



## THE SUSTAINABILITY OF MOOCs

The popularity of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) has skyrocketed. And, the rate in which these courses have risen in popularity has been fascinating to watch. Having university-level courses available to the masses is quite a development in the learning and development industry.

As learners, we now have the ability to take a course offered by an accredited university at any given time, free of charge. While the availability of these open online courses is an innovative step in our industry, there are a few drawbacks to consider.

Credentials are not provided to students who participate and complete MOOC programs. From a badge perspective, there is little to show from participation in the courses. Also, completion rates are relatively low for the courses. This may be attributed to the fact the courses are free so there is no financial obligation to finish the course, or it could simply be there is little time to devote to the course at that point. Lastly, and possibly the most notable drawback, there is limited funding sources to design and develop future courses.

From a business standpoint, the question of sustainability emerges. Are MOOCs sustainable in the current business model? Without an additional funding source, will professors eventually stop creating the content? These are important questions to consider. Since the courses are free to take, there are no proceeds that trickle back to the creators of the courses. Will the pure marketing value for the university be enough?

From where I sit, the current business model needs to change in order for MOOCs to be sustainable. The courses cannot just be developed as an advertising vehicle for the university. There needs to be money to flow back to those creating the content. I believe MOOCs have a place in the training industry; we just need to rethink the current business model to develop a sustainable solution.

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