



POWERED BY

California Community Colleges

Unit 1 – Marketing Contract Education to a District

Contents

- Understand strategies for demonstrating the value-added of Contract Education through the vision of District’s leadership
- Discover best practices for generating District testimonials to support the value added
- Find out how to enact the next steps of who to call, where to go and what to do next

The California Community College Contract Education Collaborative (CCCCEC) met in 2018, and one of the outcomes was that the Strategic Communication Action Team (SCAT) created a document that — among other things — created specific messages for each of the Contract Education-related target audiences, along with corresponding recommended communications plans for each. Familiarity with this document (titled The California Community College Contract Education Marketing Message Guidelines) will be helpful in keeping the marketing messages consistent. This will affect credibility and strengthen partner awareness of the purpose and impact of Contract Education.

On page one, the document makes its own purpose clear by saying, “In order to shine the spotlight on Contract Education’s value both to the California Community College Chancellor’s Office, and to the individual Community College’s administration and other target audiences, it is clear there needs to be a proactive educational campaign about the value Contract Education provides to the local region, businesses, and industry. There are many success stories to draw upon that demonstrate how Contract Education upskills and reskills both incumbent and unemployed workers.”

Getting the Word Out to the Communities Served and Those Who Will Help Serve Them

Contract Education in California is making efforts to position itself to work in collaboration to bring benefits to the communities it serves. As an arm of individual institutions, it can reach into communities in ways that extend beyond

what the for-credit branches of each institution can do. In this way, local and regional business and industries, and the individuals they employ or could employ, can be beneficiaries of Contract Education's efforts.

Overall Strategy of Getting the Message Out

Identification of strategy goals

For Contract Education to be effective in its reach, people communicated to should understand:

- Contract Education's purpose and methods of working;
- Contract Education's array of services;
- Contract Education's impacts on stakeholders — from individuals to regions;
- How to work and partner with Contract Education;
- The role they can play helping Contract Education be successful; and
- What Contract Education partners have accomplished to date and why it matters.

For this to happen, a simple strategy should be implemented:

Purpose of the strategy and what it would look like if it's succeeding

When CCCCEC decides what it is they want to accomplish with the marketing, they can create a strategy. That strategy would include:

Identification of key audiences

Each relevant target audience for these key messages must be identified — and they were in the SCAT document. They included:

Internal Group 1 – The Chancellor's Office, Sector Navigators and Deputy Sector Navigators

Internal Group 2 – District Business Office, College Foundation, Administration, College President

Internal Group 3 – Deans/VPs, CE Staff and Faculty

Internal Group 4 – Current Trainers, Prospective Trainers, both off campus and on

External Group 1 – Local Businesses, Prospective Clients

External Group 2 – Past Clients

External Group 3 – Current clients

External Group 4 – Workforce Investment/Development Boards, Chambers, Local/State/Government Agencies

External Group 5 – Funders (potential and current)
External Group 6 – Media

Tuning the messages for the audience

Each of these key audiences should receive a message tuned to their own particular needs, interests and communications channel preferences. As usual, the focus of the communication should be, “What’s in it for us?” That is, the communications strategy should express its messages in a way that:

- Relates Contract Education to the audience’s own purpose;
- Tells how Contract Education is structurally related to the audience (separate from, a part of, etc.);
- Relates Contract Education to the audience’s own goals and metrics of success; and
- Tells how Contract Education is similar to, different from, or complementary to the audience’s role in achieving shared goals.

Appropriate distribution channels for this audience

An example of this is found on page seven of the document, where the document addresses the target audience of Deans, VPs, Staff and Faculty:

“Attend appropriate meetings and provide updates on CCCCEC’s work. Sponsor initiatives associated with training and consulting services. Ask to be on agenda to provide specialized training when appropriate. Provide website links and maintain current success stories to support one another’s websites. Host open houses at individual CE units to showcase CE training’s support of College’s FTES goals or tie in with a specific college’s goal). Email success stories directly to Deans, Vice Presidents, CE staff and faculty. Work with the individual college’s marketing department to maintain good relationships and obtain print space in the college newsletters and publications. Upload our statewide data results to a website. Work closely with CTE Deans. Join the local regional college consortia and participate in SWP committees. Provide a quarterly report to Deans and Vice Presidents detailing CE’s self-sustaining numbers. Maintain one-on-one relationships.”

A marketing strategy time-and-task-line

As always, there needs to be at least a simple outreach plan that includes:

- What needs to be done, when, and by whom

A way to create consistency in the messaging

In all integrated marketing campaigns, there needs to be message consistency across channels. The CCCCE Collaborative Marketing Message Guidelines paper aims to do just that, so all people involved in marketing messages or face-to-face meetings should be conversant in the contents of the paper. Regular communication between the SCAT team would also allow for check in on what's being learned as marketing progresses in regard to which points seem to be clear and which are causing confusion and therefore should be 'tuned.'

Assessment of impact of the marketing

Those involved should share stories among themselves on what impact the marketing is having and what's being learned and accomplished. This means that someone needs to be assigned to manage this process. This need not be complicated. There could also be two to three simple metrics for assessing impact and making decisions on next marketing steps.

How to Demonstrate Value Added of Contract Education

Strategies for demonstrating the value Contract Education adds:

- Decide what the shared goals of Contract Education and the partner institutions are;
- Decide which metrics or anecdotes prove that Contract Education is contributing to those shared goals;
- Provide specific, concrete and when possible *measurable* proof of impact;
- Educate district leadership about those contributions in such a way that they can ask questions and get clear about what's actually happening. Aim for excitement; and
- Use story-telling whenever possible. Keys to good stories are:

Simple: Find the core of any idea. You need to prioritize your ideas. Providing 10 arguments to a public is doomed to fail since people will not be able to remember them all. Be a master of exclusion and stick to the core.

Unexpected: Grab people's attention by surprising them. You need to disrupt people's expectations with counterintuitive surprise. Generate interest and curiosity to endure your idea.

Concrete: Make sure an idea can be grasped and remembered later. Explain in terms of human actions and use sensory information. Use concrete images and proverbs.

Credible: Give an idea believability. Look for ways to help people test your ideas for themselves.

Emotional: Help people see¹ the importance of an idea. Let people feel something. Research shows that people are more likely to make a charitable gift to a single needy individual than to an entire impoverished region.

Stories: Empower people to use an idea through narrative. Tell stories. Hearing stories acts as a kind of mental flight simulator, preparing us to respond more quickly and effectively.

Generating District Testimonials to Make the Point

Using the model mentioned above of Contract Education generating proof of value through actual progress, ask Contract Education partners to create testimonials for distribution. The best testimonials will come from satisfied customers.

Using the story-based marketing tips above (notice the first letter of each tip spells SUCCESS) create marketing copy with details that are in alignment with the CCCCE Collaborative Messaging Guidelines content.

Distribute these using the strategy outlined above. Aim for consistency. Use repetition across several channels—in person presentations, email campaigns, print media cameos, video clips and social media.

Moving Forward from There

Once the marketing campaign is mid-implementation, the Contract Education staff should begin to meet with relevant parties to strengthen:

- Contract business and sales;
- Collaboration opportunities;
- Partner engagement – The more engaged they are, the more business you will get. Shared solutions are usually more productive and more widely talked-about; and
- Engagement in marketing by all of the 10 audiences listed in the CCCCE document.

¹ From *Made to Stick*, by Chip and Dan Heath.

In this effort, the emphasis on process is the same:

- Identify what success would look like;
- Create ways to measure both effort and success;
- Create a strategy;
- Create a timeline;
- Assign tasks;
- Create a reporting method and cycle; and
- Learn from your efforts and adjust how you work accordingly.

Summary

Knowing how to market and to whom you should be communicating is key. Keeping the message consistent is helpful since time and energy are limited. Focus on a few key messages and tell stories in compelling ways across multiple channels for success.