



Top 3 Education Marketing mistakes that will cost you



“Unfortunately, there seems to be far more opportunity out there than ability... We should remember that good fortune often happens when opportunity meets with preparation.” - Thomas Edison

In an ideal world, all of your education business initiatives would be fully supported by a group of marketing professionals, maybe even your corporate marketing staff who understood what you want and knew what you need. They would promote your products and services to the right people, at the right time, keeping your sales pipeline full and your boss happy. But alas, few of us operate in this euphoria.

In the real world, education business leaders are stuck in the middle; trapped by a lack of marketing resources and a growing revenue target that requires promotional support. Compound that with time constraints courtesy of day-to-day demands, and it’s easy to see why so many struggle to find a marketing solution that’s effective and scalable.

Many make the same time-consuming and expensive mistakes when it comes to balancing marketing needs with other business initiatives. After 12 years of partnering with education businesses around the world, we’ve identified three of the most popular and costly education marketing mistakes, and devised some creative ways to avoid them. This insight will help you execute a killer marketing strategy, even if you don’t have much marketing support.

Mistake #1: No plan

Thanks to time and resource constraints, promotional planning can easily fall to the back burner. As a result, campaigns are often created in a rush without a way to measure the true effectiveness. This approach costs your team valuable time and doesn’t often lead to tangible results. In order for marketing to work, you need a plan.

‘Sell more training’ isn’t a plan, it’s a goal. Setting goals is a step in the right direction, but you need to define what will guide you in obtaining that goal. Effective marketing plans outline what the team should intend on achieving—like increased sales—and should explain how marketing can be utilized to reach that goal.

Not sure where to start? Here are a couple tips for building an effective education marketing plan, despite strains on time and resources:

- Utilize customer feedback. While you measure overall satisfaction and tally up Net Promoter Scores, look for trends. Do the customers like certain aspects of your core courses? Use that feedback to fuel quarterly promotions for your most popular training.
- Start small. You know that change is eminent, so don't waste time planning for the unknown. Start by thinking about what promotions you might need or want in the next month. Once you get the hang of it, strive to create more long range plans.
- Think outside of email. Encourage & reward your team members to contribute to relevant social media discussions with product or service recommendations. Don't get carried away. Overly promotional posts don't carry the same weight as a natural response to a discussion.

Specific goals are easier to work toward than generic ones. If increasing revenue is a goal, define the growth rate as well as the number of leads you think you need. From that point, use the tips above to easily piece together a plan that will drive your team toward achieving those goals.

Mistake #2: Lack of targeting

Sure, you want everyone to know about that new course or certification, but does everyone really care? Sending all of your promotional messages to your entire database isn't a good use of resources. Targeting is a big part of effective marketing. It fuels the plan you've created by encouraging customer engagement. High engagement drives greater opportunity. Greater opportunity drives more conversion. So to ensure the best results from your marketing efforts, you need to segment your audience.

Not all organizations are equal, especially when it comes to managing training data. Regardless of where the data lives, you should understand how customers are engaging with your training and use that data to guide your segmentation.

Here are some suggestions for data points that you can use in beginner-level audience segmentation: Answering some fundamental questions can filter through the sludge and clarify your prioritization process quickly:

- Training completion data. This may seem like a no-brainer, but you'd be surprised how many organizations overlook this opportunity. Use this data to drive campaigns that increase course adoption or nurture customers to certification. Once you know where your customers are on the learning path, you can use targeted promotions to convince them to consume more training in an effort to meet their business or career goals. This process is made easier by integrating your LMS with your Marketing tools when you can.
- Role data. This data can be a combination of different demographic and behavioral attributes, or can be as simple as someone's job title. Different roles have different needs. Make sure each group of customers knows which training products or services are best for them and why.
- Geography. Have transactional classes that need to be filled in certain markets? Make sure you're creating lists based on the location of the contact. This keeps the message relevant and increases conversion opportunity.

Since customers are inundated with tons of marketing messages daily, relevancy is increasingly important. By making a few select strides in audience segmentation, you're ensuring that your contacts receive education promotions that are most relevant to them.

Mistake #3: No tracking

How do you know what's working if you aren't tracking it? Without tracking, organizations waste thousands of dollars and hundreds of man-hours on promotions that just don't work.

There are tons of tools out there, like marketing automation programs or business intelligence platforms that can simplify the process of tracking campaign effectiveness. However, even these high-end solutions won't give you any value unless you know what you're looking for. The key is to overlook the 'vanity' or 'feel good' metrics and dig into what matters – revenue and profit.

How organizations identify and manage, metrics can vary depending on how they report data. However, here are a few secrets for marketing measurement success:

- Establish a benchmark to determine KPI's. You won't know how campaigns are affecting your business until you identify status quo. Determine what you want to measure and how you're going to measure it, and then collect the data and see where it falls. Keep in mind that there can be seasonal trends for any business, so don't assume one month's results will apply to all months following that. Show the trends for the metrics over time. This way, you can easily see what is working and what isn't.
- Less is more. Choose a maximum of 5 metrics to focus on. It's difficult to focus on more than that, so choose wisely! You'll want to track your results of your chosen metrics weekly, monthly or quarterly to identify room for improvement.

Your measuring process should be aligned with the organization's goals and objectives. Consider establishing a KPI roadmap for increasing marketing ROI and measurement capabilities over time. Translating your marketing metrics to a roadmap will not only establish a foundation for improvement, it will make future promotional planning and targeting a breeze.