



Help Attract More Members with Modern Learning Strategies

Deliver binge-worthy learning experiences that make your association the one people need to be part of.



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Introduction

Associations today are changing. In the past, members often joined associations out of a feeling of professional responsibility, but now they're looking for more. They want a place that gives them access to the information and opportunities they need to develop their knowledge, skills, and careers. As part of its member engagement survey, Community Brands asks members why they joined their professional membership organization or association. In 2016, benefits like continuing education edged out professional responsibility by a razor-thin margin—42%, versus 41%, respectively. When respondents were given the same question in 2018, the gap widened considerably. Of that group, 51% said networking and continuing education opportunities were the main motivator (a 9% jump), while only 36% cited professional responsibility (a 5% drop).¹

The good news is that there's ample room in this evolving marketplace for associations to thrive and set themselves apart as a trusted authority in the industry and an invaluable source of continuing education. In the same Community Brands survey, 68% of respondents said the quality of their employer-provided training was very good or excellent, while 82% gave the same high rating to the education they received from professional membership organizations and training institutes.²

The challenge is that just because these organization members are eager to access professional development opportunities, that alone doesn't make them easy to attract and retain. Remember, they're looking for more. Today's members want multimodal experiences they can access on their terms and timelines, and they want learning that's relevant to them.³

Attract members, equip them with the skills they need to succeed, and motivate them to renew year after year, all while maximizing the value of your time and expertise. In this eBook, we delve deeper into five of the modern learning strategies you have at your disposal to help make that happen: personalized learning, gamification, video learning, bite-sized learning, and Social Assessment™.

1 <https://www.fsae.org/assets/docs/EducationCareerDevelopmentReport.pdf>

2 Ibid

3 <https://www.d2l.com/resources/assets/the-state-of-learning-solutions-and-learner-engagement/>






Let members lead the way with personalized learning journeys

Today's modern adult learners are used to being in the driver's seat. With podcasts, videos available through online streaming services, and other consumer-focused sources available on demand and at their fingertips, they can decide what information is important to them and how, when, and where they consume it. These expectations for relevant, user-driven experiences also extend to learning. Make your association the place members need to be by delivering valuable learning programs that are personalized to and driven by them.

Understand the Learner

Step one in delivering learning experiences that reflect the needs of today's learners is understanding who they really are. At this stage, one method you may want to use is a learner journey mapping exercise. This has proven successful in other industries—user journey mapping in product design and customer journey mapping in user experience—and is gaining momentum in the learning world.

The simplest way to get started is by bringing together a team (potentially including some members of your organization) that knows who your learners are, and asking the team members to research the five W's:

-  Who are the learners?
-  What do they need to know?
-  When will they use this information?
-  Why does it matter to them?
-  Where and how do we want them to apply it?

This research will likely take time, but it's a valuable and worthwhile approach to help you build those personalized learning experiences.

Build the Content

The second step is developing the learning content that will answer the learning questions above, ensuring you're always considering the needs of your members when creating the materials they will be consuming as part of your learning program.

In addition to personalizing the content itself, you'll need to tailor the paths learners take through the program—what courses they should take first, second, third, and so on. Where journeys may not be linear or where a learner may not be part of a discrete cohort, it's important to leverage a well-defined communications plan to indicate the options available. Think AI recommendations based on past consumption patterns. If you like x, then you'll like y. Taking this approach will keep members feeling more engaged, as the learning is highly customized to their needs.

Deliver the Program

From an association's point of view, the metric for evaluating a successful personalized learning program is scalability. Administrators should be able to easily automate program delivery, monitor their members' progress and engagement, and use that data to personalize experiences en masse. Members need to feel their learning is in alignment with their knowledge, skills, and behavior and is ultimately relevant to their needs.

One of the simplest ways to be sure everyone stays on the same page is to pair the use of self-assessment at the beginning of your program, with progress and mastery checkpoints at various points along the way. This will give administrators feedback as to how well their programs are or aren't working, and it will help members buy into their own progress, thus increasing engagement.

At the end of the day, a well-thought-out and personalized learning program will help members feel more engaged with their learning experiences, and thereby with your association.



Keep members hooked with gamified learning strategies

To attract and retain members, you need to be constantly considering how you can differentiate yourself from your competition. Help entice new members and persuade them to stay for the long haul by leveraging gamification strategies to make your association's learning experiences that much more gripping.

Understand the Learner

Almost 70% of Americans play video games, and according to The State of Online Gaming, people who play video games spend approximately six hours per week doing so.¹ When done right, gamification can also be an incredibly powerful learning tool for both keeping learners engaged and improving knowledge retention.

Two of the reasons gamification works so well in a learning context is that it often gives people the ability to take part in active learning—immediately applying the information they are receiving in safe, simulated environments. In 1969, Edgar Dale, a well-regarded educator, developed the Cone of Experience, a model that associates learning

outcomes and memory with how a person learns—whether they “do,” “hear,” “read,” or “observe.”² Edgar explained that when someone is engaged in direct experiential learning, they remember 90% of what they do as they perform the task. Retention drops to 70% when they speak and write, 30% when they see, and only 10% when they read. Dale's model has recently been enhanced by Nick van Dam, an executive at Gartner, who believes the way you help people remember what they learn is by providing simulations and games as part of the instructional design process.³

Gamification also draws on people's innate sense of competition. It provides friendly sparring among learners, elevates their sense of achievement, and motivates them to progress through the personalized learning path set up for them by completing the tasks assigned during the simulation or game.

1 <https://variety.com/2018/gaming/news/how-many-people-play-games-in-the-u-s-1202936332/> and <https://www.lime-light.com/resources/white-paper/state-of-online-gaming-2018/>

2 http://www.queensu.ca/teachingandlearning/modules/active/documents/Dales_Cone_of_Experience_summary.pdf
3 <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/does-gamification-e-learning-increase-peoples-learning-mart-bosch/>

Build the Content

Sometimes associations are wary of gamification because they don't fully understand it or they believe it would be too difficult to implement. At its heart, gamification, or gamified learning, involves the use of game-design techniques to solve problems, engage the learner, and increase retention—and it can be as complex as you need it to be.

On the more intricate end, your association could create a fictional choose-your-own-adventure world populated by avatars representing your members. Learners would be able to interact with each other, but they would also be able to complete a variety of games and quizzes to unlock new levels and capabilities. To create a more linear pathway, you could set up a hierarchical series of challenges suited to assess an individual's role and responsibilities.

A simple way to gamify your learning experience could be to incentivize performance by using badges and awards as a micro-credentialing mechanism. As learners complete each module or section of the program, they can receive awards that showcase their proficiency in that area. Multiple awards can turn into a badge that makes it easy for a learner to highlight a skill, and badges can be awarded incrementally as the learner continues to develop abilities. For instance, you might receive a “novice communicator” award if you receive 70% on a final skill assessment, but a “wizard communicator” award if you achieve 90% or higher.

Deliver the Program

Now that you have it set up, look for opportunities to take the gamified experience to the next level by leveraging tools like leaderboards. Leaderboards offer a way to encourage friendly competition within your program and keep your learners involved, motivated, and on track. Using leaderboards to reward individuals who have achieved a desirable badge or award on their personal profile helps those learners set themselves apart as growing experts in their respective areas, and it also fosters a sense of community by showing learners whom to turn to when they have questions or need support on a specific topic.

Together, gamifying elements of the learning experience can help your association increase engagement and satisfaction for your learners.



Capture members' attention by incorporating video

Video is a powerful learning tool, keeping learners absorbed for longer and helping them better retain the information after the fact as well. Make your content more appealing and increase member engagement by leveraging video as part of your association's online learning programs.

Understand the Learner

Today, we know that everyone learns differently. Some people are visual learners; they prefer the use of images to help them understand concepts. Auditory learners retain spoken information best and often favor traditional lectures and discussion settings. Readers do exactly as the name suggests; they read and write to lock in knowledge. Finally, kinesthetic learners absorb information by doing and practicing. What's exciting is that although we often align ourselves with one or two of the types above, we learn best when all of them come together.

If you think about the best video modules or animations you've seen in the past, you'll probably notice that they include three, if not four, of the learning mechanisms above. According to a Think with Google study, over 80% of viewers turn to YouTube to learn new things, more than 70% use it to solve a job, study, or hobby-related problem, and overall respondents said YouTube made them feel prepared for a task, smarter, and more inspired.¹ This is because a well-done video caters to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners as well as to readers.

Let's, as an example, take a closer look at the number one reason people turn to a video: to fix something in their home or car. A good tutorial video will include an image of what they're working on (visual), dialogue or narration about the steps that need to be taken (auditory), captioning or labeling of the various elements (reader), and encouragement to pause the video and complete each action along with the video (kinesthetic).

So, the question then becomes, how do you incorporate video into your association's learning experience?

¹ <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/advertising-channels/video/self-directed-learning-youtube/>

Build the Content

First, you need to consider which portion (or portions) of the program can be delivered via video. While some material will be better served as PDFs or gamified learning experiences, other material is perfectly suited for video. Some examples of effective video content include:



Online instructor-led modules



Tutorials



Role-plays



Testimonials



Animations

Video can also be incredibly beneficial when it's leveraged to enable two-way communication between the individual delivering the content and the end learner. This can be through more traditional media, such as webinars or presentations that incorporate discussion forums, but it can also include modern tools that use video to address specific skill sets for your learners. The idea here is to have video become an extension and enhancement of the larger learning program, allowing you to build rapport, familiarity, affinity, and trust quickly.

Deliver the Program

Providing a video experience should be an easy exercise—it's simply a matter of uploading the video where it belongs in the learner journey and tracking adoption and engagement.

Here are three tips you can consider when offering video modules:

1. Make video learning a two-way street.

Leveraging video assessments to measure skills can help learners actively engage with the content and take advantage of feedback loops to iterate and improve over time.

2. Give them a reason to come back for more.

One thing that makes video so effective is that new content can be delivered on a regular basis. Involving a variety of presenters who can explore a range of topics will help you frequently serve up fresh, relevant video content for your members and learners.

3. Ensure it's a great experience for all.

Despite the rate of technological advancement, bandwidth limitations are still a common problem when it comes to delivering video learning. If your association has members in nonurban, remote areas, it's important to ensure the quality of their learning will not be negatively impacted.

Make information bingeable with bite-sized learning

We're surrounded by devices and platforms constantly vying for our attention and have, as a result, become used to digesting information quickly. For learners, this transition to a digital-first world has changed how we seek, view, and interact with content. Engage your members by offering just-in-time, relevant learning opportunities.

Understand the Learner

With the growth of technology such as smartphones, our attention spans have decreased drastically—dwindling from 12 seconds in 2000 to only eight in 2013.¹ Now more research is coming to light to back that up. The typical learner isn't able to hold focus for more than 20 minutes straight, which is why psychologist Lynne Millward argues in *Understanding Occupational & Organizational Psychology* that presenting information in parcels is the best way to ensure it's processed in meaningful, lasting ways.²

Learning and development leaders within an association need to be prepared to rethink their learning programs to ensure they're delivering valuable information using the easiest-to-consume means. Bite-sized learning—small, self-contained, and short learning modules lasting under half an hour and focused on a small number of objectives—is perfectly suited to giving our brains access to the concise information they crave.



1 <https://www.scribd.com/document/265348695/Microsoft-Attention-Spans-Research-Report>

2 <https://elearningindustry.com/bite-sized-learning-future-of-elearning>

Build the Content

There are three main pillars to developing a bite-sized learning program.

- 1. KISS:** In the world of bite-sized learning, this stands for **Keep It Short and Simple**. A bite-sized learning program should meet a single objective or address one specific topic at a time. The programs should be broken down into their most basic frameworks and delivered in a simple, easy-to-understand manner. This will not only make it easier to understand, but will also enhance retention. The lessons should be kept to a digestible length, ideally five to 10 minutes, to ensure learning can be absorbed easily by the member anywhere and anytime.
- 2. Engaging Elements:** Leverage components throughout your programs that are known to increase engagement. These include videos, graphics, animations, audio presentations, and possibly the most engaging of them all—stories! As humans, we are born storytellers. We learn about people's experiences, our family's history, and new ways of doing things by listening to the stories others tell us. When used appropriately, storytelling is an effective tool that can capture and hold the attention of your audience, even in the business world.
- 3. Lean, Mean Learning Machine:** In traditional learning programs, there is a time and a place to pack course content with as much information as possible. With a bite-sized learning program, you need to cut straight to the chase.

To keep courses succinct and focus solely on what skills, knowledge, or understanding you want learners to walk away with once they're done, use the principle of three. Let's look at an example. If I'm building a bite-sized course on healthy living, I could choose to address any number of topics, but I'm going to stick to three: drinking 64 ounces of water each day, getting seven to nine hours of sleep, and moving your body for 30 minutes. For each of these behaviors, I'll provide three ideas on ways you can make them a part of your daily routine—and that's it! Add a brief introduction and conclusion, and my bite-sized learning program is complete.

Deliver the Program

Bite-sized learning programs can be some of the easiest to deliver because when they are built correctly, they can stand alone.

One way to make bite-sized learning programs even more effective is by building personalized learning paths that leverage a variety of bite-sized learning programs to enhance the skills, knowledge, and behavior of your members in the specific areas that are relevant to them. Features like awards and certificates can come in handy here, as they're easy, visible, and understandable ways to showcase skill achievements.

Enable members to master their skills with Social Assessment™

A key reason why members turn to your association is to enhance their knowledge and skills. To help them get the most out of your learning programs, empower them to go beyond simply reading assignments or watching videos. Drive powerful, lasting change by facilitating constructive feedback loops that make it easy for members to garner advice and input from experts and their peers to help them build and demonstrate mastery.

Understand the Learner

When it comes to feedback, we know two things. First, soft skills are becoming increasingly valuable in our changing world of work. In a survey by LinkedIn, 77% of executives said soft skills are just as important as hard skills, and 44% of executives in an Adecco survey said a lack of soft skills represents the U.S. workforce's biggest proficiency gap.¹ Second, learners (especially younger ones) genuinely crave feedback, but don't receive enough of it at work. Millennials, specifically, want feedback 50% more often than others but say that only 20% of the feedback they receive is meaningful.²

1 <https://www.careerbuilder.com/share/aboutus/pressreleasesdetail.aspx?ed=12/31/2014&id=pr817&sd=4/10/2014> and <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/0416/pages/hrs-hard-challenge-when-employees-lack-soft-skills.aspx>

2 <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236450/managers-millennials-feedback-won-ask.aspx>



This situation presents a valuable opportunity for your association to step in and fill those gaps. As a mechanism for feedback, Social Assessment is perfectly geared toward helping your association members ask for and receive regular feedback to help them develop sought-after skills.

Building the Content

Broadly speaking, Social Assessment allows your association to utilize modern social tools, including video, to enable the regular delivery of feedback from all types of stakeholders—peers, managers, and even outside experts—at scale. Rather than a once-a-year comprehensive review, Social Assessment allows members to gain insights into their day-to-day performance and work toward making iterative improvements in their knowledge, skills, and competencies. Part of the role of the association is to nurture that culture of feedback so learners feel comfortable and confident in the information they are sharing and receiving as part of the learning program.

There are four types of Social Assessment feedback you can leverage.

- 1. Peer-to-peer feedback** focuses on personal, authentic examples and comments like “this worked well for me in the past” or “I really liked how you did this.” To make sure critiques are meaningful, it’s important to develop clear feedback structures and nurture a culture of trust so people will feel comfortable and confident in sharing their unique perspectives.
- 2. Expert feedback** is particularly beneficial when there are specific facets of performance you want to improve. Experts can be senior leaders within the industry, peers with deep relevant experience, or even new members who may bring a fresh perspective to the table.
- 3. Meta feedback** is—in essence—feedback on feedback. It’s used primarily when you need to help those responsible for giving feedback to others to develop their own skills. It’s especially important for leadership development.
- 4. Manager feedback** is required as part of manager/employee relationships and is typically tied directly to performance.

In addition to considering the types of Social Assessment feedback that will be most useful for your association, you also need to think about rubrics. These provide valuable guidelines for scoring and assessment criteria and can be leveraged to ensure fairness and consistency. When putting a rubric together, think of the role or competency it's targeting, identify the tasks associated with it, pinpoint major areas of assessment, decide what type of rubric you want to use (grid system or point addition/deduction, for example), and, depending on the rubric you're creating, assign section-specific and cumulative point values.



Delivering the Program

Ultimately, any Social Assessment framework comes down to giving room for a three-step process.

- 1. Demonstrate the skill.** This can be done using a variety of media, but here we'll use video as an example. Let's say your goal was to help members improve their presentation skills. First, you would allow members to record themselves pitching an idea or product of your or their choosing.
- 2. Solicit feedback.** Once each member had finalized their presentation, you would get peers, and potentially even outside experts, involved. Peers could share their thoughts on how each of the presenters did, while experts could give their opinions on points that they would add.
- 3. Incorporate feedback to improve skills.** Now that your members have the information, it's time for them to act on it and find ways to incorporate the ideas and feedback into their day-to-day professional lives.

Remember, Social Assessment is meant to be an inherently circular, iterative process. You're enabling members to showcase their knowledge and skills, seek evaluation and advice, take action to improve their skills, and come back seeking additional observations and guidance to advance their proficiency that much more.

About D2L

D2L is the creator of Brightspace, a learning platform for associations who value member engagement as a driver of business success. Grow your membership with personalized learning experiences tailored to suit members' needs and peer-to-peer knowledge sharing that allows them to share their expertise and get feedback via video, audio, and inline annotations. The fully responsive design means they'll be able to learn anytime, anywhere, and on any device. With a fully open API Brightspace can easily integrate within your existing technology ecosystem, and smarter reporting will help you monitor performance and engagement so you can make informed decisions about training and development.

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