ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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How to manage student data

Data is crucial to improving your offerings, yet managing and protecting it is a responsibility that should not be underestimated.

Collecting data to gain a competitive advantage

One of the reasons why data collection is essential is to learn more about the product you are offering and to know what your customers think about it in order to offer an ever-improving product.
Data collection helps educators and developers **improve the product and increase the value offered to end users**. It is not just about collecting reports on technical problems with the system, but also qualitative data related to every aspect of the educator's work, such as:

- Which courses are the most and least valued?
- What features are most and least used?
- What training methodology is most often used?
- How do users navigate the software product?

Data collection is widespread among both companies and freelancers for two reasons:

1. Proper data analysis **saves a lot of time** in identifying the cause of problems before they recur.
2. Saving time and resources in identifying a problem is **cheaper** than solving a problem once it has occurred.

How to collect data

There are several ways to collect data, and if you would like to learn more about this topic I recommend reading **this article**. One of the most common ways is through **customer reviews**. Another way is to use **questionnaires**. Asking customers what and were their recent experiences with your course and getting their feedback on those experiences is a great way to collect qualitative data. For example, ask your students if they have suggestions for improvement or what changes they would like to see in your service. You can also collect "internal" data by asking your employees what they think about a particular feature or function of the service you are providing.

In some cases, especially for those who have recently started selling their courses online, this will provide enough information to improve your service. In other cases, further research may be needed before you can change your offering based on the results of this round of data collection.

The use of data

When it comes to data collection, there are a few things that are critical to consider. Some of the questions that are good to ask are:

- **Who will use the data?**
- **Are they just for your company?**
- **Are they for a customer?**
- **Do you hope to use this information to better understand how your company works?**

If no one is likely to be harmed by the collection of the data and if there are no laws that are violated by the sharing of this information, then you can proceed with the collection without any problems. But if someone could be harmed by the data you are collecting, such as a customer who does not want his or her privacy violated, then do not go ahead and collect the data.

What data is important to collect

Below we see the different groups of people whose data it is important to collect to get an accurate picture of how your service is performing.

1. Current customers
This group already knows you and is familiar with your offerings. They already know what sets you apart and why to buy your service. To ensure that these people feel valued and return to purchase, track their interactions with your company. For example, ask questions about their experience, note how often they return, or anything else that makes them stay.

2. Potential customers
This category of people is a bit more difficult to identify because it includes both people who do not know you and those who have heard of you but have not yet had a chance to connect with your service. The best way to attract these people is through social media ads and other marketing strategies.

3. Former customers
These are the people who no longer buy your courses. Perhaps they have found a better alternative or simply no longer appreciate you. Why are these people important even though they are no longer customers? Because they are the people who have suffered more negative experiences than others, so who better than them to highlight any problems? Also keep in mind that sometimes these people can be converted, that is, they may return to buy your courses if, for example, you convince them that the new changes have solved the problems they experienced.

Backing up the data

Once you have collected the data and found a way to continue collecting it, it is critical to keep in mind that you now have a responsibility to this data. You must ensure that you keep it safe, and the only way to do that is through backup.
The cost associated with data loss can be considerable if not fatal for some companies, which is why it is considered a 'necessary operation for a business. If you do not have backups, you risk losing all the data you have collected. This is problematic mainly for companies that store huge amounts of data but also freelancers who collect a smaller amount. Losing data can be problematic because it significantly affects productivity, leading to considerable losses and months, if not years, of lost work. Moreover, with a public increasingly aware of the importance and use of data, losing data not only affects profits, but also reputation. Customers will be more reluctant to share information if they suspect they cannot be trusted.

How to make a backup

It is not possible to store all information on a single hard drive, so a backup is necessary. But what happens if the backup is not done right? What if the backup is not complete? What if an error occurs and all the data is lost? These questions nag at all those who are not computer experts but are faced with a backup.
Data backups are an effective way to protect data securely, but they are only as good as if done properly. If you do not pay attention to how you save what is important, you risk making the situation worse. In the following, we will not focus on how to make a backup from a practical point of view; in fact, there are plenty of products on the market that make it easy for you to make backups of your data. In this article, we focus on what kind of data to focus on if you are new to making a backup and when to do it.

1. What eLearning data should be backed up?
The amount of data that even a small business has to deal with nowadays is so great that it is not possible to back up all the information. One question that plagues anyone faced with backing up data is "which information to save and which to delete?"

There are different types of data that should be backed up, and often this depends on the business strategy you are adopting. Depending on what you want to improve, whether profits or your students' performance, you need to focus on different types of data. In general in the world of e Learning (and the same is true in many other industries as well) it is critical to keep two types of data in mind: customer information and payment data

A. Customer information
Include names, addresses, e-mail addresses, phone numbers, etc. If you currently store this data only on mobile devices, think

about one day losing your phone or tablet and consequently access to your customer database. It would mean years of lost work and could cause a lot of damage to your company.

In the case of eLearning there are other learner data that are important to store that will help you run your business more easily. If you offer eLearning courses here are some data you should collect:

1. The **number of courses sold** (this will also show which courses sell better than others)
2. The **number of courses dropped** for any reason.
3. The **number of customer complaints and reviews** about your services (this will show how many customers are dissatisfied).
4. The number of times people register for a course **directly on your website**.
5. How many times people enroll in a course **from other websites, such as social media channels**.

B. Payment data
Include both credit card numbers and current account information, such as passwords and security questions. If someone, such as a hacker, were to get hold of this data and use it without authorization, it could cause serious damage to the company.

2. When to back up data?
You should back up every time you make a change to your application. It can often happen that as a result of a change or intervention to your site or application, users lose all their data. If your database becomes damaged and has to be rebuilt from scratch, not only will your service suffer, but all the data collected during its lifetime will also be lost. If you have a database backup somewhere else, you can import the database into the new version of your site or application and everything will work better than before.
In general, it is advisable to determine how often to do this. You can decide to do it once a month, every three months, or twice a year depending on your needs.

Conclusion

Performing backups of collected data is of paramount importance in data management. In today's world, where data is the lifeblood of businesses, being responsible and knowing how to protect and take care of data is increasingly important. Backups protect against human errors, hardware failures, virus attacks, power outages and natural disasters. They can also help save time and money. For novices, this can be a complex task, but hopefully this article has provided the help needed to overcome the biggest obstacles.

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