Tips To Find The Right Training Programs On the Internet

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When you investigate training options for yourself or your employees it may appear to be a daunting task to get it right given the variety of options available. How do you obtain the specific training programs to best meet your needs? If you are like thousands of professionals the first place you will go to investigate your options is the Internet.

Using the Internet to Find a Credible Training Provider

There are a number of ways to find training resources through the Internet. One approach is to do a Google search , but this is a hit-or-miss process at best and ultimately will probably refer you to hundreds of training web site links. Training web sites range from one provider offering one or more training programs, products or services to web site databases offering hundreds of thousands of training-related offerings from thousands of providers. This paper will focus on provider web sites that contain information about their training programs.

Training Provider Web Sites – What To Look For

The web affords you the ability to find out information with just a few mouse clicks that might otherwise take one hundred phone calls to investigate. When you seek a training opportunity not currently available within your organization, a web site is a **fast** way to find alternatives.

Training providers offer everything from classroom instruction, distance learning, computer-based training and web-based courses to consulting. Providers may vary from full-service universities to community colleges to large training vendors to individual training consultants. Professional and occupational licensing and certification information may also be available.

When you investigate external training through the Internet the **availability of comparative information can overwhelm you**. It is best to limit your Internet research to sites that meet criteria you pre-define as important for the training provider to have as part of their offering. The criteria can include:

- Are they an accredited or certified training provider? This helps to eliminate fly-by-night organizations that might present themselves as training providers.

- Do they offer varied training delivery approaches (e. g. classroom, distance education)? This may show you how invested they are in their business.]

- Do they demonstrate expertise in the area of interest in which you are looking for training? Are there examples or quotes from similar organizations to yours that selected them as their training provider. Do they or will they give references that you can contact regarding their work?

- Can you compare their curriculum, faculty and course materials with other competitor providers? This will be up to you to organize with the criteria that you consider most important.

- Are they easy to contact and are they responsive to your inquiries? This can be a sign as to how they will be to work with in the future.

Web Site Training Databases

Some organizations have attempted to build comprehensive databases of training providers to assist prospective students and training managers in their research of qualified providers. Some offer this service as a professional courtesy to further the field of training and education. Others are fee-based services, where providers either pay or are required to become members of the sponsor organization to be listed. Examples of web-site training bases can be found at:

American Society for Training and Development   www.astd.org
Classes USA   www.classesusa.com
Grad Schools.com   www.gradschools.com

Although a training provider web site can be a great time saver, you still need to ultimately deal with a specific vendor/provider. Assessing the prospective provider is still key to understanding a particular institution's qualities, culture, credentials. . . and what they can do for you.

Potential Concerns When Assessing A Specific Training Provider:

- *Incomplete information.* Each training provider web site has its own approach for assembling and organizing data. One site might provide detailed information on pricing, whereas another site is weak on pricing information but strong on content descriptions.

- *Accuracy over time.* Just because a training offering is listed on a web site does not necessarily mean that it is still offered as listed or even that it is still offered. Web sites and offerings on them have changed very fast. You must verify that fact.

- *Biased data.* Information comes directly from the training service provider.

- *Quality control.* Training provider websites are intended to get you to inquire about their offering. The first step in the process of exploring potential training options is to use the Internet, but it should not be the only step. The phrase "buyer beware" definitely has an important place in any discussion on external training resources found through the Internet.

Making the Most of An Internet Training Search

Positive online searches should always be followed up with direct questions to potential training providers. Asking detailed questions about the training offerings listed on the website helps you find out details that are not included and verifies if in fact what you found out is truly the case. Information to ask about includes target audience descriptions, objectives, prerequisites, typical schedules, sample materials, technology requirements and references.

Online evaluations and pre-screening the providers would help you get a better sense of the instructional quality offered by the training providers. Good luck in this venture!

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