Utilizing Business Intelligence to Enhance Online Education at For-Profit and Non-Profit Institutions

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ABSTRACT

With the increase in the demand of online education, especially for working people, there is a need for institutions that offer online education to identify, target, and market their services to people who are in need of furthering their education or who would be interested in using online education to advance their careers. The aim of this paper is to explore how Business Intelligence (BI) can be utilized to enhance online education for profit and non-profit organizations. The goal is to identify, target, and market online education to an audience who may not have thought of online education, but will appreciate the opportunity.

Keywords: Business Intelligence, Business Management, Education, E-Learning, For-Profit, Information Systems, Non-Profit, Online Education

INTRODUCTION

According to Onlineeducation.org (2011), the Internet has given educators a new way to communicate with students and a study by Sloan Consortium shows that online education enrollment increased by 13% annually compared to traditional classrooms, which grew at 1.2% annually. Also, the website shows that people interested in online education are full-time workers, those hospitalized, and those unable to attend traditional classrooms. Shaffer (2011) says that over 5.6 million students study online, a 19% increase since 2005, compared to a 1.8% increase for traditional education. The author also states that the online education graduation rate is 71%, and for-profit universities, such as University of Phoenix, will take the lead in the continuous growth of online education. So there is a high demand for online education in today’s world, which is growing faster than traditional education.

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Onlineeducation.org mentions five types of online education, which are adult, hybrid, online continuing, online distance, and online higher educations. Adult education is where adults are taught basic math, reading, science, and problem solving skills to combat illiteracy. Hybrid education is a mixture of online and traditional classroom learning. Online continuing education attends to students who already have degrees but want to take a course or two to further their skills. Online distance education is for students taking traditional classes but may also want to take some online courses, while online higher education is for students who want to get their entire degree online. Nevertheless, studies show that students who take both online and classroom instruction (i.e., hybrid classes) perform the best (Jaschik, 2009). So there are various forms of online education that may fit the need of various individuals who need further education to better their lives in this new global economy.

Brantley (2006) gives ten reasons why individuals would want to enroll in online education. They include: the flexibility to do assignments at any time and from any location (given variable family situations, one’s inability to travel, and scheduling conflicts); saving money on gas one would utilize to go to school; working a decent full-time job while going to school; saving time between traditional classes and on driving back and forth between home and school; the ability to simultaneously take multiple courses that may have had been offered at conflicting times in the traditional classroom; not needing resources and classroom supplies because these are now electronically accessible; and engaging with more classmates through venues like the online discussion board. You can still be a parent and access class from a single location (e.g., from the comfort of your home), and do house work and other tasks, while attending any school from any location with adequate internet access. Shaffer (2011) adds other plus points of this platform. They include referrals from colleagues who have had a great online education experience, and those who travel a lot for work, as well as people who might want to graduate early by taking more classes, even during summer breaks. She also suggests that online education is more suitable for people who wish to learn at their own pace, including working ahead, staying up all night, and studying in the early part of the morning. Onlineeducation.org mentions the value of online education for those who have been suspended from school, drop-outs, and those who are home-schooled. These individuals are very likely to be interested in online education. So there are people in society (e.g., prisoners, delinquents, and those on probation) whose lifestyle and/or condition make online education the most viable and accessible mechanism for furthering their careers and becoming productive members of the society.

Lohr (2009) says that online students performed better than students in classroom instruction and over a 12-year span, online students ranked in the 59th percentile in test performance, while classroom students ranked 50th percentile. The author insist that web-video, instant messaging, and collaboration tools have transformed online education, provided learning experiences tailored to individuals, transformed traditional learning, and have students teach one another. Much of the benefit of online learning is not based on technology per se, reports Jaschik (2009), but rather, on the quality and quantity of time students spend on online tasks, as compared to classroom students. So online education may even be more productive to students in terms of active learning and tested performance than traditional classrooms. Onlineeducation.org states that tuition for for-profit online education is lower than for traditional education, because many states fund virtual school programs and students can apply for financial aid if the online school is accredited by an impartial agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Many non-profit online education programs are becoming very cheap or even free.

Ali (2003) explains that the transition from lecturing to student-centered learning demands a teaching model that enhances interactive learning and critical thinking, so online learning
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