ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

Year 3 - number 78 Wednesday 24 july 2019

How to apply the startup MVP strategy to an online course

Before launching a product on the market, startups validate their idea with a minimum viable project. Is it possible to do the same thing with an online course?

We have already talked about the reasons why it is useful to make a pre-sale of the online courses and how to organize the pre-sale of an eLearning course.

Deciding to launch the first online course can be a titanic undertaking if you start on the wrong foot. The most common mistake is to prepare the course, collect the material, involve the experts and, when it is simply perfect, launch it on the market. The lean startup approach, created to help new digital companies to adopt a lean strategy to present themselves to the market, says that the search for perfection is one of the biggest reasons for the failure of a startup. If after all the effort made, the online course does not interest anyone, the project is destined to fail. To avoid this waste of resources and energy, it would be good to adopt the principles of lean startups and start with a minimum feasible product. Here's how to make a minimum viable project (MVP) for your first online course.

1. Take stock of your training material

Often companies that want to switch to online training have already produced a large amount of material. The advice is to watch carefully not only the texts already produced and the PowerPoint presentations, but also the audio or conference transcripts, questions to the customer service and videos. This gives you a clear idea of what you can offer.

2. Identify the training needs of the beneficiaries

The second step is to understand if you are able, with what you have available, to respond to the needs of your beneficiaries. For a lean startup, in fact, it is essential to talk to your beneficiaries to understand what their needs are and how they think they want to solve a problem. E-learning has the advantage of including different media formats. Knowing the preferences of the future beneficiaries of the courses helps to better understand their tastes in terms of learning: texts, videos, games, simulations, etc.

3. Select the teaching resources and create two modules that respond to the requests of the beneficiaries

At this point, you are ready to select the material to use. The slenderness principle wants to make at most one or two modules and not the whole online course. In this phase we want to test our hypothesis on what the course beneficiaries would be willing to buy and start the real experimentation or validation of their project.

4. Get feedback and measure the effectiveness of the online course with a suitable LMS

An LMS, Learning Management System, not only allows you to upload your own material and deliver the online course modules, but also allows the trainer to analyze, through statistics, the course progress. By means of quizzes, comments and surveys the trainer can get feedback from the beneficiaries of the modules and understand if their hypothesis has been validated.

5. Implement the feedback received and test the online course module again

Surely there will be adjustments to be made to the online course prototype offered based on the feedback received from the beneficiaries. This is where you must adjust the pitch, correct the course and present it to the beneficiaries. Once you have validated your idea of the course, you can proceed to build all the remaining modules because you can be sure that this is exactly what the beneficiaries require and what they would be willing to pay for.

It makes no sense to build an entire online course before presenting it to the target audience. Instead, start with a minimalist project made up of a couple of modules to present to future learners, test their response and adjust the course with the feedback received. In short, to get the most out of an online course, you need to adopt the same lean startup strategy.