



Creating a gold standard for marketing excellence

The CMA develops the first designation for Canadian marketers, helping learners thrive in their careers

As rapid changes reshape the marketing sector, the Canadian Marketing Association (CMA) noticed that professionals were struggling to keep up with the latest developments. Working with D2L experts and using D2L's Brightspace platform, the CMA launched the Chartered Marketer (CM) designation, providing learners with a deep knowledge of emerging industry trends and the skills to succeed in senior marketing roles.

At a glance

Client: Canadian Marketing Association

Learners: 400+

Industry: Marketing

Website: thecma.ca

Platform/Features:

- Brightspace Core
- Competencies
- Bongo for Video Assignments
- Learning and Creative Services

Interviewees:

- Gabriele Janes, Senior Advisor, Learning
- Stephen Ghigliotti, Associate Vice President, Curriculum Development

Highlights:

- Provides learners with a deep understanding of new developments in the marketing sector
- Helps advance careers; many learners have gained promotions since achieving the designation
- Enables learners to balance study with work with anytime, anywhere access to education
- Empowers employers to identify potential hires with relevant marketing expertise
- Equips learners with the soft skills and knowledge to become future marketing leaders
- More than 400 marketers have either received, applied for, or are currently working toward the designation



Challenge

Developing future marketing leaders

The CMA aims to promote the practice of marketing and nurture the next generation of marketing talent. Headquartered in Toronto, the association provides thought leadership, networking opportunities, and learning programs that help more than 400 organizations, including many prestigious brands, increase the impact of their marketing.

Recent years have seen rapid changes in the marketing world, with digital technologies unlocking new ways to interact with potential customers. Although this has been a period of dynamism and innovation, the CMA saw several major issues impacting the industry.

As Gabriele Janes, Senior Advisor, Learning at the CMA, explains, “Marketing was practically the only profession in Canada without a formal designation, leaving practitioners without a clear way to show potential employers their skills and experience. Marketers also lacked a means of staying up to date with industry developments, such as the ethical challenges created by new technologies.”

The CMA also noted that marketers struggled to acquire the broad understanding and soft skills needed for senior roles, such as chief marketing officer (CMO). Since early-career marketers often specialize solely in one discipline such as copywriting, branding, or social media, they had difficulty moving up to roles that require a more multidisciplinary perspective.

To solve these challenges, the CMA designed the Chartered Marketer (CM) designation, an educational program that would equip learners with a deep knowledge of the emerging marketing landscape, including best practices for ethical digital campaigns. Completing the CM designation would help marketers enhance their professional standing and enable employers to recruit the best talent.

Stephen Ghigliotti, Associate Vice President, Curriculum Development at the CMA, adds, “In our regular industry surveys, we discovered a real appetite for a professional designation among Canadian marketers. Having run the first digital marketing courses in Canada during the mid-2000s, we looked to harness our experience and expertise in online education and training to create the designation scheme.”



Solution

Tailoring course content for professional learners

To develop and launch the CM designation program, the CMA enlisted support from D2L, including project management, instructional and graphic design, and software development expertise. The association also deployed D2L's Brightspace platform to host video, text, and audio content prepared by subject matter experts, many of whom are currently working in marketing leadership and prominent academic roles.

Gabriele Janes continues: "D2L's Brightspace platform was ideal for the CM designation program; it enabled us to make course materials available anytime, anywhere, via any device, and empower learners to balance study with their full-time professional commitments. We can manage the course content through the platform as well as add supporting resources such as case studies and reports from industry leaders such as Google."

Using the Brightspace platform's competencies tool, the CMA created a unique structure for each of the five 12-week courses that make up the CM designation, with specific learning objectives tied to a series of assignments and quizzes. After progressing through three core courses on high-level topics, learners tackle more immersive, in-depth work in the final stages, including using the platform's video assignments tool (integrated with **Bongo**) to record, assess, and submit video-based presentations.

In addition, D2L's Brightspace platform supports both asynchronous learning, where learners pursue independent study, and synchronous events, including web conferences, discussion forums, and interactions with a program facilitator, who serves as a friendly guide to learners.

"D2L also played a key role in helping us make our course content as engaging as possible. They helped identify the right amount of material for each page, the most impactful color schemes for headings, and the best fonts to maximize accessibility and highlight key content for learners. Plus, D2L's instructional designers helped us develop a style guide to present the whole course in a consistent, clear, and informative manner."

*Stephen Ghigliotty, Associate Vice President,
Curriculum Development, CMA*

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Gabriele Janes, Senior Advisor, Learning, CMA

Result

Equipping learners with the skills to succeed

Working with D2L, the CMA successfully launched the first professional designation program for the Canadian marketing sector. So far, more than 275 learners have received or applied for the designation, and 125 are currently working toward achieving it. Although the program is still in its early stages, feedback from learners about the course content has been highly positive.

Gabriele Janes continues, “Learners really appreciate the broad range of topics that the course covers, from marketing technologies to ethics and financial management, along with the opportunity to improve their soft skills. They have also told us that the real-world case studies are especially valuable and that they appreciate the opportunity to balance their CM designation studies with their professional commitments.”

She adds, “Learners say that CM designation helps them bring a fresh perspective to their day-to-day work and advance their careers — we’ve heard of several cases where they have secured promotions and taken on greater responsibilities. We also know that the companies that make up our membership are really pleased to have an objective way to identify the best-qualified marketers.”

Similarly, feedback from course instructors confirms that the CM program is equipping learners with the skills needed for senior marketing roles. In particular, they see huge improvements in learners’ communication skills. By the later stages of the program, learners are much more confident in their abilities and are able to deliver highly polished, professional, and analytical presentations.

“Initially, we weren’t sure whether it was even possible for us to offer a program covering the full spectrum of modern marketing — but that’s what we’ve achieved. With help from D2L, we have developed a comprehensive designation program that helps learners become well-rounded, innovative professionals. Today, we believe CM designation will become the gold standard for marketing excellence in Canada and a must-have for aspiring CMOs.”

Stephen Ghigliotty, Associate Vice President, Curriculum Development, CMA

Looking ahead, the CMA will continue to update and enhance the course content to provide learners with an up-to-the-minute picture of the fast-moving marketing sector. Using D2L’s Brightspace platform, the association will add new case studies and supporting materials to reflect industry trends while fine-tuning content to optimize learner engagement.

Stephen Ghigliotty concludes, “Initially, we weren’t sure whether it was even possible for us to offer a program covering the full spectrum of modern marketing — but that’s what we’ve achieved. With help from D2L, we have developed a comprehensive designation program that helps learners become well-rounded, innovative professionals. Today, we believe CM designation will become the gold standard for marketing excellence in Canada and a must-have for aspiring CMOs.”