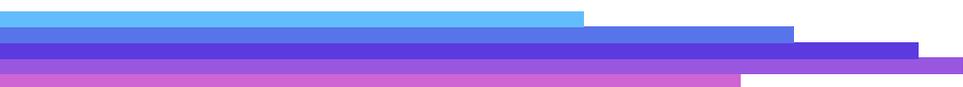# Product Consulting For Digital Training

Introduction

Our client is a Finishing School, that provides technology training to fresh engineering graduates. Students, on training completion, are assured placements with one of their affiliated clients. The business model is somewhat like this: every month new training batches are created, which typically lasts for 4 - 6 months (depending on the course). Students are entitled to 10 free demo sessions, after which they have to pay a course fee and enroll into a course and the batch. During the tenure of training, students are groomed on real world problems and coding practices and are also continuously evaluated on their knowledge levels. At the same time a dedicated team works towards interacting with affiliated corporate clients (approximately 500 numbers) and organizing placement drives, in campus. All ongoing and passed out students are eligible to participate in these placement drives. Once the students are placed then the loop completes. If students are not placed, even 6 months after training completion, then the course fee is refunded.

In order to support the above business model, our client has built a fairly elaborate operations process involving around 200 plus people and spanning across multiple departments: digital marketing; event management; tele-sales; counselling; training; facility management; placements. Each of these teams are engaged in the business operations at different stage of student's engagement and are interested in different data points pertaining to the student. Consequently, each of them creates their own version of the student data using excel and google sheets, which leads to – lack of cohesion between the departments; introducing data leakages threat; absence of actionable analytics and dashboard; and an overall suboptimal student experience owing to large scale manual intervention. So, our client was looking to build a bespoke platform which will help them overcome the above challenges. In addition, the incumbent platform should also help them shift to a complete digital model of delivery and operations in 2 years; shorten the recruitment lifecycle by building a student profile and gradation; extend the lifecycle of the student; provide them with a better handle of the overall training operations administration.

Although our client's strength has been training and operations, they struggled with technology and digital way of thinking. But as the business environment in training industry evolved rapidly, our client started looking at leveraging technology to adopt newer business models and create deep business impact. They identified certain key business requirements around which they wanted to develop customized software. However, a more holistic approach was required to move their business into the digital mode. Hence, they were looking at a consulting organization who could help them set the digital vision, percolate technology mindset into the culture of the organization and help resolve roadblocks owing to their established ways of working. They engaged IOO Labs to provide them with these consulting services and help them evolve from physical to phygital (physical + digital) mode.

The Need

Our client engaged IOO labs to help build a product strategy and also build multiple product platforms which can help them with the following:

- Improve the lead conversion rate. The company generates leads through digital marketing, offline seminars in colleges, direct enquiries and direct walk-ins. Despite having strong inside sales team, using marketing automation & CRM software, and cloud telephony solution, there is no streamline process automation to handle leads from beginning till admission. The time frame could be from 1 month to a year. While some engagement activity is manually triggered through SMS and WhatsApp, it is not systematic and error prone. All these leads to a relatively low conversion rates of leads.

- Build lead analytics and dashboards. Without this there is limitation on the understanding of trends such as performance by lead generation sources, lead conversion rates, keyword performance, registration geography wise etc. contributing to inefficiencies in the advertisement spending.

- Reduce in the drop off rate from free demo to admission.

- Improve the student satisfaction. Despite having a superior training methodology, high quality content and high placements rates, the company is not able to attain a student feedback of 4.8 out of 5, owing to the day to day administration issues.

- Help in achieving the long term vision of attaching placements to all online training courses. The idea is to shorten the recruitment cycle by building learner profile over a period of time and shortening the Interview process.

- Build a constant engagement with ex-students. This will provide the company great opportunities for upskilling students, placement with other companies and increasing the lifecycle and life time value of a student.

Some of these business needs were lofty, requiring deeper analysis and longer development cycle. Also, our client's team did not have the necessary digital skills to understand the nuances of some of the product ask. So, we suggested a product management consulting engagement to help sensitize them to changes needed from their side and also structure the overall process of building the product strategy and roadmap.

The Approach

IOO Labs have the requisite background in digital technology, product management and also understanding of digital consumer behaviour. To help our client in their digital transformation

journey, IOO Lab provided a senior consultant who worked in close coordination with client's leadership team. The focus of our consultation was along following dimensions:

Build and Train the Team

We realised that in order to have long term sustainability we need to build the right team on client side who can seed the digital culture within the organization. This was an iterative and drawn out selection process of picking candidates both from inside the organization and also hiring from outside. This seed team eventually became the champions of seeping the digital culture into the rest of the organization. Along with setting up the team we also focussed on training the team on a weekly basis on the following:

- How to decipher usage and behaviour data
- How to do business impact analysis
- How to do feature prioritization
- How to use the product platform for Digital Marketing
- How to use the product platform for Training operations

Creating the Product Strategy

We created a team of consultants, architects and engineering leads who conducted multiple interviews and workshops with the different stakeholders on client side. The purpose of these discussions was to elicit the business need in detail. The main idea behind this was to collate the business vision and stitching of the product vision to the same. Additionally, the following value addition was also done: check technical feasibility of the solutions, identify potential business impact and also create a prioritisation for the solutions. Some of the key highlights of the product roadmap that we created for our clients are:

Learning Management System: A platform to support online learning and skill building of students. For trainers have the ability to create eCourses with multiple sections - each section will comprise a video, coding assignment, pdf and questions. Also allow trainers to offer free and paid courses. For student have ability to self-enrol to a course and have guided access to the courses content. Also the platform have a digital right management solution in the form of a customised browsers which allows only authorised users to access the contents.

Impact: No of placement per batch, Median salary per batch

Training and Operations Management System: A platform with the capability to manage the entire training operations of the client. For trainers have the ability to create offline courses, batches and training sessions. For the student have the ability to self-enrol to a course by making online payments, receive notification on sessions, mark attendance for a session through an app and track course progress online. For finance have the ability to track payments, refunds by batches and also do offline enrolment to courses. For management have various dashboards to track trainers efficiency, room usage, batch course progress and timely start and end of session.

Impact: Reduce student/staff ratio, Increase NPS(net promoter score) for students

Digital Marketing Solution: Ability to track user acquisition by different source channel; ability to create user segments based on various user parameters.

Impact: Reduce the cost per lead

Virtual Live Delivery: A platform that enables live virtual sessions. For trainers have ability to create a virtual training session and ability to record and view a virtual training session. For students have ability to participate in a virtual training session, see both the trainer and content parallelly and be able to ask questions.

Impact: Reduce overall capex, Improve student NPS

Gamification: In the learning management system, use game like constructs, to build intrinsic motivations for different types of students– socialisers, explorers, achievers and competitors. Award points, badges and levels to student on their various achievements based on their activities, thereby pushing them to higher skill levels in the system.

Impact: Student engagement in last 7 days, Average duration spent on LMS

eResume: A platform that builds online resume of a student with a proper scoring. Recruiters would be able to search the students profile and invite them for job drives.

Impact: Recruiter NPS

Recruitment Solution: A platform which allows recruiters to conduct and manage recruitment drives within the campus of our client. Recruiters should be able to search student profile, shortlist candidates, finalise candidates and release offers.

Impact: Recruiter NPS

The above are not an exhaustive list of product but some of the key highlight of the roadmap. The above roadmap map was evangelised with stakeholders to have a consensus on the proposed solutions, the proposed success metrics and also the proposed prioritisation.

Developing the Detailed Product Requirement

Our team of experts worked on analysing the cleints requirements in greater details and developing the architecture, wireframes, mocks and flowcharts. The mocks are then circled back with the stakeholders from client side to obtain their feedback. Once there is a consensus on the product design and flow, the team focused on developing the detailed requirement. The detailed requirements were written in the form of test cases. This ensured that the development and testing team can verify coverage of all the requirements. Also from project management perspective it is easy to track project progress in terms of percentage of test cases completed.

Product Management Activities

Our consultant also engaged with the clients product team, on weekly basis, to provide detailed guidance as well as review on the following aspects:

- Execution of Digital Activities
  - Managing product roadmap and development phases
  - Planning activities around pending launches and releases
  - Tracking and Review of usage and behaviour data
  - Review of activities to drive product usage and user engagement
  - Performance Analysis of product features – what is working and what needs tweaking
  - Business Impact Analysis – for launched features and also new product features
- Aligning the technology and the support team
- Managing the progress on product roadmap as defined and agreed
- Recommendations of focus areas that will likely make business impact.

Conclusion

Our client is a successful training organization with a strong brand in the student community. But as their operations grew, the quality of their services and offering started diluting. In order to grow and scale their business without compromising on the brand equity, they are now compelled to adopt a digital technology. This is a complex journey which requires the following changes:

- There is a mindset shift towards technology adoption
- Internal process and culture is changed around technology
- Opportunities and constraints around technology is well understood
- There is a deep focus on digital activities

Also, from a cultural point of view the following changes were required to percolate within the organization:

- Upgrade technology skills of employees
- Think around integrated solution instead of point solutions.
- Think technology solutions that are suitable to current situation and will make deep impact instead of pursuing technical hypes with superficial impact
- Develop a deep understanding of cost of a solution and ROI before embarking on a solution building
- Balance between time-to-market vs quality.
- Think of how to leverage technology to create a disproportionate relationship between demand and supply
- Think of new ways of disrupting business models through technology

Through the product consulting engagement IOO Labs could help sensitize the teams in our client's organization to the above changes. Slowly, the impact of all this is felt through the multiple flawless product launches. At the same time, it is important to recognize that digital transformation is a slow and painful process and digital capability building will take time.