

***Augu'soft***<sup>®</sup>

---

**Enhancing Value in  
Continuing Education**

---

## Enhancing Value in Continuing Education

Augu'soft has the privilege to service 300+ of the nation's top Continuing Education (CE) programs and through these collaborations has gained extensive insights into how technology, blended with an organization's mission, culture, and practices enable success. The following document highlights these insights and provides a path for planning and implementing lasting, impactful change.

### Getting Started

Carefully choosing and blending the appropriate business practices and technology can improve an organization's effectiveness and ability to serve its chosen marketplace. Through our work with over 300 successful programs, we've observed and compiled the following framework that has assisted organizational leadership in creating and executing impactful change that has enhanced their overall performance and ensured key resources and technologies are enabling success.

### Where are you going?

Many organizations overlook the first and most important step in creating a successful program: ensuring they have a clearly defined mission with a detailed description of the market(s) they want to serve. It is critical a program know where they are going and that the entire team is engaged with its mission.

If your mission and market definition needs to be created or refreshed, we highly recommend using an external facilitator who can challenge your assumptions and push your team to develop the right focus. The inclusion of this external perspective, with knowledge of what your colleagues are successfully doing, will enhance the quality of the roadmap you create. At the end of the document we have some suggested sources that you can leverage to assist with this important step.

### Who's traveling along?

The biggest challenge CE programs have in driving change is understanding who in the overall institution should be engaged in the planning and execution of actions you are considering. We have many examples of CE programs creating a solid case for change and/or investments in technology, process improvements, marketing, etc. only to have their plans halted by the finance, IT, or other departments outside of their direct control.

Unfortunately, most CE programs are left to their own devices until an investment or major change is proposed and then it seems everyone in the institution wants to be part of the decision. Therefore, we suggest proactively building a list of stakeholders that could meaningfully influence your change initiatives and/or proposals for technology investments. Then, engage them early and often through the creation and execution of a detailed communication plan. This proactive work will ensure you have a solid foundation for successfully moving forward with your change initiatives.

We have found that using a stakeholder analysis tool has been extremely helpful in assisting our prospects and customers with this process. The tool asks you to capture the names and current disposition of those that may influence your decision and provides suggested strategies and actions to positively engage them early, so they are part of the decision process and do not feel the need to protest and block your proposals. Building allies early greatly enhances your ability to deliver positive outcomes.

# Augu'soft®

## What is important to do well and what's not?

When we begin working with an organization to implement technology we start by asking a series of in-depth questions about their processes and practices. These are the heart of how an organization runs, how it is perceived in the marketplace, and how effective it is in meeting its mission and market goals.

These processes can be summarized in eight key categories (see insert below). They are interconnected and therefore need to be thought of holistically. Each provides an important touchpoint between your organization's resources and those they serve. They are the foundation of your relationships with students, staff, and the broader perception of your program.

### Key Processes:

- Taking and Managing Registrations
- Course and Class Management
- Student and Faculty Information Management
- Financial Management/Reporting
- Program/Offering Creation
- Marketing
- Certification and/or Contract Training
- Data Analytics

**We strongly recommend that these key processes are evaluated by asking the following questions:**

1. How do they work today, who is responsible for executing and who consumes the results, and how much time does an average transaction take?
2. Is this process providing quality service to internal and external customers and supporting growth? How are results measured and improved?
3. How do current technology/automation systems enable these processes, or is it a barrier to success?
4. What cultural or institutional issues would be impacted if changes to these processes, or new technologies was introduced?

Like with the mission/market work outlined earlier, this evaluation is sometimes difficult to do internally. We recommend leveraging an outside facilitator to assist the CE leadership team in taking a non-biased look at these processes and provide recommendations on prioritization (which would provide the biggest ROI) and suggested best practices.

LERN, leveraging their extensive market experience, provides a Program Review that can assess these key processes and provide recommended improvement steps along with estimated ROI's and messaging to help engage your leadership team.

## Is technology enabling success?

We also find many CE programs forced to use technology created for the "credit side" of the institution. This dramatically decreases the CE program's productivity and the quality of service it provides its internal and external customers.

Many CE leaders find it difficult to articulate the benefits for implementing CE-specific software, so they settle for the we-just-can't-afford-it answer. However, by reviewing key processes and better understanding how these processes currently are enablers or barriers to success, it becomes much easier to build a strong business case for investing in CE-specific technology.

For example, we worked with a program that initially thought \$2,000 per month for technology was just not affordable. However, by first working to fine-tune their key processes and then implementing supporting technologies, we quickly saw a 30% increase in their registrations and revenues with no increase in staffing, a measurable improvement in student feedback, repeat registrations, and word-of-mouth advertising. The results for this program was a 32% annual ROI on their technology and professional services investment.

# Augu'soft®

Some programs may not be large enough to justify reviewing key processes and/or obtaining software specifically designed for CE programs, but we find many programs can easily justify this investment if they look closely at their business models and the ROI possibilities.

## Building a Plan for Change

If a CE team has taken the time to review its mission and market focus, built a stakeholder plan, reviewed and selected key processes for improvement, and considered how technology can play an important role in your success, they are ready to build and communicate an actual plan.

At this point many leadership teams struggle because they are unclear as to how much detail they need to create to get the support and funding to move forward. Here is where stakeholder connections are critical. It sounds simple, but just ask, “As a critical stakeholder to this project, what would you need to see to support our recommendations to implement (the following)?” Let those supporting your decision guide you as to what your messaging should be.

As for building an actual project plan, we would recommend getting assistance from inside or outside the institution and to engage a resource that has project management experience. This person can help build a workflow, point out risk areas, and facilitate resources to get the work completed on-time and budget. Augusoft can suggest processes and templates that can help, but don't underestimate the challenges of implementing anything new, even a simple change.

## Final Approval and Beyond

Congratulations! The planned process change/technology implementation has been successfully implemented. It's critical that key stakeholders continue to receive communications related to ROI attainment. Funding and leadership can be transitory and it's important to have the support of key stakeholders and confirm for them they made the right decision to support these efforts.

### Resources:

**Mission/Market** – LERN is a CE-focused association that can be engaged to facilitate building a clear Mission and Market Focus.

**Stakeholder Planning** – Augusoft has basic templates and strategies we can share and offer an organizational readiness consulting service that is customized to your needs.

**Process and Technology Evaluation** – LERN offers a Program Review that first audits the critical processes outlined in this document then provides improvement strategies and technology ROI's. They can also assist in messaging these findings to your stakeholder list.

**Creating a Plan** – There are number of good resources to assist in creating an actual project plan. Many institutions have a Project Management Office that could “lend” you a project manager, PM's can be contracted, or Augusoft can assist in building a plan.

There is plenty of assistance available to you on a path to improved performance. The journey starts here:

[augusoft.net/ContactUs](http://augusoft.net/ContactUs)

