

How your association can scale  
its learning programmes



There's a solid chance that your association already offers education programmes. And if that's the case, there's an even greater chance that your association does a stellar job at it.

Most associations have spent years honing their courses and delivery. So, this PDF guide isn't here to tell you how to make an effective learning programme.

Instead, this guide explores the pressing question for association leaders with gold-standard education offerings: "How can we expand our programme's reach and boost revenue in the process?"

The following pages provide five revenue models designed to do just that.



# 4 things to consider when choosing your monetisation strategy

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To predict the overall success of a new strategy, it pays to understand how a model will affect the different areas of your association.

That's why we provide an overview of each revenue model included in this guide based on the following key questions:

			
What kind of experiences will your association offer through the new model?	How will the revenue strategy influence relationships with current and potential members?	How will the model affect business initiatives?	In what ways could a learning management system (LMS) help you achieve your goals?

When you find a facilitated learning revenue model that just clicks with your association's objectives and ecosystem, the results can have a significant impact on your organisation's growth.



When you find a continuing education revenue model that just clicks with your association's objectives and ecosystem, the results can have a significant impact on your organization's growth.

Not long ago, the British Society of Lifestyle Medicine (BSLM) began its mission to boost revenue through launching online facilitated learning programmes.

After answering similar questions as the ones listed above, BSLM identified the opportunity to reach more learners by repurposing some of their in-person, core accreditation using standalone, micro credential courses.

This way, BSLM could continue providing their exceptional in-person offering, as well as increase the scope of their reach through online programming.

The result? Maximised return on existing learning.

BSLM's introduction of online micro credentials aligns with their broader learning strategy, developed in partnership with D2L.

The next section of this guide offers revenue models that can help boost your association's revenue, just like BSLM. However, the key to success lies in understanding your association's overall learning strategy and implementing specific tactics (like revenue models) to support that strategy.

You're the expert of your association. We're here to guide you—let's explore.

**Andrew Howie**, Chief Finance and Commercial Officer at BSLM shares the result of implementing a learning strategy: "It's early days, but we have already increased revenue from education spend by 20% and we expect learning to constitute 60% of our total revenue in the near future."



## 5 models to help you monetise your learning programmes

### 1. Freemium with upsell

Freemium is a well-known portmanteau—two words blended together—of free and premium. In the context of online learning, you may want to have some information available on your website, for example, but if someone wants more, they'll have to create a paid membership and log in to get it. You can also have tiered memberships and subscriptions so that people are incentivised and enabled to take advantage of upgrades and add-ons.

With this model, the nature of the content in front of your gate and the quality of the information behind it can both play vital roles in its success. Ideally, you want the first things people see—those free offerings—to be broken out into easily digestible 10-to-15-minute chunks. Your premium content needs to be high quality and relevant to your learners' needs. Featuring recognisable industry experts and sought after speakers can also help draw people's attention.

It's important to remember that although you won't convert everyone, you want to be able to expect and forecast that a percentage of freemium registrants will convert to paid subscribers. You can even create **targeted marketing campaigns** around this to help convince freemium subscribers to take the plunge.



#### MODEL

Offer limited access for free and access on an ongoing basis—or to a more complete catalog—for an additional fee.



#### RELATIONSHIP

This is a strategy to court new learners by offering focused content that prospects need now and can take advantage of at no cost, assuming they meet any conditions.



#### COST AND REVENUE

A percentage of freemium registrants will typically convert to being paid members or subscribers. You can develop targeted marketing campaigns to help you accelerate and strengthen initiatives aimed at conversion efforts.



#### USING D2L BRIGHTSPACE

Using Course Merchant, you can expand your online reach with an integrated, branded storefront and offer free—and paid—access to courses, facilitating the freemium model. Anyone, anywhere, can seamlessly discover, browse, purchase, and self-enroll in your course offerings.



## 5 models to help you monetise your learning programmes

### 2. Levels of access to a virtual event

For associations that are ready to offer virtual conferences as part of their facilitated learning programmes, this model can help organise several different levels of access based on factors such as **ticket choice, membership type or tier, and partner status.**

There are various approaches you can take, including:

- **Exclusive roundtables or coffee chats around a hot topic:** This works well when your keynote speakers and notable presenters can attend these sessions. It attracts attendees' attention and gives them rare opportunities to talk to established names in their industries.
- **Networking meetups:** The primary draw here is that you can make these gatherings hyper-focused to your audience's niche or the pain points they want to address.
- **Lunchtime meet-and-greets with big-name speakers:** If someone is especially interested in getting some one-on-one time with one of your presenters, you can offer individual meetings for which you charge an additional fee.
- **Limited access to dedicated sessions:** Oftentimes, even if people don't want to get a ticket for an entire event, there's one session that really appeals to them. Plus, once they get a taste, you can market to them the following year to try and turn them from a onetime watcher into a repeat customer.



#### MODEL

With something like preconference access, you can try three levels: all access, access to a sub-set of sessions, and access to a specific session.



#### RELATIONSHIP

This model tends to create stratification. You need to be intentional about how you deliver and differentiate standard through premium experiences.



#### COST AND REVENUE

There may be additional costs here associated with creating digital red-carpet experiences, but there are also big opportunities for revenue.



#### USING D2L BRIGHTSPACE

Use Learning Groups to create and assign the right courses and learning paths to learners at each level.

## 5 models to help you monetise your learning programmes

### 3. Single events with ongoing access as the upsell

In practice, this often involves having one price for live attendance plus an additional cost so attendees can continue to access the content throughout the year.

**For your association, the beauty of this model is that there's typically nothing new to create.**

Down the road, uplifts tend to be minimal. They may include repackaging and relaunching some of the more popular pieces, upgrading the look and feel, or adding in features like discussion forums. You're shining up the wheel—not reinventing it.

One quick tip: If you're looking for guidance on how to price some of the pieces you want to sell separately, consider polling a select group of key users and then piloting proposed changes.



#### MODEL

Attendees will pay a price for the real-time event and an additional fee to have ongoing access for the year.



#### RELATIONSHIP

Create ongoing conversations around the content and provide additional value that could be attractive to learners.



#### COST AND REVENUE

For little to no further investment, you can create a revenue stream around ongoing access to content that's focused on the additional value it brings learners.



#### USING D2L BRIGHTSPACE

With the Discussion feature, attendees can keep the conversation going all year long, sharing their ideas, and responding to others' posts about the event.

## 5 models to help you monetise your learning programmes

### 4. Extended events

This is a model that many organisations, **D2L included**, have taken advantage of. In 2020 and 2021, we transformed our annual user conference, **Fusion**, from an in-person event to an exclusively online one.

Since 2022, we've been thrilled to connect in person again—gathering in Boston, Anaheim, Toronto, and soon Savannah—but we've still maintained an online, on-demand component to make more valuable content available to more people.

For organisations that employ this model, us included, it's not about detracting from existing, successful initiatives. It's about maximising the return of our hard work by using it to expand reach and drive impact.



#### MODEL

Break up your in-person event or offer one track per month for three or more months, depending on the number of tracks.



#### RELATIONSHIP

With focused events, you can become known for offering in-depth sessions along with topic-oriented networking opportunities using discussions or video conferencing tools.



#### COST AND REVENUE

By taking your event virtual and offering more in depth sessions, you can attract a broader participant base and drive more revenue. Costs may vary depending on the support your event requires.



#### USING D2L BRIGHTSPACE

Using content tools, Virtual Classrooms®, and Learning Groups, you can offer experiences that are specific to individuals and groups—and do so at the right times.



## 5 models to help you monetise your learning programmes

### 5. Subscriptions

Subscriptions can be used to give members and others access to content not included in their regular package. Your association can also use them to reach beyond its traditional learner base and appeal to new audiences. Often, subscriptions are structured as self-paced, do-it-yourself offerings that let learners dip in and out as they need to.

One association we worked with offered its members the opportunity to buy subscriptions for others in their organisation at discounted rates. The association ended up seeing a boost in memberships and a jump in revenue from people who took those introductory courses and then became regular, recurring members.

**If you take an approach like this, it is important to create policies to help manage those subscriptions:**

- Do you want people to have access to your whole content library or only portions of it?
- How long will subscriptions last?
- What happens if someone buys a subscription for their colleague and the colleague never signs in?
- How will you handle it if someone is in the middle of a course when their subscription period ends?

These are conversations you'll need to have internally if you choose to go with this model.



#### MODEL

Offer a series on a specific topic or one year's access to specific content for a certain number of people.



#### RELATIONSHIP

Offering online content to subscribers can give prospective learners a try before-you-buy relationship in which you win them over with these experiences.



#### COST AND REVENUE

This could be an entirely new revenue stream that doesn't have to require a significant investment and effectively pays for itself depending on factors like how you deliver content.



#### USING D2L BRIGHTSPACE

Intelligent Agents can automatically unenroll learners after their subscription period ends. You can also set release conditions to automatically unlock content based on a learner's activity.



**Whether you choose to implement freemium strategies, virtual events, subscriptions or other models, the key remains: Match the revenue model with your association's unique positioning.**

You know what your members need, or don't need.

You're the expert of your association's role in the industry.

And when expertise is paired with the right strategy, the possibilities are endless.

# Work with experts to define and deliver your online learning strategy

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Providing sustainable education for members requires more than just a one-off online course or conference.

Members rely on continued, comprehensive programming to develop new skills and stay informed about industry trends.

To help learners grow, your association needs a learning strategy: a plan to bridge the gap between where your learners are and where they need to be.

Connecting the dots with a learning strategy isn't quite a snap-your-fingers-and-you're-done sort of process. You will need to determine the most useful skills for your members to develop, keep them engaged, and establish a method to measure the success of your program—to name a few components of an effective learning strategy.

Andrew Howie compares investing in your online learning strategy to investing in a new employee, saying, “You wouldn’t hesitate to spend time with a new staff member to make sure they’re performing to their potential.”

The strategy-development process, much like onboarding a new employee, takes time and resources.

But it doesn't have to leave you feeling overwhelmed.

Our learning strategists and consultants have the expertise to guide your vision, map learner experiences, set key milestones, and transform education into your association's competitive edge.

**Let's get started.**

[Learn more >](#)







# D2L BRIGHTSPACE


## ABOUT D2L

D2L is a global learning innovation company, reshaping the future of education and work. We're leading the way into a new era of personalised learning, driven by the belief that everyone deserves access to high-quality education, regardless of their age, ability or location. Our signature technology product—D2L Brightspace—enhances the learning experience for millions of learners at every stage of life, from the earliest days of school to the working world. Learn more at [D2L.com](https://D2L.com).

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