Corporate training, a nearly $200-billion industry, has always been a competitive field. With recent developments in educational technology, it has become even more so, and the space is getting more crowded every day. Non-profit and for-profit universities, professional associations, private training companies, individual consultants, internal corporate universities, free online programs—all are competing for the same clients, and on a global scale. To be truly successful in this field, a corporate training provider must create a clear differentiation—their unique selling proposition—that will set them apart from the competition.

As the head of the corporate training division at a major West Coast research university, many of our most likely customers are unaware that we offer corporate training in the first place. Even after we have established contact, it is not uncommon to hear objections borne of the stereotypes associated with large institutions, such as “They will be difficult to work with,” and “The training will be too academic for our employees.” Over time, we have honed our selling proposition, product and post-sale service model to overcome these stereotypes. As a result, we have outperformed our competition in winning critical business. We do this by focusing on our product, the customer experience and building trust.

1. Your Product Is Your Promise

Focus on the end product to achieve the desired learning outcomes of the client and their employees. No cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all programs allowed.

We believe in responding to all RFPs quickly—within 24 hours—with a detailed proposal that includes program information, delivery options, pricing, instructor biographies and answers to any additional questions the prospective client may have listed in the initial training request. Our consultative approach starts with a conversation with the client so we can fully understand their needs. We lead them through a pre-training assessment to discover what their desired learning outcomes are, so we can make recommendations to meet those needs. We always customize the training to fit our clients’ needs.

By focus on creating a high-end, highly engaging customer experience, universities can stand out and succeed in the competitive but lucrative customized training space.
Three Ways to Enhance your Customer Experience and Stand Out from the Competition

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clients’ needs. Examples include: Incorporating internal company processes and procedures into the training; creating industry-related case studies; and integrating real work projects, which students complete throughout the program. Not only do we want to satisfy the company stakeholders, but we also want to ensure the corporate student has a chance to speak. Many times, we survey the actual participants. We want to hear from them what their pain points and challenges are, and to glean what they hope to be able to do differently at their workplace as a result of the training, to achieve better or more efficient results. We want to certify that the employees can apply the learning immediately on the job, so all of our courses are experiential, hands-on and practical. We also take steps to confirm the instructor is the right fit with the client. Our clients have the opportunity to meet with the instructors, audit their teaching styles, talk through the curriculum and discuss any customization prior to the course start. Our relentless pursuit of client satisfaction means that every training proposal includes a well researched and formulated training program, crafted to exact client specifications and expertly delivered to achieve the desired results.

2. It’s About the Customer Experience

Creating a great customer experience is the key to building long-term partnerships. Not only is it important at the onset of a relationship, but also throughout the entire process, and for everyone we serve within that partnership.

A client recently said to me, “You have changed my perception of what it is to work with a university.” Our goal is continuously to exceed the expectations of our clients and students by being a true service provider. We offer many complementary services, such as the creation of customized training websites. On the website, students can enroll in courses, see course information, get answers to FAQ’s, read instructor biographies, look-up university contacts, access their student accounts to check grades, and engage the curriculum on course pages – all in one central location. If the client needs assistance with promoting the training opportunities to employees, we will create marketing materials for them, such as email communications, program flyers and e-newsletters. Whether the training is for a specific group of employees or is offered enterprise-wide, we give our clients the option of holding information sessions, either on site or online, where an instructor discusses the curriculum and answers questions corporate students might have prior to enrollment. If corporate students have additional questions prior to, during or after the training, we have a dedicated team to assist.

3. With Transparency Comes Trust

Build trust with your clients by being transparent.

We don’t make promises we can’t keep. If a client has a need that we cannot fulfill, we will make recommendations and/or introductions to a training provider that can help them reach their goals. We want to make sure that our clients’ needs are met, even if we can’t meet them. Recently, we were approached by a client asking for basic Microsoft Office training. While we certainly could have assisted, we specialize more in advanced skills training information technologies, and since we have a connection with an institution that could serve them better and more cost effectively, we connected them. This is one example of putting the needs of the client first, and in so doing, building trust that you have their best training interests at heart. Since we operate both as a partner and a resource, clients can trust that they will get the best service from us, and often come back to us as new training needs arise.

Conclusion

This is an exciting time to be in corporate training, as more and more companies realize that an investment in their employees’ skills can and will lead to higher productivity, increased job satisfaction, lower turnover and more profitability. Corporate training providers of all types and sizes can capitalize on this demand by delivering the right product, providing an exceptional customer experience, and building trust with their clients. By mastering all three areas, they will be better positioned to succeed in this highly competitive marketplace.

The EvoLLLution is an online newspaper dedicated to non-traditional higher education. It is the brainchild of Destiny Solutions, a company that creates software for universities and colleges to help them successfully attract, manage and maintain their non-traditional students.