



Webinar
November 2019

A KNOWLEDGE COMMUNITY PLATFORM

MOBILIZATION AN IMPERATIVE FOR EFFECTIVE PLACEMENTS





WHY MOBILIZING THE RIGHT CANDIDATE IS CRITICAL FOR THE SUCCESS OF TRAINING PROGRAMS?

Mobilizing the right candidate for any skills training program is a major challenge faced by many training partners. More often than not, training partners have found that the candidate being trained may not retain interest in the training program, and hence drop out before the course is completed. At times, training programs may not be relevant for the candidate, given her/his aspirations and demands. These factors impact not only the right candidate being connected with the right training program, but also their eventual placement and retention post placement.

THE WEBINAR MOBILIZATION FOR EFFECTIVE PLACEMENTS

As part of the recently initiated webinar series by NSDC, a second webinar was held in November 2019, where more than 100 training partners connected through Microsoft Teams, a chat-based communication platform, to share their knowledge and experience from across different geographical locations.

Representatives from training partners PanIIT Alumni Reach for India Foundation and Orion Edutech shared insights from their robust mobilization programs that helped successful completion of training, resulting in effective placements.

ABOUT OUR PARTNERS

Orion Edutech and PanIIT Alumni Reach for India Foundation

Orion Edutech was incorporated in 2006 with an aim to empower the aspiring youth with knowledge and skills relevant to the industry needs. It provides them holistic and world-class training, there by assuring sustainable livelihood through placement and self-employment. Today, Orion offers over 360 vocational training courses and skilling for both formal and informal blue-collar job roles through 300 centres and 1400+ trainers. It has skill training programs spread across 17 sectors including IT & ITeS, electronics, travel, tourism and hospitality, organized retail, automobiles, agriculture, telecom, healthcare, apparel, beauty and wellness and construction. Besides providing domain and skill jobs, Orion focuses on life skills, soft skills, digital literacy and financial literacy. It has presence in twenty-nine states in India and has recently forayed into Africa and South East Asia.

PanIIT Alumni Reach for India Foundation (PARFI) is a section-25 company and is

committed to executing and scaling self-sustainable business models that enhance incomes of the underprivileged sections. It runs vocational training schools for school dropouts especially below grade 10, to provide 'fit-for-purpose' skills through 60 to 90 days' full-time, residential training programs in a Gurukul style setting with 200 -300 contact hours. PARFI trains candidates in blue collar trades like welding, fitting, assembly line technicians, machining, shuttering and scaffolding, bar bending, light commercial vehicle (LCV) and forklift driving, catering, electrician, ductmen, AC mechanic, tiling and plumbing. It provides 'hard' skills training combined with the 'soft' elements like yoga, patriotism, public speaking and work values. Supported by NABARD, PARFI is pioneering a loan-based model for under-privileged candidates who cannot afford fees but can repay the loans post course completion.

ESSENTIALS OF EFFECTIVE MOBILIZATION

Training partners need to devote as much care and attention to this soft issue of mobilization as they do to financial, planning and execution of the training program. Both training partners at the webinar suggested that while the overall skill training model they use helps in placements, the mobilization strategy must be strong to ensure that the right cohort is chosen for the training. Their mobilization strategies have evolved out of their extensive training experience.

(i) Planning for mobilizing: First and foremost, effective mobilization needs to rest on the grounds of a mobilization plan that outlines who needs to be mobilized (and for what training), where such mobilization activities will be held, what will be communicated at the mobilization drive, what tools will be used for mobilizing candidates, and follow up activities for ensuring that the mobilized candidate actually signs up for the training and completes the training. These steps in a mobilization plan help in ensuring that the right candidate is mobilized for the right training.

(ii) Who will be mobilized?: A complete listing of the candidates who could be targeted must be made during the planning process. The list should include school and college dropouts, unemployed and undergraduates who



haven't been placed, youth having school degrees and vocational training but are still unemployed, women looking to work, any vulnerable groups and academically weak students who may find it easier to be vocationally trained.

(iii) Where to hold mobilization activities?:

Training partners need to identify the specific places where mobilization activities can be held, to maximize the reach of such activities. Schools, colleges, market places, local fair grounds, railway stations, metro stations and local markets offer themselves as good spots where training partners could achieve a high reach for mobilization activities.

(iv) What to communicate?: Good marketing material must be prepared by the training partners and used for promotion. Leaflets and brochures must be prepared for circulation not only during the mobilization rounds, but also dispersed through the local newspapers for ensuring mass awareness. In some cases, training partners have also used advertisements in local newspapers and tapped into social media for wider reach.

(v) How to mobilize candidates?: The effectiveness of mobilization depends on the training partners' approach towards mobilization, its ability to maximize reach and match the aspiration of the candidates with the desired job roles.

Successful training partners have shifted their mobilization strategy, from just targeting maximization of enrolments, to developing an outreach campaign that raises awareness amongst the target audience i.e. the candidates to attract the most eligible and fit candidate. Training partners have used door-to-door visits, mobile van announcements, road shows and interaction with candidates at a community level to attract the right candidate for the training.

Some training partners have approached their mobilization strategy through a community engagement lens, using Community Engagement Officers who work closely with local communities to understand not only the needs of the candidates, but also the local customs of a region. This has helped in

developing context specific methods to reach out to young people in a location. In some cases, local leaders and community-based groups like the rotary club, lions club and self-help groups have helped in mobilizing candidates for training. Training partners have also used local priests, religious leaders and other influential people in the community to reach out to the youth during mobilization.

Training partners have also evolved their strategies from just filling the numbers for trainings, to engaging with the youth and their parents to understand their needs, before connecting them to training program leads and ensuring a right fit between the training being offered and candidate aspirations. They have held Community Level Training Fairs where candidates have interacted closely with the engagement officers to understand the specifications of the training being offered. Engagement officers have also held seminars in colleges, schools and coaching houses to ensure that there is awareness among the candidate so that s/he can make the right choice for the training suited to her/his need.

During mobilization, training partners may use Aptitude Tests to determine if the training program suits the candidates being targeted. Career Counseling Services have also been provided to ensure that the candidates are well aware of their career path, so that there are no surprises and that the candidate chooses a training according to the career he/ she aspires to pursue.

Some training partners have also moved beyond engagement leaders and formed Mobilization Marketing Teams comprising of 2-3 mobilisers (like the community leaders), 1-2 counselors and telecallers. Once mobilized, candidates receive calls from telecallers to ensure that the mobilized candidate actually signs up for the training. The marketing teams also targets schools, colleges, coaching houses and community meetings for mobilizing candidates.

(vi) Follow-up: Once mobilized, training partners use their engagement and marketing officers to ensure that the mobilized candidate indeed signs up for the training.



WHAT HAS WORKED?

While emphasizing upon measures that can improve the quality of candidates being mobilized, both training partners left their peers with specific recommendations for improving their mobilizing strategies.

- Importance of a **strong database of potential candidates** cannot be overemphasized, since a comprehensive database helps improve the reach of the mobilization activities being undertaken. The database needs to consider the geographical area being targeted and target spots from where candidate details could be obtained, especially schools and colleges.
- **Identifying the hotspots** for mobilization, like railway stations, bus stands, metro stations, malls and market-places, where targeted mobilization activities could be undertaken for sensitizing the candidates. PanIIT targets the “village haats” (open markets), where branded canopies as well as stalls with resource persons help communicate with interested candidates around the training programs being offered. PanIIT also sponsors local sports and cultural events with onsite branding to increase their brand awareness and existence in the skilling space.
- Using **multiple means for outreach activities** helps in increasing the extent and spread of mobilization activities. Training partners should not only look at resource intensive activities like door-to-door visits, training fairs and counseling sessions with prospective candidates and their parents, they should also explore mass media such as print, local TV and social to spread awareness about the training programs. PanIIT uses local newspapers as well as television to generate awareness about their “Gurukul” system of training. Orion uses a mobile van to reach remote areas to spread awareness about the training programs. Seminars and interactive sessions organized by Orion with the students and their parents' help explain the specs of the trainings and placements thereafter. PanIIT has two “PracharGadis” (publicity vans) that are used for mobilization and awareness generation in remote areas.
- Orion organizes **skill camps and kaushal melas** (fairs) on a quarterly basis for generating enrolments. At these melas, Member Parliaments (MPs), Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and local dignitaries are invited to address potential candidates and motivate them for taking up training programs that can help them get gainfully employed. The melas are advertised in the local newspapers about 15 days in advance so that the community is aware of the mela and helps in ensuring high footfall. At the mela, the candidates undergo a career orientation session especially on post-training, and the students' skills and qualifications are taken into account before finding the best training for her/him.
- **Word of mouth** through old students is one of the key drivers to awareness generation. These alumni act as the best brand ambassadors for the training partners. Good feedback about the training programs from existing students helps in generating interest from other interested candidates, thus increasing enrollments. Most alumni from Orion and PanIIT have been their brand ambassadors, since they have been very satisfied with the training and placement opportunities they received from the training partners. Pan IIT suggests that 70% of their candidates were referrals from the alumni of the Gurukuls.
- Training partners also suggested the use of **telephonic helplines and directing candidates to counseling centres**. These worked in their favour for attracting the right talent and retaining them in the training programs. Partners also emphasized that the training programs should go beyond the hard skills and focus also on soft skills including public speaking, computer literacy, work ethics and values and mannerisms while interacting with the candidates.

SUMMARY

Ensuring good placement ratios would mean training partners focus on the entire training cycle, from student mobilization, to training pedagogy, trainer quality, industry engagement and understanding needs of the employers. It is a good idea to engage the industry partner / employer at all stages, especially while designing the training content so that there is no mismatch in expectations.

WEBINARS

Webinars are an easy and effective way to connect training partners across different geographies. NSDC has initiated a webinar series that will:

- Surface and disseminate good practices among training partners
- Encourage peer learning and knowledge sharing to address critical knowledge needs
- Ensure sustainable sharing of tacit knowledge of partners from implementation experiences and lessons in running training programs at scale
- Initiate generation of new ideas for efficient delivery of training programs

SKILL INSIGHTS

National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) aims to promote skill development by catalyzing the creation of large, quality and for-profit vocational institutions.

NSDC is institutionalizing a capacity building program that will support the systematic dissemination, exchange and transfer of good practices and knowledge between peer training partners. It is proposed that the development of a knowledge-driven and experience-exchange engagement with training partners would enable the delivery of efficient, effective and quality training programs at scale.

Skill Insights is a medium that connects training partners to share and learn about the operational nuts and bolts of skilling. It will support capacity enhancements for training partners by sharing and learning from peers, in a structured and systematic manner. Besides disseminating knowledge products to share lessons and good practices in skill ecosystem, the aim is to extend support through webinars, training partner (TP) meets, knowledge exchanges and twinning arrangements to further strengthen capacities.



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