The Software Tools Continuing Education Programs Need to Succeed in the Next Decade
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A white paper discussing how having the “right” software system is a must to running a “winning” continuing education program.

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The second decade of the 21st century will be a time of significant change for the continuing education and lifelong learning industry. As the world shifts from the industrial age to the information age, continuing education and lifelong learning programs will need to re-evaluate programming, marketing, sales, and operations strategies and techniques and make the necessary changes to be positioned for long-term success.

Presently, only 25 percent of the continuing education and lifelong learning programs LERN works with are what we call “winners.” During this decade these “winning” programs will continue to grow and thrive.

“Winning” Continuing education programs have the following traits:

- They are financially self-sufficient
- They collect data and make data-driven decisions
- They use programming, marketing, sales, and operations best practices that match up to industry benchmarks
- They have a one-year business plan and two-five year strategic plan
- They operate in a structure where revenue generators can generate revenue and marketing is a priority
- They have a leader connected to the top of the organization
- They use a software system built specifically for continuing education

Over the last five years, it has become noticeably apparent that having the “right” software system is a must to running a “winning” continuing education program. We have found that programs operating with a software system – such as an ERP system like Banner, Peoplesoft, or Datatel – that is not built to support the diverse requirements of continuing education can reduce staff productivity by 25 percent or more. This not only negatively impacts customer service, but will also have an adverse effect on repeat rate – the leading indicator of growth and stability.

Continuing education and lifelong learning staff need to have the right tools in place so they can be more productive, improve customer satisfaction, make data-driven decisions, and be flexible to quickly make changes and adjustments.

In 1999, LERN teamed up with Augusoft, a developer and provider of continuing education software, to build Lumens, the first web-hosted enrollment management software system built for the continuing education industry. For over a decade LERN and Augusoft have worked together to enhance Lumens with LERN best practices and Augusoft innovation and commitment to exemplary customer service.

Because every continuing education and lifelong learning program is unique, Augusoft works with each program to implement Lumens so it works with the customer's business processes, and trains staff
so they can design their own website, catalogs and reports using the tools Lumens provides. At the same time, the Augusoft team works with Lumens users and LERN to improve and keep Lumens the continuing education industry’s premier open enrollment and contract training software system.

Supporting the long-term needs of continuing education and lifelong learning programs with innovative product research and development is one of Augusoft’s greatest strengths. For your software system to be effective, your software company must be three years ahead of you with features that help you distinguish you from the competitors. With the difference between success and failure in continuing education being as little as 3 percent in profits, you cannot afford to be utilizing a software system that is not web-hosted, built on industry best practices, future-oriented, and easy for both staff and customers to use.

Over the last year, LERN and Augusoft have diligently worked together on three primary projects to further enhance Lumens to meet the needs of continuing education and lifelong learning programs for the next decade – Corporate Education (B2B), Certificate Programs, and ERP Integration.

**Corporate Education (B2B)**
Successful continuing education and lifelong learning divisions must develop and sell both open enrollment programming (selling to an individual) and contract training contracts (selling to a business, government agency, or some other organization). Being dependent on just open enrollment is not a sustainable strategy anymore. To sell contracts, you must have software that can handle your efforts from the proposal/client nurturing stage all the way through invoicing. Lumens B2B functionally makes Lumens the only industry-specific software system with comprehensive contract training management tools.

**Certificate Programs**
The fastest growing area in continuing education and lifelong learning today is certificate programs – the ability to have cohort programs or a grouping of courses that when completed a student earns a certificate. With the increased need in the workplace for specialization and knowledge, certificate programs will play a prominent role in the future of lifelong learning, particularly for Generation Y who are demanding these types of programs and will become the leading purchasers of continuing education and lifelong learning during the coming decade. Lumens will soon include functionality allowing you to build certificate programs and track students so you can improve and report your certificate completion rate.

**Integration**
The main reason many continuing education and lifelong learning divisions are not using industry-specific software is because their IT department requires them to operate on the same ERP software system as the rest of the institution, even if that means continuing education and lifelong learning does not have online registration. In the past Augusoft has provided batch uploading and an API to connect Lumens to an ERP system such as Banner or Datatel. Now Augusoft is adding a more complete and seamless integration feature that allows Lumens to easily interface with your ERP and move data from one software system to the other. Now you can meet staff, customer, and IT’s needs!

Lumens is continuing to evolve. LERN and Augusoft have listened to your pains and have with the guidance of Lumens users tackled three of the major continuing education and lifelong learning stumbling blocks thus increasing staff productivity, customer service, and the ability to meet the needs of a diversifying customer and client base.
About Learning Resources Network (LERN)
LERN is the largest association in continuing education in the world. LERN provides “Information That Works!” to over 6,000 continuing education professionals each year. Members of LERN include universities, colleges, public schools, recreation departments, associations, and other providers of lifelong learning. For more information about LERN, please visit www.lern.org

About Augusoft
Augusoft® develops and maintains Lumens®, a cloud-based (SaaS) enrollment management system designed specifically for the continuing education industry. Lumens provides continuing education programs with the ability to manage their open enrollment, workforce development, and corporate education businesses all in one system. Visit www.augusoft.net to see Lumens in action.