Making a seamless shift to virtual customer events

PartsSource pivots its partner symposium to an online platform with help from D2L

After successfully using D2L’s Brightspace learning management system (LMS) to build a community and provide customers with information and resources during the COVID-19 crisis, PartsSource decided to harness the same platform to host its Partners Symposium—a major event that the company successfully delivered 100% online.
**Challenge**

**Responding rapidly to emerging needs**
As a healthcare technology management company, PartsSource helps clients in the healthcare sector ensure that their mission-critical clinical equipment is always available and operational for patient use. To keep the medical supply chain running smoothly and cope with the continuous evolution of clinical practice, it’s vital for PartsSource to build strong relationships with its clients and keep them informed about the latest developments.

In late 2019, PartsSource invested in a new external training capability built on D2L’s Brightspace platform. As Jeremy Negrey, Director of Customer Education at PartsSource, has explained in a series of blog posts, the company intended to use this platform not only to provide training for customers and partners, but also to create an online community and social network where healthcare technology managers could interact with their peers and share best practices.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in early 2020, the Brightspace platform enabled PartsSource to change gears rapidly; it postponed its planned training initiatives and refocused on providing immediate guidance on the latest announcements from the Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, and equipment recommendations for an anticipated spike in hospital admissions.

“As we got our feet back underneath us after the initial shock of the COVID crisis, we realized that we now had a platform that was going to enable us to transition many of the things we did in person to a virtual environment,” says Jeremy Negrey.

“With our annual Partners Symposium—one of the most important dates in our calendar—coming up in October 2020, we realized that running a traditional physical event was not an option, so we considered how to pivot and host the whole event online.”
Solution

**Extending the value of a versatile platform**

To turn its vision of an online symposium into a reality, PartsSource began looking for a virtual events platform.

“We were facing the prospect of spending some ridiculous amount of money with an online events service to host our symposium virtually,” says Jeremy Negrey. “That’s when it occurred to me that we could deliver the whole event in-house with our existing Brightspace platform.”

Working with the D2L team, PartsSource added a new widget to its homepage that allowed registered attendees to log in to the event website, view the agenda and announcements, and interact with the social feed. Under the hood, the event itself was set up as a course in Brightspace, which meant that users could click into the agenda—where each session was itself another Brightspace course—and select the sessions they wanted to attend.

The big advantage of this approach was that it enabled PartsSource to track each attendee’s participation in the event using the same powerful reporting tools it uses for all its external training courses.

“For example, we could tell the difference between whether somebody had registered and logged in to the event live and whether they picked it up on demand afterwards, as well as which sessions they attended,” says Jeremy Negrey. “That type of insight is valuable as we look at rolling out our external training programs with Brightspace in the months ahead, because it will help us tailor the course content we deliver and shape the community that we’re starting to build.”

The close relationship between the PartsSource team and their D2L contacts was a key factor in the ability to deliver the symposium 100% online. “I think one of the things that we’ve really liked throughout our relationship with D2L is that they’re a true partner,” says Jeremy Negrey.

“We get real one-on-one support, and we always know who we can reach out to if we need help or even if we just want to bounce ideas around with someone.”
**Building on success**

The Partners Symposium went ahead in October 2020 and was well attended by healthcare technology management professionals from across the industry. With 15 speakers and an array of panel discussions and live demonstrations, there were a lot of moving parts for a one-day event, but everything went off without a hitch, and feedback from both customers and senior leaders at PartsSource was very positive.

“We’re excited about the possibilities for community-building with Brightspace,” says Jeremy Negrey. “When our technology and product teams want to communicate some new feature to our customers, for example, they’ll be able to interact directly with users via the community. That instant, personal connection is so much more powerful than just adding another set of product pages to our corporate website.”

Analytics will be another key theme. “Beginning next year, we’re going to really begin to look at engagement and tie that back to business goals such as customer renewals,” says JeremyNegrey. “If we can identify common themes in customer behavior in our online community, we’ll be able to predict whether each customer is likely to renew with us, for example.”

He concludes: “The assumption today is that organizations that are more engaged in our training programs will be more likely to renew, more likely to grow their partnership with us; they will have fewer support calls and generally be happier with us as a provider. Brightspace will be a key tool to help us put real data behind those assumptions and ensure our customers keep finding value in what we offer.”

Now that PartsSource has successfully used the Brightspace platform to coordinate its response to the COVID-19 crisis, the company is renewing its focus on user training and certification. New external training programs are set to launch in early 2021, and the company is eager to introduce elements of gamification such as leaderboards and badges to boost participation and encourage users to engage more fully with PartsSource’s online community.