



# UNICON 2020 Virtual Directors' Conference

*Session 2: Rapid Ideation Exercise*

DRIVING VALUE  
THROUGH  
TRANSFORMATIVE  
LEARNING  
EXPERIENCES.



# Rapid ideation exercise

The aim of this virtual group activity is to crowd-source best practices on leading executive education organizations during this crisis. The themes are:

1. Client and customer engagement (team 1 and 5)
2. Team motivation and management (team 2 and 6)
3. Board and University stakeholder relations (team 3 and 7)
4. Faculty (team 4 and 8)

## Required of you:

1. Using the Zoom breakout function, you will be allocated to one of 8 teams to discuss ONE of the four themes listed above
2. Each group will have 30-minutes to list best practice actions for leaders
3. The two people with surnames/ family names closest to A and closet to Z will report back
4. At *28 minutes*, there will be a two-minute countdown to return you to the main session
5. Share your best practices in plenary for 3 minutes
6. The complete lists will be recorded and shared with the audience

(If, for some reason, the technology fails, please return to the main session at 10:30am US EST)

## 1 & 4: Client and Customer Engagement

- Health and Safety is first priority – don't jeopardize, check on clients
  - Preserving and growing long term partnerships
    - Working closely with them – preserving
  - Delivering value to each other – however we might define that
  - What's happening above the water and what's happening below ("duck" metaphor)
    - How do you maintain professionalism while also "flapping around" to figure out this new way of life
  - How cut through the email traffic?
    - Some folks going silent, others using other channels – e.g., Slack
    - Pick up the phone! Zoom! FaceTime!
  - Pivot from "what the heck is happening" to "what do we do about it"
    - Be ready to frame what our role is when that pivot comes
- There has been a constant evolution of messages to clients ranging from ensuring clients that on-campus hygiene practices are of a high standard to later communicating that campuses have been closed due to the severity of the pandemic and that courses are either cancelled or postponed
  - There are two different approaches to client engagement for custom programs versus open programs. Custom programs have had deeper levels of client engagement than open programs. However a few key clients in open programs have also been engaged where the relationships held are with HR and L&D professionals as opposed to the individual program participants.
  - Engagement with custom program clients had predominantly been about evaluating the best way to adapt. This has included converting some sessions to online formats and rescheduling others where online delivery would not work.
  - Client engagement has taken a very supportive role and is not pushing any program on to clients. There is an appreciation that HR and L & D teams have a lot of other pressing issues to deal with amidst the crises and a perception that learning and development has somewhat taken a back seat.
  - Giving clients the option to move to online courses: Many clients have declined the offer and have opted to attend a face-to-face offering later on in the year when things stabilise. There is a resounding preference for face-to-face offerings and this speaks to the readiness of the market to shift to 100% online learning. Also, how do we ensure clients that their experience will not be compromised when choosing to go the online learning route?
  - Discussion about how to position L & D as a necessity to survive the economic down-turn rather than a nice-to-have is top of mind in terms of client engagement.

## 2 and 6: Team Motivation and Management

- Be very clear about scenario planning that allows teams to know what direction their headed
- Be solution focused
- Put selves in shoes of clients
  - Make sure the whole team understands what clients are going through
- Task teams set up
  - Manage focus
  - E.g., 6 teams focused on different topics/constituents
- Connecting with the teams
  - Well-being checks and acknowledgement
    - E.g., zoom, slack, blue jeans
  - Daily check ins
    - More connection now than before!
    - 4 R's
      - Reach out
      - Re-imagine (engagement, products, etc.)
      - Reschedule
      - Resilience
    - 3 S's
      - Steady
      - Savvy
      - Strong
- Re-allocation of staff time to support other units within the School
- Making sure there is a backup solution in case someone is unable to work

- Teams, Zoom, Webex, Learning Curve – new to rely on new tech for comms/connection
- Challenges around productivity – we spend a lot of time in meetings – lots and lots
- Ideas
  - Happy hours 1-2x week
  - Lunches together
  - Games
  - Involve pets and family
  - Share personal experiences
  - Talk about more than just work
- Anxieties
  - Job securities
  - Health concerns
- New ways of collaboration needed in this new environment

- #HealthyHygieneHabits campaign activated
- Zoom at noon hosted by Dean to give updates and to also allow space for school to share
- WhatsApp comms- faculty, management decision making, information sharing – to ensure there is no overwhelm or blurring of messages
- Upskilling for all faculty, professional associates and programme managers
- Health tracker for those in quarantine and daily comms with those team members
- EAP
- Faculty buddy
- Heightened availability to think with team members as they work to move things online or reschedule.
- I also think humour has been invaluable. I am seeing sides of faculty I never knew existed 😊.

## 3 & 7: University/Board Stakeholder Relations

- Broad definition and profile of stakeholders
- Some schools paying careful attention to custom clients
- Some schools noted that their small size relative to overall institution, so they don't get a lot of Board attention
- Not forgetting about stakeholder point of view, not getting to inward focused
- Free offerings to certain stakeholder groups
  - Webinars and online engagements to help through the crisis
  - That space very crowded right now
- Board engagement very high value

Deans identified as primary stakeholder in our discussion group (Team 3)

- They grasp the situation as a larger systemic issue, not just an EE issue and the ensuing hit to EE revenue
- Their clear immediate priority is a focus on transitioning faculty to online platform for degreed programs (basically, a business continuity issue for the School's core business)
- Vis-à-vis EE, given the larger systemic reality, they are patient and supportive
- They recognize the revenue hit due to decline in face-to-face programming

Exec Ed Responses

- Targeted activities (illustrations, not uniform across our breakout team membership)
  - Focus on immediate program responses to targeted stakeholders such as alumni (pick up additional targets in turn)
  - Enlisting faculty to develop rapid response “fireside chats”/webinars to address how current research informs managerial and executive responses under crisis conditions
- Current situation has forced the issue in terms of developing online capabilities within EE
- Questionable response to on-line Open Enrollment offerings – many prospective registrants would rather wait for next available face-to-face offering (thus contributing to/exacerbating short-term revenue hit)

## 4 and 8: Faculty

- Challenges
    - Faculty distracted moving everything to virtual
    - Many F do not have experience,
    - how to make classes interactive
    - Accountability of learning
    - Rethink/reinvent content for online/digital
  - Opportunities
    - Forcing innovation
    - Allows testing of new faculty
      - E.g., some not as good in classroom could be great online
    - Test new stuff
    - Scalability of digital
  - Actions
    - Communication – increased transparency and crowd-sourcing
    - Connecting experienced faculty with less experienced
    - Connect different faculty across units
    - Sharing best practices
      - E.g., wikis, LMS
    - Become a practice spring board
- Transition to online in degree programs - different levels of confidence and capability
  - EE has helped and seen difference, especially with those faculty who have not led distance learning in other programs prior
  - In some cases this is only focus instead of non-degree programs
  
  - Some think it can translate 100% to non-degree right away
  - Need to help faculty understand that executives cannot sit for 8 hours on a zoom like a degree student
  - Balance between academic continuity and new learning modes to leverage for executives
  
  - Exposes need for thoughtful instructional design
  - Some faculty are lecturing more than they should
  - There is opportunity to help faculty understand all the different ways to engage in addition to synchronous video
  
  - Some professors don't come across well on video
  - Some will succeed and others will not



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**Thank you**

