Professional development at scale

(ISC)² delivers greater value to members with engaging, interactive learning

Cybersecurity is a fast-moving field, and (ISC)² aims to ensure that all its 150,000 members stay on top of the latest developments. Its new Professional Development Institute (PDI) worked with D2L to launch a massively scalable training program, capable of supporting hundreds of thousands of learners in 175 countries.

At a glance

Client: (ISC)²
Learners: 150,000
Industry: Cybersecurity Training and Certification
Website: isc2.org

Platform/Features:

- D2L's Brightspace platform
- Course Builder
- Intelligent Agents
- Data Sets
- Integrations with Kaltura, Course Merchant, Webex via CirQlive, StudyMate
- D2L Creative Services

Interviewees:

- Mirtha Collin, Director of Education
- Jamie Birks, Production Manager

Highlights:

- Nearly 100,000 total enrollments in professional development courses
- Twenty-seven percent of members now have taken at least one course, up from 13% last year
- Thirty-three percent of members now complete their courses, an increase of 25 percentage points
- Increased learner satisfaction scores range from 92% to 99%

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Challenge

Delivering new value to members

(ISC)[2] is an international nonprofit association with over 150,000 members in 175 countries that focuses on training and certification for information security professionals. One of its main offerings is the Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) accreditation, widely recognized as the world's premier cybersecurity certification.

Cybersecurity best practices are constantly evolving as criminals discover new techniques to penetrate information technology networks and compromise systems. To deliver greater value to its members and to help them stay ahead of evolving threats, (ISC)[2] decided to launch its new Professional Development Institute (PDI), which offers courses to educate members about cutting-edge developments in the field.

"The goal really is to have our entire membership taking a PDI course," says Mirtha Collin, Director of Education at (ISC)[2]. "We have a modestly sized staff, so we really needed to make sure that our courses were truly self-directed and easy to manage at scale. We had to rapidly develop a really meaningful portfolio that would resonate with our membership, we had to communicate the value to our members, and we had to get everything up and running on a pretty aggressive schedule."

Jamie Birks, Production Manager at (ISC)[2] adds: "Given the scope, scale and high visibility of this initiative, the technical side was a major challenge too. We needed a very robust platform to provide access to each course for each of our 150,000 members."

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Solution

Harnessing data to design smarter training

As it began building out its vision, the PDI project team's first move was to consult D2L, (ISC)²'s long-term learning management partner.

"The daily support that we've received from D2L has been invaluable, especially their data-driven approach," comments Jamie Birks. "For example, we collaborated with the D2L team to analyze the performance of the PDI platform, especially for bulk enrollments of large numbers of learners. As a result, we've been able to reduce enrollment time from four hours to just one."

Similarly, the D2L Creative Services team used insights from (ISC)²'s existing courses to help optimize the PDI home page and site structure to make it easy for new learners to navigate the hugely expanded portfolio of courses. The PDI and D2L teams also analyzed the reasons why learners sometimes failed to complete their courses and adjusted the course structure to keep users engaged.

"We now use the Intelligent Agents feature in D2L's Brightspace platform to nudge learners along if their progress has stalled," says Mirtha Collin. "The ability to automate those interactions is so important."

The team has also accelerated the creation of new courses and content using Brightspace Course Builder. Jamie Birks explains: "Course Builder allows us to create an entire course in a few clicks. Just being able to create that structure and encourage users to engage with it has been a huge benefit of what we've been able to do with PDI."

And when (ISC)² wants to add new functionality, it's easy to integrate other systems with the platform. Currently, it uses integrations with Kaltura for video content, Course Merchant for sales and marketing, and several others. As Mirtha Collin recalls: "I can't think of an instance where we wanted to do something and haven't been able to. We're either able to satisfy our needs within the Brightspace platform itself, or there's a partner integration that's easy to adopt."

Finally, from an operations perspective, the D2L Brightspace platform provides cloud-based scalability capable of supporting hundreds of thousands of sessions—up to 5 million instances. "Knowing that D2L is able to ramp up and accommodate different server loads gives us confidence that we aren't going to be overwhelmed," says Jamie Birks. "Having that cloud infrastructure in place is paramount."

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Mirtha Collin, Director of Education, (ISC)[2]

Result

Boosting enrollment, engagement and satisfaction

The results of the PDI initiative speak for themselves, and Mirtha Collin has the key stats at her fingertips.

"Twenty-seven percent of our membership has enrolled in at least one PDI course, which is double what we saw last year, and we have learners from many countries around the globe."

She adds: "Our learners absolutely love the courses. Overall feedback is very, very good, with satisfaction scores ranging between 92% and 99%. Moreover, of members who have enrolled, 33% have completed their courses. That completion rate is nearly four times higher than it was last year."

Recent examples of student feedback include:
- "Awesome material and brilliant presentation!"
- "For me, the timing was perfect and the material a very relevant great way to earn CPEs and a valuable resource for members."
- "I thought it was great. It's the first (ISC)[2] online course I've done, and I was very impressed with the quality. Good job!"
- "Most informative and engaging! Well done, (ISC)[2]!"

"We're refining our building process and continuing to expand our catalog, with a goal of reaching 40 to 50 courses that we can continuously refresh to keep providing the best possible value for our members. Our relationship with D2L is going to be key to making that happen."

Mirtha Collin, Director of Education, (ISC)[2]

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