ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

Year 4 - number 117 Wednesday 17 june 2020

Why do students drop out of online courses?

eLearning and drop-out rates: What are the factors that drive students to drop out of an online course before completing it?

When you create an eLearning course, one of the data you need to constantly monitor is the **drop-out rate**, i.e. the percentage of users who drop out of the course before completing it.

If on the one hand your goal is to sell your courses, on the other hand you have to make sure that **the courses are completed by the students**. A user who does not complete a course is generally a dissatisfied student who will not only not buy more of your products, but will not speak well of your brand and compromise your reputation.

The recipe for **reducing drop-out rates from an online course** is (apparently) very simple: all you need to do is understand what causes your students to drop out of the course early and act on them.

In order to do this, it is essential to listen to your students' feedback: provide a **satisfaction questionnaire** to be submitted to all learners, including those who have not completed the course, and analyze the responses received.

At the same time, considering that many users will decide not to fill out the questionnaire, it may be useful to consult the list of the most common causes of dropping out of eLearning courses and analyze your courses from these points of view. To this end, we have collected below the main factors that drive students to drop out of an online course before completing it.

Unrealistic expectations about the commitment required

This is probably the main reason why students abandon an online course before completing it.

A rather common mistake when promoting an online course is in fact to emphasize the absolute **ease of use**, minimizing the effort required and the time needed to complete it. Remember: students should be aware of the effort required to complete the course from the beginning. If you offer them unrealistic expectations, they will feel overwhelmed by the content and will end up giving up.

Give them an idea of the **estimated amount of time** they will need to complete the various modules, taking into account the time needed to complete any activities or tests.

For longer courses, especially if they are tied to an expiry date, give an indication of the weekly commitment required (e.g. 3 hours per week) and, if **live sessions** are planned, clarify this immediately in the course presentation.

Lack of support and poor communication

As we saw when we talked about the **loneliness of the online student**, for some students an eLearning course can be very alienating.

That's why it becomes important to foster and encourage communication. How? Provide the presence of a **tutor** who **offers students support** in case of doubts or difficulties in using the contents and integrates in your platform tools that encourage **interaction** (e-mail contacts, message boards, forums, real-time chat, etc..) so that students can confront each other and / or easily contact teachers and tutors overcoming that feeling of loneliness typical of distance learning.

Lack of prior knowledge

Whether it is computer skills or prior knowledge of particular subjects, it is necessary to clarify from the outset what requirements the student must meet in order to successfully complete the course.

A user who enrolls in a beginner's course and finds advanced teaching material will inevitably find it difficult to complete the course, to the point where he or she may decide to leave it early.

In the **course presentation**, therefore includes a section on the **requirements for participants**; only then can you be sure to attract the right students for your course.

Non-relevant content

Make sure that your course provides **relevant and accurate content** that can be really useful to your students. Make sure that the course presentation is consistent with the topics covered and that it accurately describes the teaching approach taken.

If a course promises to be practical but provides only theoretical content, students will soon lose interest and confidence and tend to leave the course before it is finished.

Technical issues

Make sure that your **LMS platform** is reliable in order to minimize possible technical problems and ensure timely support. There is nothing more frustrating for a student to encounter problems related to the functionality of the course.

At the same time, be sure to clarify immediately what the **technical requirements** are to use the course: type of device, web browser, possible installation of external software, type of internet connection, etc..

Difficulties in using the course

The watchword for any online course should be **ease of use**. Make sure that you offer clear and intuitive navigation and make sure that the user can easily find what they need: navigation buttons, teaching materials, "Help" section for assistance and all this puts them in a position to easily enjoy the content offered.

Translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator