GTB Earns OMCP Agency of Excellence Award for Innovation in Training

The OMCP 2016 Agency of Excellence Award for **Innovation in Training Methodology** goes to GTB.

GTB is an agency that prides itself on inspired thinking, fact-based decision making and execution, delivering true 'integration' within the speed, diversity and potential of modern communications. The agency is known for bringing together best of breed data, media, advertising, technology and creative under one roof in multiple markets worldwide and as part of the WPP Group.

GTB's L&D team of three deployed OMCP-approved training from Simplilearn's Market Motive worldwide, conferring with managers to set individual and team goals in certification, rewarding top learners with recognition, and hosting town-style "lunch and learn" sessions to promote the training. Results are exceptional so far with over 750 staff in training for certification with 219 already achieving certification.

GTB Learning & Development Leaders: Lance Cruz, Britany Levin, Kara Norton

https://omcp.org

Key differentiators include:

- Putting a human face on the training
- A close relationship with the training provider
- Allowing managers to set objectives for each team member entering training
- "Lunch and Learn" sessions where L&D presented available training
- Choosing a certification standard used by clients and other agencies
- Giving learners autonomy in methods of training engagement

GTB's Britany Levin, Instructional Designer, and Lance Cruz, Learning and Development Specialist met with Michael Stebbins of OMCP to discuss how the program achieved its success.

OMCP: Let's start out with the first question. How did this start, what motivated it, and what are some of the steps you took to get it going?

Motivation

Britany: The L&D team assessed what was needed, and determined that training for a digital marketing certification was something that would help with a digital marketing skill gap that we had identified. In 2014, We teamed with training vendor, Market Motive and provided a two-week trial period. Anybody that wanted to sign up could sign up, take a look at the content, and decide if they wanted to go through the courses. It was very well received, so we went forward with implementing them as our vendor of choice for digital marketing training.

OMCP: Was the demand driven by executive management saying, "We need this," or by the managers and practitioners saying, "We need this," or was it driven by L&D?

Britany: It started at the management level expressing a need for digital marketing training.

The Team Behind The Training

OMCP: So our readers can know, tell us a bit about your background

Britany: I have been in the Learning and Development field for about seven years

Britany Levin Instructional Designer at GTB

now with a Master's Degree in Organizational Learning and Performance. I have worked in traditional HR as well as Learning and Development, specifically on the e-

learning side. About two and a half years ago, I joined GTB to focused more on face-to-face training, developing and implementing instructor-led training materials.

Lance: I joined the L&D scene in early 2015 from our recruiting team. Most of what I do now is focused on our new employee onboarding process, which includes orientation and needs assessments across new hires. I also assist in instructional design and facilitation. One resource that we go to a lot, actually, is this digital marketing certification training.

OMCP: To get an idea of the resources you have available to you, obviously you've got the vendor, Simplilearn, Market Motive teaching to OMCP certification, there's the two of you. Is there, say, technical support for your LMS or learning and development support in a team? Or is it just you two and the vendor?

Britany: Currently, we have a team of three. Along with the two of us, is Kara who helps with a lot of the day to day administration of work we do in our

Lance Cruz, Learning & Development Specialist at GTB

department. In this case, we used the training provider's LMS to administer the actual training as we do not have an LMS of our own at the moment.

Lance: Not having our own LMS is why the processes that we have in place are so important. In the past, tracking had been done manually in Excel worksheets. We had to make sure that tracking all learning, not just this one, was as stress-free as possible.

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Setting Expectations

OMCP: What were some of the feedback loops you provided?

Britany: It is different for each team and it depends on the learner. There are some leaders who have said "As part of your development this year, I'd like you to go through the digital marketing certification." We saw this particularly on the GTB Connections team, Digital Marketing Certification was a big initiative for their team in 2016 and they now have 106 people certified as a result of that push.

OMCP: Time allocation for training staff that provide billable hours is always a challenge. How did you manage the time?

The managers were briefed on its content, benefits, and time commitment, increasing their buy-in and their support of interested team members.

Britany: Because it is online, users have the flexibility to work on the training as time permits. On our side, we give them 90-day access, and encourage them to think about it in a 90-day timeframe. If they have 90 days to complete X hours of training, that can be broken down into X amount of hours per week. That's very doable. It is about a 30 to 40-hour commitment to complete certification, so we always tell people, try not to do it all in one week, because it will become too overwhelming.

Lance: We were also setting the expectation with the managers, usually before the team members even knew about the resource. The managers were briefed on its content, benefits, and time commitment, increasing their buy-in and their support of interested team members. One benefit managers gravitated to, is that it can create a baseline of knowledge for the team, which is what the Connections (media) team did when their 106 people went through it.

Because managers have to sign-off on their team members access, they also helped keep up the push for completion. And on top of that, we also started sending out emails to users whose access was expiring. We had limited ability to extend access, but having a deadline does basically put a fire under them and say, "Hey, you need to do this under your agreed deadline."

Creating Incentives

OMCP: What were some of the incentives you used for participation and course completion?

Britany: The biggest piece of the digital marketing training is the certificate participants receive once the training is complete. Because it is a certification program, we can say, "It's a well-known certification in the industry and something you can put on your resume as well as take back and utilize in your day-to-day job."

Lance: I would say the biggest incentive was the knowledge itself. Those who requested access wanted to learn, and the feedback on the tool was consistent. They liked that it was created by professionals in their respective fields, they appreciated the on-demand nature of e-learning, and that it was consistently updated.

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We also have our annual recognition program. Every year, we send out an email and gift to each of the top learners. I think we chose 25 top learners across different aspects of the different resources that we used. So, for example, we'd choose 25 people who watched the most videos, most distinct courses completed, most 100% scores, and then also we recognized everybody who completed the certification training. That showed, "Yes, we are paying attention, and we appreciate that you're taking your time out to better yourselves." And that also caused conversation, because people wanted to know more about what the recognition was for.

OMCP: Big gifts, small gifts?

Britany: For our top learners we have sent them both water bottles and Moleskins. The water bottles are branded with the GTB logo and the Moleskins have our Global University, Accelerator, logo on it.

OMCP: Okay. And what mechanisms did you use to publicize it internally?

Britany: We publicized it through "lunch and learn" sessions. In these sessions, we talk about what we offer as an L&D department, as well as go through the digital marketing certification courses in great detail. We like to emphasize the curriculum behind it because it is developed by industry leaders such as Avinash Kaushik. He developed the analytics piece of it, and he's a very well-known person in the analytics field. So, when we told our analytics team Avinash developed the content, they were really incentivized to look at it closely.

OMCP: Experts want to learn from experts.

Lance: Exactly.

Britany: Exactly, yes.

Planned Outcomes

OMCP: Tell me about some of the planned outcomes, in which you may not have been a part of, versus the actual outcomes. Most of these programs that are successful, they have a measurable set ahead of time. Did you do that?

Britany: For the connections team, it was important to make sure that they established a baseline knowledge across that team. The plan was to have 100% participation and we were very close, I think we were probably around 90% to 95%. Some of the things that we learned is that the push and the drive from our leadership teams is really key. The connections team had really great leadership support and encouragement and that is what lead to their success.

Lance: I think one of the big pushes back in 2014, around the same time that the L&D team was specifically created, was just to have a ready [anytime online] resource for our agency. It was to respond to the culture of our industry. People constantly feel crunched for time, and they feel like they can't attend all of our in-person trainings. This online-based training was really meant to address that problem. So as far as that goal, I think that was achieved.

Britany: The original goal was to increase baseline knowledge of digital marketing and I think we are making progress towards that goal, especially in certain disciplines. Like I said, there have been unique goals for each particular team, and I think we have met some of those team goals. In addition, we have been rolling it out to our global teams for the last year and a half, and that's seen some success, but the uptake is gradual and we're still improving on delivery.

Challenges

OMCP: Can you share a few of the roadblocks or challenges that you ran into, and how you got around them?

Britany: I think one of the biggest challenges that any learning and development team faces, no matter what organization, is making sure that you have leadership buy-in for L&D programs. In our case, this is especially true with programs like the digital marketing certification. This certification is a very large time commitment and leaders have to understand what the objectives are, what the

Keep it a personal experience, not just a link-and-click.

outcome is and the time commitment involved. We call this the WIIFM, what's in it for me? I think we've done a good job with the digital marketing certification and many of our programs to make sure we have the best outcome possible. We don't hit the mark every time, but we've had some pretty good success.

Lance: Going off of that managerial piece. I think we were able to handle that especially well for new hires due to our onboarding process. Before a full time team member

starts, we meet with their manager to do a needs assessment and review the resources available to them. Ideally, we can partner with them to reduce ramp-up time. This tool is especially helpful for people new to the industry. Most managers have recognized how useful this resource was in creating common language and a baseline for industry knowledge on the team. We'd also recommend going after the low-hanging fruit, as far as leaders or teams that have already identified or asked for resources. Those managers seem more likely to be advocates, which was a great way to socialize the tool. Recommendations from peers have a different weight, so be sure you're making use of any champions!

Britany: It's the snowball effect. Just like Lance is saying, find one team that's really interested in it and provide examples of successful outcomes so that other teams can see the benefits. For example, we have 95% of the connections team certified in digital marketing, leaders are going to look at that and see that they were successful, are using the knowledge learned and consider having their team certified as well. In addition, Ford, our client, trains a lot of their marketing team members using Market Motive. We use that to show team members that the client is following the same standards as we are and encourage people to sign up based upon that.

What Success Means

OMCP: What are three or four ways that you know this program was successful?

Britany: We know it has been successful for a few different reasons. First, we have seen an increase in completion rates. People are signing up and completing the entire certification in the allotted 90 days. They see the value in the content and are taking the time to complete a 30-40 hour course, this is no small feat and I think it can be explained using the snowball effect. People are spreading the word that the content and information is great, so others are looking at it and taking the time to complete it. We have also seen more of a push for the content than

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in the past, for example the connections team having really great leadership buy in and accountability lead to a very high completion rate. We also have a really strong Returnship program and one of the benefits we offer participants is the ability to become digital marketing certified. We have seen a lot of success in that area because participants are learning something new and really excited to have something tangible to take away from this opportunity.

Lance: That's probably the biggest thing, having managers continue to sign up their team members after their initial experience. It wouldn't be a good sign if they only signed one team member up and then never again, but thankfully, that isn't the case.

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We are seeing managers continuously sign people up, which I would consider a success.

OMCP: It may be obvious to you and I, but for our *readers*, would you articulate what benefits there are having highly trained and online marketing-certified staff on the GTB team — what does this do for GTB and its clients?

Britany: It allows us to provide the most up-to-date and the most innovative digital marketing ideas and content. The more we know about what's happening out there in the digital marketing world, the more that we can provide to our clients, the more that we can keep up with trends that are happening now or in the future. If we don't have that knowledge, then we don't know how we can perform in those areas.

Lance: Even for agency brand image or essence, we like to consider ourselves innovators. Our main focus is to keep out in front of innovation, and the only way we can do that is if we're constantly learning new things. If we as an agency aren't trying new things, then we are doing a disservice to the client. If there's space for growth, then we need to address that by making resources available. We want to make sure we're supporting the agency to continue to do good work.

OMCP: Anything that you want to say to the industry that we haven't covered here?

Britany: I think it's all about making sure that you've got those processes in place to allow everyone to be successful. when you've got a set process in place, you're following up, you're making sure that everyone has the tools that they need to go through. Whether it's a training program, or completing some type of certification, making sure that that processes are there to support the program

Lance: Bouncing off that accountability piece. It might seem obvious, but I wanted to reiterate just how important the interpersonal relationships are. Even when using a web-based tool with low face-to-face interaction, it's important to continue being a resource for whoever is using it. Keep it a personal experience, not just a link-and-click. Be available for questions or guidance, and use that opportunity to build up rapport.

Mentioned in this Article:

- [GTB, Creative Advertising, and Media Agency: https://www.gtb.com/](https://www.gtb.com/)
- [Britany Levin, Instructional Designer at GTB: https://www.linkedin.com/in/britany-levin-4575124b/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/britany-levin-4575124b/)
- [Lance Cruz, Learning and Development Specialist at GTB: https://www.linkedin.com/in/lancecruz/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/lancecruz/)
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