AT A GLANCE

PURPOSE
To broker on-demand, aggregate learning opportunities targeted to individual and employer needs.

PROJECT GOALS
• Provide quality learning events that are learner-defined, employer-informed, and data-guided
• Aggregate market & learner analytics to inform pedagogy, development, & design around scalable learning competencies
• Align learning goals & outcomes with all parties in the workforce development chain
• Maximize learner & employer agency in workforce & curriculum development
• Strengthen cooperation & interoperability of all parties in the workforce development chain
• Match employer needs to learners who may become job candidates
• Continuously scale data, demand, and affordability to the benefit of all parties in the workforce development chain
• Provide mechanisms of quality assurance and relationship management as a value-added benefit for all parties in the learner-educator-employer dynamic.

TARGETED POPULATION
Displaced workers, military personnel, people whose needs are not met by traditional degree programs and courses. Recent college graduates who need additional skills development.

ABSTRACT
Not every learner’s needs are met by a degree program. Some learners, such as displaced workers who are trying to enter new career fields, need customizable and flexible education options without the additional requirements of general education courses or pre-requisites.

ClassMob is a tool that allows learners and employers to define their learning preferences, needs, and outcomes via crowdsourcing. Learners are empowered to design, request proposals/bids on, and vote on the curriculum and instruction they desire to drive personal career change, skill attainment, or employment. Employers can define skills they most want to see in new hires, but may be missing in college graduates or displaced workers. Education and commercial training providers bid to meet the learning needs of the Mobs.

HOW CLASSMOB WORKS
Individuals enter the ClassMob web site and complete an assessment that provides feedback, matching learning needs and strengths to employer needs (Figure 1). Individuals can join an existing Mob or create a new Mob based on desired learning outcomes. Employers can create a Mob based on their employment needs, which learners can choose to join. Academic and commercial providers, as well as individual experts, craft proposals and “bid” to develop educational events for Mobs. Individual experts may or may not be affiliated with an academic or commercial educational provider. Each provider can determine the student cost and whether they will offer transferrable credits or a certificate of completion. The Mob decides which learning solution they will accept and pursue.

ClassMob aggregates demand for learning. ClassMob defines and aligns workforce needs. ClassMob gives power to mobs of learners.
PROBLEM OR CHALLENGE ADDRESSED
This project addresses needs of an underserved population: those who have skills or even college degrees, but find themselves at a crossroads in their career for one reason or another. Possible reasons may include: job loss, return to the workforce, mid-career change, need to develop a novel skill, or a transition from military to civilian life. This population has skills and even degrees—they may not need a degree or another degree—but would benefit from a learning “tune-up.” ClassMob allows these learners to design or join Mobs based on the specific learning needs they have.

A second population consists of those students who have attempted to pursue a traditional degree but did not complete for some reason (Cox, 2009; Tinto, 1975). By offering an opportunity to learners to set practical and tangible goals, they are more likely to achieve success (Corker & Donnellan, 2012).

This project also addresses workforce skills gap job seekers and employers face. Job seekers or employees may have technical skills needed for jobs, but lack other skills, such as leadership or communication skills. In a recent survey of 500 top executives, 92% noted skills gaps and nearly half of those said the gaps were in “soft skills” areas like communication, creativity, team work, and critical thinking (Wastler, 2013). The findings mirror those of Kuh (2008), who found low employers ratings of college graduates’ global knowledge, self-direction, writing, and critical thinking. Traditional education institutions are not addressing these needs as well as one might think (Arum & Roksa, 2010). ClassMob allows employers to design Mobs to address specific gaps in needed skills.

Further, employers will find ClassMob useful for their workforce development needs. Large and small corporations have training and development needs that are often unmet and too expensive to address in-house. With ClassMob, employers can outline specific sets of skills their employees need to develop and education providers can bid to offer programs that meet those development needs.

Key stakeholders and beneficiaries of ClassMob are underserved learners and workforce-challenged employers. Learners may be mid-career employees, displaced workers, veterans, non-degree seeking groups; employers may be large or small corporations needing workforce training and employers seeking employees with specific skill sets. Providers of educational opportunities for mobs, such as universities, colleges, MOOC providers, and individual experts and educators may benefit financially and by having Mobs select their education programs.
PROJECT OUTCOMES
Develop a ClassMob experience that aggregates a broad range of learning opportunities to in order to meet learner and employer needs.

ClassMob outcomes:
- Launch the ClassMob web site.
- Recruit employers who will sponsor and participate in the Class Mob experience.
- Create an assessment tool that learners complete to help inform them of areas in which they need development to match the needs of employers.
- Create a tool and process to form learner-designed Mobs and employer-designed Mobs.
- Formalize the education provider bidding and selection process.
- Develop a Mob satisfaction survey for ClassMob users and analytics dashboards.
- Inform educational programs by offering analytics on employer and employee demand for learning.
- Establish a customer base of learners and employers who use ClassMob for learning needs.
- Employ an “Amazon-like” rating system where participants in each Mob will review the overall effectiveness of the learning event and provide a quality assurance/evaluation that is public on the ClassMob site.
- Offer low-cost student services for Mob learners, including counseling and tutoring services, matching services for mentor-mentees, etc.

User & employer outcomes:
- Create or find Mobs that meet learners’ or employers’ needs for workforce skills development.
- Increase employment options for learners in career transition.
- Improve the quality and quantity of job opportunities for individuals who are transitioning to new careers.

Education provider outcomes:
- Offer learning programs that meet the needs of a large number of learners.
- Offer flexible learning programs, such as non-degree or certification programs, to meet the needs of learners and employers.

Activities that are out of scope:
- Offering degree programs.
- Expressly offering courses for credit.
SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

ClassMob is a non-profit venture, but it will be sustained via several funding sources. Those funding sources include:

Employer listing fees: Employers can design and list Mobs to target workforce development needs. A small one-time fee will be charged for listing a Mob.

Education provider tuition: ClassMob will collect a percentage of the tuition collected by an educational provider for a Mob’s event. Percentage will be inversely scaled to the number of participants enrolled in the event. The more participants in a Mob, the smaller the percentage ClassMob will collect.

Add-on services: The ClassMob site will offer add-on features for users, for a small fee, including career/skills counseling, Mob design consultations, and decision support for assessing and selecting education providers.

DEPENDENCIES & ASSUMPTIONS

Employers must be interested in sponsoring this idea. The link of employer-needs to potential ClassMob participants is critical for success. Our assumptions are: 1) that employers will be interested in sponsoring this idea, 2) that providers of education and training will be interested in offering classes/training to ClassMobs, and 3) learners will find ClassMob an efficient and effective way to sharpen their skills and be linked to potential employers.

OWNERSHIP

ClassMob is responsible for developing the web site, developing the assessment tool, recruiting employer sponsors and participants, advertising for potential students, developing the tool to select class topics/skills, facilitating the bid proposals between Mobs and learning opportunity providers.

EVALUATION PLAN FOR OUTCOMES

ClassMob will use a combination of analytics, surveys, and self-reporting for the effectiveness metrics listed below.

Outcomes metrics:

- Completion: Number of learners in a Mob who complete learning programs.
- Employment: Number of learners who gain or improve employment status after completing a Mob’s learning program.
- Employers: Number of employers who use ClassMob for workforce development needs.
- Users: Total number of users, total number of new users over periods of time, number of return users, where do new users come from?
- Cost: Comparison of what Mobs pay for education programs compared to similar degree programs. Comparison of what employers pay for education programs compared to in-house programs.
- Program evaluation: What causes Mobs to succeed or fail?

User Experience - Website (UX) Metrics:

- Happiness: Satisfaction, perceived ease of use, overall effectiveness of education program.
- Engagement: User involvement, measured via behavioral proxies such as frequency, intensity, or depth of interaction over some time period. Examples: the number of visits per user per day/per week.
- Retention: The rate at which existing users are returning. Examples: how many who complete the assessment survey actually participate in a ClassMob? How many do not? Complete a course? Take more than one course? Refer new learners?
- Task success: This includes traditional behavioral metrics of user experience. Example: Number who opted to participate in a ClassMob, number who actually registered for a ClassMob, number who completed a ClassMob course, number who transferred credit to a college or university.
EXAMPLE. FINDING A JOB AFTER THE MILITARY (FICTIONAL USE CASE)

Angelina finished her service in the military and is now looking to transition to the civilian workforce. She wants to continue the work she was doing in the military, which involved analyzing and redirecting surveillance reports to the appropriate commanding officers, but all civilian jobs that involve similar tasks require a bachelor’s degree in business or computer science. Angelina hears about ClassMob and decides to try the ClassMob work skills assessment. The assessment indicates several career paths that would make use of her experience in the military and shows her existing Mobs she can join to develop skills for those career paths. Angelina joins the Computer Security Mob and she helps her Mob design a request for proposals that would meet the learning goals of the Mob. Several education providers submit bids to meet her Mob’s needs. Angelina and her Mob select and complete an education program proposed by SouthWest Online University, offering 4 computer security courses, with transferrable college credits and a completion certificate, for $500 per learner.

After completing the education program, the Mob provides Amazon-like evaluations of the program and of the provider, thus helping other Mobs to make choices about which providers and programs to select.

EXAMPLE. MEETING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS (FICTIONAL USE CASE)

BlueSky Productions is a small firm that makes large-scale marketing videos. As industry standard tools change, and to stay at the cutting edge of industry expertise, BlueSky must continually provide software, hardware, and skills training for its 50 employees. An in-house training program is too expensive and most large training providers are not flexible enough to meet BlueSky’s needs. To help, BlueSky designs a ClassMob that outlines the specific training goals of their employees. BlueSky can close the Mob membership to include only employees, or they can open the Mob to the general public, possibly lowering the overall cost of the program they select. Education providers bid to offer BlueSky’s training program and BlueSky selects a provider that offers customized training and support for its employees.

BlueSky also needs to employ new highly-skilled workers to replace those who transition to larger firms. BlueSky uses ClassMob to find the right employees for their firm. They design a ClassMob that interested job applicants and the general public can take. After learners successfully complete the BlueSky ClassMob program, they are more likely to be offered interviews and job opportunities in BlueSky Productions.

EXAMPLE. PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO MASSIVE AUDIENCES (FICTIONAL USE CASE)

Dr. Regina Donald is an adjunct instructor at Oklahoma State University, where she teaches 1-2 classes per semester in the Business and Marketing program. Adjunct pay is not adequate for Dr. Donald to sustain her living conditions and she often struggles financially when classes she was slated to teach get canceled. Dr. Donald finds ClassMobs and decides to bid to provide courses for Mobs. Dr. Donald finds a Mob of 1,200 people (and growing) that is looking to develop marketing-related skills and she submits a bid to the Mob. She looks at the learner information (distribution of ages, gender, learning preferences) for that Mob and tailors her bid to the needs of those particular learners. She offers 2 online marketing courses, which she will offer on her hosted platform, for $50/course per learner. Though she cannot offer transferable college credits or a degree, she will help learners create a skills portfolio for sharing with potential employers at the end of the program.
### RESOURCES (BUDGET AND STAFFING)

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ABOUT THE CLASSMOB PROJECT TEAM

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REFERENCES


SCREENSHOT OF PROTOTYPE