome. ””

Dan Pontefract, Senior Director of Learning and Collaboration, TELUS

““ Due to the out-of-norm complexities of private customized engagements, both executive and mid-level programs are best served if they have dedicated staff to assist in their administration (i.e. needs assessment, contract preparation and revisions, faculty organization, implementation, ongoing evaluation and review, general administration, etc.). ””

Kevin Currie, Executive Director, Northeastern University Online



# 4

## Actively Maintain Relationships

Successful institutions foster a personalized relationship with each of their students. However, when dealing with corporate clients, that level of personalization and attention must increase significantly. Corporations often have many vendor partnerships and expect the institution to provide the same high level of service to which they are accustomed. Outdated attitudes that “only the quality of the teaching and learning matter” will quickly be dispelled in this marketplace.

### The EvoLLLution community comments on managing relationships with corporate clients:

“ From program management to student support, companies will be looking for their university partner to treat them better than commercial training providers do. The promise of the university’s brand is expected to shine through services as well as content. ”

Chris Proulx, Chief Executive Officer, eCornell

“ I would say the strongest corporation-university collaborations are those that set an ongoing communication and expectations model. Normally you don’t get it exactly right first-off; either the corporation comes in saying, ‘we realize we want something different that what we originally articulated,’... so you want to keep meeting and saying, ‘are we delivering what this group of employees needs? Are we challenging them? Are we doing it in a way that will benefit the organization’s goals?’ ”

Merodie Hancock, Vice President of Global Campus, Central Michigan University

“ The needs have changed, but also the expectations have changed. There are greater customer demands for the university to be more customer-responsive. People are expecting a certain level of customer service. They expect it in all areas of their life; the university is not immune. ”

Richard Novak, Associate Vice President for Continuing Studies and Distance Learning, Rutgers University

# 5

## Create Win-Win Partnerships

By partnering with corporations, a university stands to increase revenue and enrollments, create closer ties with the workforce and more. The corporation, on the other hand, stands to increase employee effectiveness and productivity and improve talent management, amongst other things. However, each organization will have its own aims, and in order for a partnership to be successful, everyone must win.

### The EvoLLLution community comments on how institutions stand to win:

“ Our institutions are increasingly brand conscious and a good corporate client can augment brand in a number of ways. A business' vote of confidence in your institution can be a terrific public relations talking point, not to mention the access to their staff and executives. However, not all companies are created equally. A university's brand could very well be diminished if the company becomes embroiled in activities publically perceived as inconsistent with the university's mission. ”

John LaBrie, Vice President of Professional Education, Northeastern University

“ It is important to replace the self-referential character of an ivory tower with a more open and responsive approach to a highly uncertain future ... . In order to succeed, it is crucial that both higher education institutions and corporate or societal partners speak the same language. ”

Rolf Reinhardt, Managing Director, Learning Agency Network



# 6

## Personalize, But Avoid Creating

Each company brings unique issues and goals to a partnership, yet for a university to start entirely from scratch on a curriculum for each corporation is economically unfeasible. Successful corporate training divisions will create building blocks and frameworks that can be reused time and time again, yet easily customized for individual needs. Sometimes the framework involves mixing and matching classes to create a custom certificate, other times, it involves having students bring in a problem from their workplace to use as a real-time (and relevant) case study. It is up to the university to determine how to customize their content, without creating too many one-offs.

### The EvoLLLution community comments on the challenges to personalization:

“One size does not fit all; however it’s not a sustainable practice for a university to develop entirely new curriculum for every potential partner.”

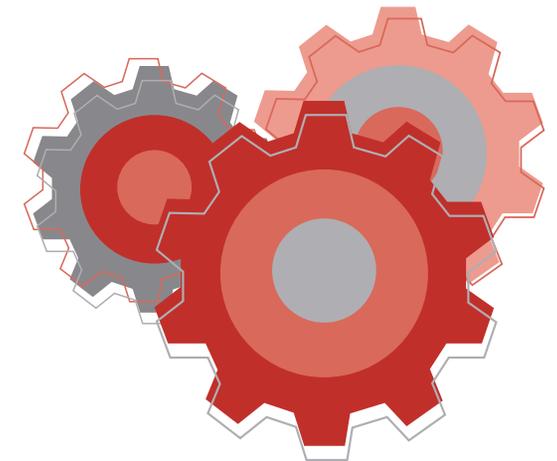
Nancy Salzman, Dean of Extended Education, Brandman University

“Get to know your corporate client and if there is a capstone course make it relevant to their cohort or students. This does not mean you make it only about that company but show how the principles apply to that industry.”

Frank McCluskey, Vice President and Scholar in Residence, American Public University System

“Businesses have their unique company expertise that needs to be incorporated into the training. Businesses and agencies want practical training – not academic theory. They want instructors with ‘real world’ knowledge and skills. They want programs created in a short time frame, delivered at times and in modules that work for the business.”

Leah Kier, Senior Custom Training Manager, University of New Mexico



# 7

## Be Relevant

In addition to knowing what the corporation needs, you need to know what the industry needs. Rapid advancement means that you must be constantly updating and adapting to change. Traditionally slow moving institutions may struggle to keep pace with the needs of corporations. However, by working closely with corporations, institutions can bridge the gap.

### The EvoLLLution community comments on how to make programs more relevant:

“ A common observation by corporate executives is that a disconnect exists between the ivy walls of academe and the real world outside those walls. Corporate training can help equip university faculty simply by exposure to practical world requirements. This, in turn, translates into enhanced teaching because real world practices inform theory. This is a case where both the corporation and the university benefit through experience in the workplace. ”

James Pappas, Vice President for University Outreach, University of Oklahoma

“ The mandate for new, ‘just in time’ programming presents inherent challenges in the often slow-moving bureaucracy that is higher education. For academic leaders to be successful and stay ahead of the curve they must respond adeptly to emerging trends, governmental needs and changing market demands. After all, adult education is a climate where upwardly mobile business professionals are seeking immediate educational opportunities to advance or change careers, gain credentialing or learn specific knowledge. ”

Tom McGuire, Program Director, UC Berkeley Extension

# 8

## Consider All Business Requirements

Effective business operations are especially important when competing for corporate contracts, owing to high standards and close scrutiny. While many institutions boast innovative programs, exceptional service and much more, the schools with the business processes to do so consistently, efficiently and securely are the ones rising to the top.

### The EvoLLution community comments on overlooked areas of business operations:

“ Security is one of the most important and overlooked areas surrounding integration between systems and organizations. And, as a result of serious data breaches over the past decade, there are now several information security regulations that require it. ”

Rob Kingyens, Chief Technology Officer and Chief Marketing Technology Officer, eCornell

“ Part of the issue is having a history of not really thinking like businesses. The business side and the education side have been separated and the people in the business side have been relatively shielded from academics and faculty ... . What we have in many situations is a problem of a lack of business literacy among people who really have to make decisions that involve finance. ”

Wayne Smutz, Dean of Continuing Education and Extension, UC Los Angeles



# Destiny Solutions

creates software for universities and colleges that helps them to successfully attract, manage and maintain their non-traditional students.

What makes us truly unique is the fact that our software satisfies the specific needs of continuing education extensions, corporate training divisions, international programs, online schools and other units with distinctive requirements, while enforcing system-wide objectives across the institution. We unite best of breed capabilities with economies of scale so that each unit is empowered by a single solution.

[Click here to learn more.](#)

**LIKE WHAT YOU READ?**



**SUBSCRIBE FOR MORE**



©2014 Destiny Solutions. All rights reserved.

Destiny Solutions, Destiny One and The EvoLLLution are trademarks of Destiny Solutions Inc. All quotations come from articles published on The EvoLLLution and are the opinion of the author only and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of Destiny Solutions. The information contained herein is subject to change without notice. Destiny Solutions shall not be liable for any technical or editorial errors.