



Cut Catalog Production Time in Half

Greg Marsello's article "Cut Catalog Production Time in Half" discusses the way in which web-based management systems can help lifelong learning programs save time during catalog production. Marsello begins his article reasserting the importance of paper catalog in marketing, even though most programs have developed an internet presence. The author then goes on to give advice on how to efficiently produce this essential marketing tool. Marsello asserts that a web-based management system with a catalog extract is central to creating time savings during catalog production. Marsello offers a series of experiences from catalog creation to illustrate the various steps during catalog production where a web-based system (combined with a custom catalog template) can create enormous savings for lifelong learning programs.

Abstract

Although your website is a critical promotional (and of course, management) tool, your printed catalog/brochure/schedule of courses and events still remains your primary marketing tool. Even with the advent of the internet, a large portion of your students still use the paper catalog to search for classes. The paper format is easier for some students to browse, and some customers will not feel the need to change over to the internet. Your catalog is still the most visible, tangible, and familiar symbol of your program, and it pays to invest in the catalog production process. LERN recommends spending 75% of your promotion dollars on your direct mail promotions.

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If you are going to spend a large portion of your promotional budget on production of a catalog, then the catalog development process is a paramount concern for your program. First of all, you want to create a catalog that is appealing. Your catalog is a powerful tool to generate repeat business as well as new business and needs to follow with AIDA Principle: the cover gets people's **A**ttention, the second and third pages generate their **I**nterest, the course/event descriptions create **D**esire, and the registration information and form produce **A**ction. Time spent developing an organized and appealing catalog, brochure, or schedule is time well spent. It pays to have a trusted graphic artist, either on staff or as a consultant, to help you create a usable and exciting catalog layout.

Secondly, after you have created a "winning" layout (one that showcases your identity and your best classes) you will want to streamline the catalog creation process. This is where most learning programs hit a roadblock. Most lifelong learning programs use a completely different (often non-web-based) software tool to produce their catalog than the system they use to register students and manage their web site.



journal of lifelong learning™

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Web-based management systems are designed to consolidate the two processes, and be your only software tool. With web-based systems you build classes that appear and disappear on your website, that are available for student registration, and that are also available to produce your catalog in a desktop publishing software tool like PageMaker or Quark.

The benefit of developing your catalog in your web-based management system comes in the form of time savings. By inputting your catalog information into your web-based system, and then using it in an extract, you save time by not having to input information into more than one software system. You save additional time because only the information you want can be extracted and in the order you want it. With an advanced web-based system, you can define which information you want displayed (the course title, description, instructor, location, cost, etc.) in your catalog. Additional time is saved because catalog information is extracted in text form, so the information can easily and compactly be forwarded to your graphic designer, who can be located anywhere, even across the country.

The savings generated by consolidating catalog development in with the functions of web-based management system can be enormous. Some lifelong learning programs report a 25 to 50 percent savings on catalog production costs created through operation efficiency. However, the most efficient part of the process, where a majority of the time savings occurs, is when your graphic designer has a custom template to “pour” your catalog extract information into. A template allows your course and event information to be automatically formatted – with all titles formatted one way, all descriptions formatted another way, all logistics will look one way, etc.

It may cost \$2,000 - \$10,000 to have a custom template built, but once you do you will be receiving your galleys for proofing 30 minutes after you forward them to your graphic designer. Your graphic designer then imports your catalog extract into the template. Now you can proof the course and event descriptions, and once that is done your graphic designer can build the final product.

Creating a template can give you additional savings. Lifelong learning programs that use a web-based software system and a template report that catalog production time, including printing, is four to eight weeks. Many of these programs are now able to build templates and produce more catalogs a year and generate more business due to increases visibility.