

## Memorandum

**To:** Nick Ducoff, Vice President at nuEX;  
Jon Fish, Project Manager at nuEX;  
**From:** Marquis Cabrera, Project Consultant at nuEX  
**Date:** November 17, 2014  
**Subject:** Learnx MVP - Thoughts

This purpose of this memorandum is to analyze Learnx at its MVP stage.

**Purported Theory:** College students complete learning modules and quizzes to access independent paid employer projects. Create a marketplace between employers and students to do project-based learning that may lead to longer term employment by validating student (skill set) learning and getting employers to post paid projects to a job board in said skill domain.

**Sign Up:** The goal for Learnx reminds me of edX's goals section. Is it critical to ask what the students' goals are? Should nuEX control/direct their platform goal?

**Modules:** Some modules are dense, others short. The modules are text heavy. Many take a long time to read, which can become exhausting, especially for lazy users or those who lack significant attention spans. In order to get to the independent projects, the product user has to get through a lot of content. What is the expectation of time commitment to finish modules? A few hours. A few days. A week.

**Quizzes:** In some sections, I glanced over the readings and went straight to the questions. Other times, I completed the whole module. The module learnings were not always part of the quiz. For example, consumer and risk liability test were not included in the product liability (module 11) quiz. Some tests are short, others long. Quizzes were pretty straightforward.

**Projects:** In order to access employer projects, product users have to take a final exam. After taking a testing and securing a good enough score (~90%), the employer--in this instance Northeastern University--is alerted that the product user has earned said skill set; then product user is told the employer will be in touch shortly. The aforementioned is the premise behind the user experience for Learnx.

**Overall Thoughts:** This was a two sided experience for me. I experienced Learnx as a learner and evaluated it as a nuEX consultant. My user experience with the Learnx product informs my evaluation, and I shall share both learner experience and consultant evaluation.

*Student User Experience* - After finishing the modules, I felt like I knew more about the law, but I only went through them all because I wanted to unlock the project/ job. However, I could

not access a project/job. I believe most students would not sit through these modules, unless the carrot outweighed the tedious method of learning (i.e. extra pocket cash). This is why our perceived value proposition must be evident off the bat so as to not confuse product users.

If I were still in college: Instead of spending the time going through a module/ project, I would call an employer and ask for informational interviews or to shadow, which would serve the purpose of project-based learning and also create in-person relationships. In this instance though, a payment is not made though. This scenario begs the question, should students be paid to do learnings?

#### *nuEX Consultant Experience -*

Students - The skills training market is trending towards mobile gamification. For example, [Switch - The App Mobile](#) came out and is connecting employers and potential employees, but this has a unique value proposition (only ping employer and potential employee if there is a mutual likeness). Also, [Plexx](#)--formerly LearnX--is working in the mobile domain area to provide skill training. My friend helped to co-found Plexx. Now it is led by an Echoing Green Fellow. [LearnUp](#) is also incorporating gamification via animated videos.

Employers - It is impressive that nuEX was able to get to LearnX to MVP stage already, however. I am unsure how this MVP serves to test or validate our hypothesis, for we did not justify both sides of the market, specifically the employer side. Corporations pump a lot of money into their human resources departments, including learning departments, because they believe in the organic nature of hiring and want in-house employees selecting people who fit within culture. However, human resources departments operate with autonomy. If we create win-win relationships that are beneficial to them and advance their recruitment goals, employers will buy-in, but, in my opinion, they are not likely to adopt something forced on them. This is why we should create skills training apps with prestigious corporations and their human resource departments. If we want to create a job marketplace for college students, employers must be willing to hire based on articulated and agreed upon learning/ training materials.

**Next steps:** In my opinion, we must figure out a better way to deliver module material via gamification, voice and/or video to create a more interactive experience for student users. In addition, we must create a direct personal gain and benefit for the student user. Moreover, we need to validate the employer-side of the marketplace to learn more about our MVP (and offerings).

To this end: In my position as a nuEX project consultant though, I am still left questioning and not knowing enough about the product goal, and target-customer and -market. Although a MVP, Learnx currently says to the user, gain real life skills, but no other action is included. For example: Gain real life skills, but for what? Gain skills and earn money. Gain real life skills and get employed. Gain real life skills to improve your chances of employment. Make money

and gain real life skills. Gain skills and earn money. Gain real life skills that employers want. And, more importantly, why should employers care about the product right now?

**Question(s):** Learnx is attempting to answer multiple questions: How do we create a project learning platform for college students? Will employers hire our students for project based learning? How do we cater to the student and employer sides of the market? In my opinion, the questions that must be answered before moving forward:

- Are we trying to create an offering for the general public or students at Northeastern University?
- What is the product offering, value proposition, and target market?
- Will employers hire students that use Learnx?
- How are we going to make money? Is it worth the investment?

Note: The thoughts presented below are based solely on the current Learnx MVP.