

# Online Learning 3.0 to Generate and Scale Impact

## White Paper



August 2017

**A lot of nonprofit organizations want to create engaging online learning programs. Some have already created mediocre, or even bad, online learning programs. It's not for lack of effort; lack of resources, budget, know-how, and ROI visibility are the key reasons.**

**Modern online learning can help your nonprofit engage constituents, educate them, and generate impact at scale. But only a few nonprofit organizations are leading the charge, and it's possible for any forward-thinking organization to be one of them.**

Harvard Business School has created one of the most **advanced learning environments in the world**. **Life is Good Kids Foundation** and **Year Up** have recently started projects to create unique online learning experiences to further their missions. These and a number of other examples represent the evolution of leading nonprofit organizations to the next generation of learning, online learning 3.0. You don't have to be a massive organization to create a modern online learning experience. But before we discuss exactly how to do that let's take a look how we got here and what online learning 3.0 means.

A few key nonprofit organizations are leading the charge to online learning 3.0, but any organization can do it.

## Online Learning 1.0

When organizations first started using the Internet, online learning meant making the usual instructor led training (ILT) materials — like web pages, downloadable PDFs, and long, classroom videos — available for download. Learners were given the links and left to make sense of them on their own. This was online learning 1.0. The online experience basically consisted of left-hand navigation menus. Learners were largely left to their own devices (beyond what might or might not have been discussed in the classroom), and there were no analytics.



Online Learning 1.0



## Online Learning 2.0

Over the past few years, more organizations have adopted Learning Management Systems (LMS) that are designed to present courses in a cohesive way. The LMS enables courses to be more structured than is possible with creating a web page for downloads, and so it allows course creators to easily stand up a course online. More sophisticated LMS offerings enabled institutions of higher learning to offer MOOCs (massive open online courses), which took off and led to a period of expansion and refinement.

But there are limitations. While learning management systems offer more consistent and streamlined courses, they still follow a traditional instructor-led training (ILT) approach, meaning the courses are comprised of lectures (in the form of videos), usually followed by multiple-choice assessments. The flow is linear, again similar to classroom learning. These courses have also included some rudimentary analytics mainly consisting of completion status and rates.

**Online learning 1.0 put the usual Instructor Led Training materials on the internet. Learners were left to their own devices, and there were no analytics.**



Online Learning 1.0

Online learning 2.0 makes use of learning management systems that present courses in a more consistent and structured way

## Online Learning 2.0

While these online, “talking head” courses have allowed nonprofit organizations to expand their reach beyond ILT classrooms and to create more structure than a static download page did, they still aren’t a great way for people to learn from or to entice commitment to a nonprofit’s organizational mission. First and foremost, let’s be honest, these simplistic courses tend to be really, really boring.

Besides being boring, online learning 2.0 courses are also not great at teaching real-world application of learning — something that is absolutely necessary if the purpose of the course is empowering learners to contribute toward achieving the organizational mission. A dependence on generic, cookie-cutter, off-the-shelf LMS software means that educational outreach and training are limited to a generic talking head approach. It’s difficult to tailor the digital experience needed to create the unique learning environment best suited to train or enlighten users, nor to personalize the course to the learner’s specific needs for maximum effectiveness. Traditional classrooms allowed for blending online materials with projects accompanied by instructors who could assist in translating the learning to real-world application in direct response to students

in attendance, but online learning 2.0 doesn’t do this well. As a result, the learning is not contributing what it could toward outreach, stakeholder education, and inspiring constituents.

A further problem with the off-the-shelf LMS is the production-focused perspective it fosters. Much like PowerPoint, an LMS, to its credit, allows for an easy way to think about and produce a course. You simply outline a course, create some scripts, shoot some video, upload related text and assessments, and watch the completion activity. Simple and straightforward. Still a lot of work, but it’s straightforward.

Just as we’ve all been through PowerPoint meeting hell, it’s not surprising that this easy-to-produce system has focused course creators on their process at the expense of engaging the learner.

**Although more structured, online learning 2.0 is still “ILT on the internet”. The result is boredom, ineffectiveness and inefficiency**

While the off-the-shelf LMS might have made things straightforward, it hasn't done much to reduce the cost of producing any given course, which leaves even fewer resources to innovate. With costs of creating a mediocre talking head course still ranging from \$50,000 to \$150,000 each, organizations are essentially spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to build a Hyundai (sorry Hyundai, no offense). If you're

spending that much money you should get a Ferrari. Or that mediocre experience should at least cost a lot less. The \$150,000 Hyundai effect is preventing nonprofit organizations from funneling dollars into new and innovative ways of creating online learning to further mission goals.

**Courses created on antiquated learning systems are a poor use of budget and have a negative impact on business results**





## Online Learning 2.0

Lack of differentiation is another problem. For nonprofits who exist to make a difference in the world, the implications of staying with run-of-the-mill talking head courses is obvious: poor learner retention. Without differentiation, courses lack efficacy

and are unlikely to inspire learners.

But there are organizations today who are starting to figure out how to move beyond the talking head video, multiple-choice course. That's where online learning 3.0 comes in.

## Online Learning 3.0

So what is online learning 3.0? Fundamentally it's the end of courses that consist solely of video lectures and multiple choice assessments. It's an evolution to a learner-centered world that leverages advances in learning science and tools to make learning faster, more effective, more enjoyable, and more applicable to a larger set of learning areas. It's the end of systems where course production considerations trump learner experience. Hopefully it's the end of wading through hours of boring videos and questions to learn something without really being able to apply it in the real-world.

Online learning 3.0 has a few fundamentals aspects:

- Modern user experience design, similar to what folks are seeing in consumer web
- Visually engaging overview, e.g., what am I going to learn, how am I doing, what's next, etc.
- Personalization that allows learners to test out and navigate in a nonlinear fashion
- A knowledge graph frame of reference, instead of a list of materials to get through
- Learn-by-doing opportunities
- Integration of external materials
- Interactive content and assessments
- Human involvement at scale; for example, online coaching or group collaboration
- Engagement tools, e.g., gamification, mobile, social integration, etc.
- Visible and transportable credit for what's been learned
- Delivery in the context of lifelong learning programs
- Heavy use of data to improve the learning experience and course material over time

Online learning 3.0 is an evolution to a student-centered world. It ends boredom, inefficiency and ineffectiveness and offers access to user-oriented design, interactivity, personalization, and metrics.

## Online Learning 3.0

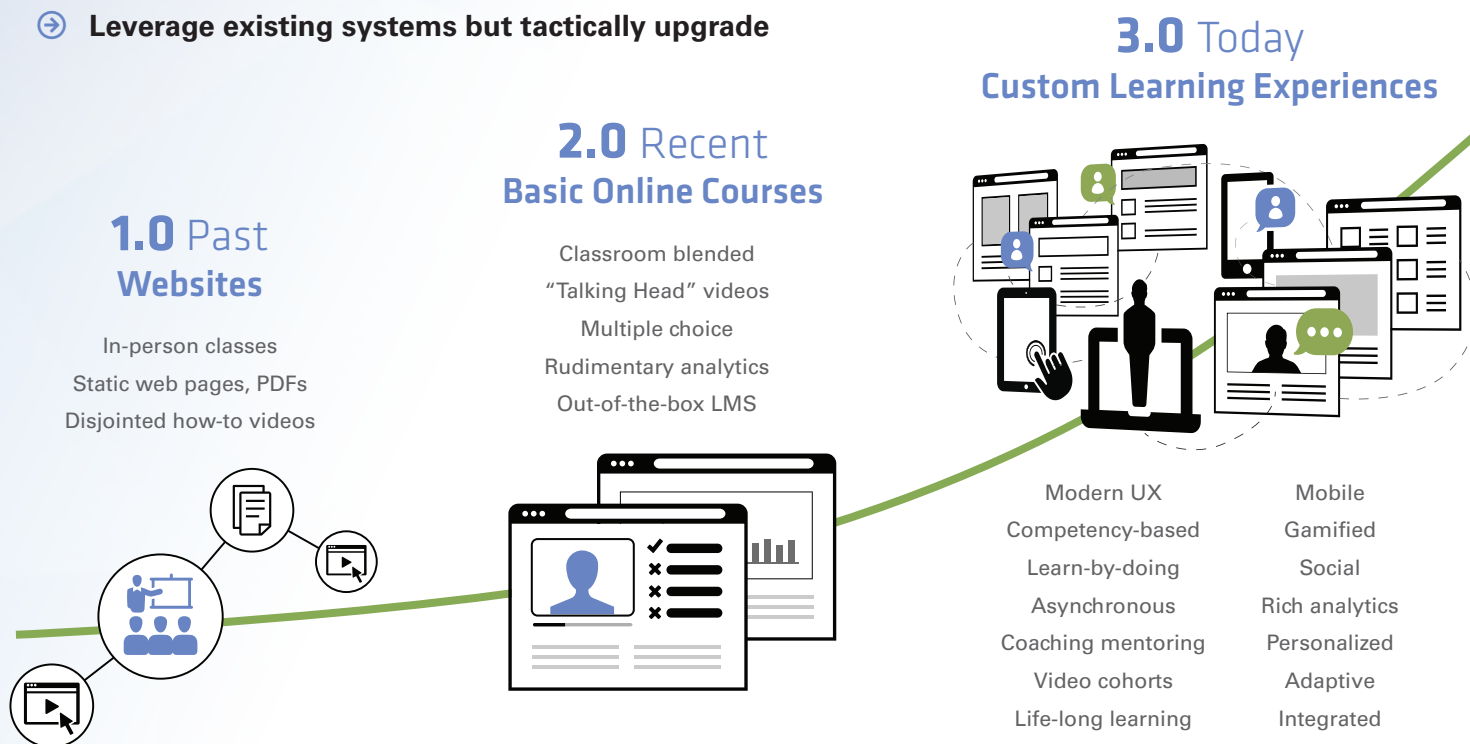
You may be thinking to yourself “that’s great but I can’t invest millions of dollars and years of development to get to the next generation. On our budget, I can barely get the existing courses out.” Or “we just invested in an LMS, we don’t want to upset things now.” However, wherever you are in the online learning evolution, it’s possible to create a plan that has immediate impact yet puts you on the path to online learning 3.0.



Online Learning 3.0

# The Path to Online Learning 3.0

- ➔ Online learning evolution
- ➔ Move up the curve cost-effectively
- ➔ Transition from one stage to next in steps
- ➔ Leverage existing systems but tactically upgrade



Here are some practical tips to start formulating your own path that will make the journey less daunting:

## 1. Take the learner's perspective.

If you or your dad are the learner, what would make for an efficient and enjoyable experience? Think outside of the LMS box for a bit. What online experiences do you enjoy? Borrow from those.

## 2. Create a strategic roadmap.

This is not a feature roadmap for the next 12 months; a strategic roadmap lays out how you want to position yourself against your current state in the long term. What do you think the most effective learning solution in the future will look like? How would you prioritize critical new capabilities?

## 3. Connect your near-term and long-term roadmaps.

Change your near-term roadmap from a list of interesting features to one that connects the near-term to your long-term strategic roadmap through a series of iterations.



#### 4. Start pilot projects.

You won't be able to get complete clarity on the strategic roadmap or how to get there right now. But start getting a feel for the learner and ROI impact of various approaches.

#### 5. Think modular.

Technologies are key enablers allowing organizations to move from cookie cutter courses to dynamic experiences.

#### 6. Change the learner experience right now.

Leveraging APIs and lightweight companion apps, it's relatively easy to create an engaging learner experience that leverages your existing off-the-shelf systems.

#### 7. Get serious about data.

Reporting is often an afterthought for online courses. But just like the best consumer web companies, the leading online learning organizations are using data to improve their systems rapidly and proving out their ROI models.

**So where are you in the online learning evolution and how are you going to catch up?**

**Any nonprofit organization can tap into online learning 3.0 capabilities by thoughtfully formulating an incremental path**

Ready to launch your own engaging, effective,  
high-end online learning 3.0 experience?

## CONTACT US TODAY

### **We are experts in Custom Learning Experiences.**

After working with clients like The Kauffman Foundation, Life is Good Kids Foundation, Year Up, J&J, MIT, and Harvard, we created an approach to learning unlike any other. We call it Custom Learning Experiences. It's helped exceptional universities, corporations and nonprofits deliver innovative online learning experiences.

### **Why Custom Learning Experiences?**

Organizations looking to drive revenue or impact from their programs find most online courses are undifferentiated, antiquated, and yield ineffective learning experiences.

### **Services**

With a staff of over 200 experts, we help our clients with each aspect of building a Custom Learning Experience including strategy, instructional design, platform development, creative, program management, and learner acquisition services.

Edward Daciuk has worked with some of the world's best known companies on learning strategy and implementation. He is known for his innovative, challenging thinking and expertise in cutting edge online learning. He has a BS from The Wharton School at University of Pennsylvania.



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