# Skillsoft’s Take: MOOCs

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| **What is a MOOC?** | A MOOC is a “Massive Open Online Course” that is offered by a University to anyone that has access to the Internet.  The MOOC is “**massive**” because it is designed to enroll tens of thousands of learners; it’s “**open**,” because, in theory, anyone with an Internet connection can enroll in the free course; it’s “**online**” because much, if not all, of the interaction takes place online in threaded web discussion groups with cohorts of learners, or on wikis, or via online videos of professors giving lectures; and finally, MOOC’s are “**courses**” because they have concrete start and end dates, student assessments, online tests and quizzes and proctored exams.  MOOC’s are typically lectured based and generally run for 6 to 12 weeks. MOOC content is typically assembled by professors and delivered via platforms, like Udacity, Coursera and EdX that range from basic to more user friendly, interactive and collaborative learning experiences. Although most have been offered for free, some fee-based offerings are starting to emerge. |
| **Background and history** | Key milestones in the evolution of MOOCs:   * 2001: In one respect, MOOCs are not new. MIT made headlines in 2001 when it posted lectures from nearly its entire curriculum on the web for free. * 2006: Introduction of Khan Academy which was an entire K-12 online math curriculum based on short, easy to understand video and audio modules. Although Khan Academy is not a MOOC, its approach to ‘flipping the classroom’ —or swapping classwork with homework—has become a defining feature of MOOC’s. * 2008: University of Manitoba in Canada offered a free online course called “Connectivism and Connective Knowledge.” Stanford, MIT and others followed by offering computer science lectures online. Thousands enrolled, few completed (< 10%). * 2010 - 2012: Universities started to turn to technology partners like Udacity, Coursera, and edX (partnership between Harvard and MIT) to provide the platforms and services that enabled open delivery of college curriculum.   + Feb ’12: Udadicy launches   + Apr ’12: Coursera launches   + May ’12: EdX launches * 2012: MOOCs attempt to penetrate the corporate and organizational learning space by creating corporate oriented platform offerings and features. Introduction of SPOC (Small Private Online Courses enabled by MOOC platforms). * 2013: The leading UK online university (The Open University) rolls out a program   containing MOOCs from leading UK and international universities.  (<https://www.futurelearn.com/>) |
| **Skillsoft’s Take on MOOCs:** | As leaders in the learning industry, Skillsoft strives to follow all major trends across the industry. The Massively Open Online Courseware (MOOC) movement is certainly one of the trends we have followed closely since MIT opened their content to the world via the [Open Courseware Consortium](http://www.ocwconsortium.org/about-ocw/) almost a decade ago. Since that time, we have seen a wide range of organizations emerge as providers of MOOC content with an equally wide range of business models and academic and business relationships.  While no single MOOC provider has yet emerged as the dominant player, several organizations are currently offering compelling academic course content together with solid delivery and management technology. Given the growing diversity of available course topics and of the amount of popular press attention, the number of individuals registering for MOOC courses has increased. Very few of these registrants, however, successfully finish.  Rather than see the movement towards free and open source content as a threat, we embrace it as continued validation of the online learning model. And we expect to learn from best practices in the MOOC world as we continually invest to bring compelling learning solutions to market. We will also look for opportunities to enhance the value of our learning delivery and management technology by simplifying the integration of MOOC and other content sources.  We agree with [analysts such as Josh Bersin](https://www.bersin.com/blog/post.aspx?id=f7f918fd-74e2-4dcd-9668-f241418aa4e6) that carefully selected MOOC content can be used effectively to complement and enhance core corporate and organizational learning initiatives. Choosing MOOC content over Skillsoft is not an “OR” decision. It should be viewed as an “AND.” In fact, the Skillsoft Solution Services Team has developed significant expertise that can be applied to help navigate the complex and rapidly changing MOOC landscape and help customers make informed decisions in the selection, application and deployment of MOOC content. |
| **Why are people talking about this now:** | Learning organizations continue to look for cost effective learning solutions, and MOOC providers are beginning to penetrate the corporate and organizational space with a broader course curricula and in some cases, private offerings. This has led some organizations to assume they can replace their fee based solutions—like Skillsoft—with MOOC content.  Additionally some organizatonal buyers are focused solely on economics and may perceive the (currently) free aspect of many MOOC courses as appealing—not taking into account the time and energy to source, vet and manage another external platform. |
| **Cautions, tips, hints:** | There are a number of reasons Skillsoft believes MOOCs can augment an elearning program, but not replace it.   * More than a decade of expertise and experience has demonstrated that enterprise learning is a spectrum of many modalities ranging from the social/informal to the immersive/formal. MOOCs represent a very narrow band at the most extreme end of formal training. As such the role MOOCs can play in organizations is most relevant for that subset of a workforce that needs to develop deep expertise with academic rigor in a specialized topic. * Corporate Learners engaged in professional development need learning that is compact, modular, easily discoverable and relevant to their world. MOOC courses are often scheduled at specific dates and times typically running for 6-12 weeks. This is contrary to the flexibility needed by business professionals and offered by traditional self-paced learning.   To date, the largest MOOCs are targeted to audiences seeking college course subject matter and in some cases college credit. For organizations with small populations of highly technical individuals, some MOOCs may provide topical subject coverage not otherwise available in an online format (i.e. physics, engineering). For most, though, this curriculum is not aligned with the business, IT and other competency requirements that are at the heart of most workforce L&D programs.   * Support for most organizational requirements does not exist including:   + No integration by MOOCs with business platforms for learning management, talent management or HRIS.   + Little to no tracking and reporting.   + No customer consulting support to help learning organizations effectively deploy content so that it presented within the right context at the right time.   + Little to no reliability, availability, security or data privacy guarantees where there is no corporate commercial relationship.   + No control over whether a MOOC course is pulled, terminated or changed which is potentially disruptive to building a MOOC course into a learning program. * MOOC business models are in their infancy. With the exception of edX which is a non-for-profit (but ultimately must find a way to become self-sustaining), most MOOCs are VC-backed commercial entities primarily focused on the higher ed market, do not have defined business models and are generating little to no revenue. MOOCs will need to monetize their business in order to sustain and ultimately the attractiveness and reality of ‘free’ will diminish. |
| **To learn more:** | <http://www.mooc-list.com/>  <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jeannemeister/2013/08/13/how-moocs-will-revolutionize-corporate-learning-development%20/>  <http://www.forbes.com/sites/joshbersin/2013/11/30/the-mooc-marketplace-takes-off/2/> |
| **Internal SMEs:** | Kieran King  Pam Boiros  Sue Rodeman  John Ambrose  Lee Ritze |
| **Keep the conversation going:** | Contribute to the discussion on this topic—and watch for official updates—on Chatter under the hashtag: #[MOOC](https://na13.salesforce.com/_ui/core/chatter/topics/TopicPage?name=MOOCS&ref=hash_mention) |

**Supplement**

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| **Name** | **Description and Notes** |
| **Udemy** | * Launched in May 2010. * Provides a market place for anyone to publish and sell MOOC course. * Marketplace includes hundreds of courses including some by very well-known authors. * Covers variety of topics including technology, business, health & fitness and crafts and hobbies. * Authors set prices that range from ‘free’ to $500+. * Learners enroll in (and purchase if applicable) courses, take assessments and collaborate with peers. * Has an offering specific to organizations that allows companies to use content available or publish their own. Other features include e-commerce, portal branding, and course administration. |
| **Udacity** | * First classes offered in May 2012. * Offers branded academic courses covering Business, Computer Science, Design, Mathematics and Science topics. * Many topics are free. Certificate-based programs have a monthly fee. * Learners watch videos, take assessments and interact with peers. * Partnering with AT&T, Google and others to create the Open Education Alliance which is a subscription based certificate program that includes projects, code-reviews, feedback and a personal coach. |
| **edX** | * Launched in May 2012. * Nonprofit offering of academic courses covering arts, sciences, business and humanities. * Open-source platform. Encourages global community to enhance product. * Currently has 29 Partner universities including Harvard, MIT and Cornell. * Courses are free. Fee-based Certificates of Achievements are available for some courses. * Offers partnership program for creating corporate training programs. |
| **Coursera** | * Launched in 2012. * Currently has 107 University partners including Stanford, Princeton and University of Michigan. * Offers over 500 branded academic courses in Business, Computer Science, Design, Mathematics and Science topics. * Most topics are free. Certificate programs have per user fees (approx. $100/ course). * Learners enroll in courses, take quizzes, complete peer graded assessments and collaborate with peers. * Provides a certificate of completion through their ‘Signature Program’ and through ‘Signature Tracks’. * Coursera recently reported it generated its first $1M in revenue by selling completion certificates. |
| **Khan Academy** | * Nonprofit initially focused on k-12 math curriculum. Now includes economics, finance, sciences and humanities. * Learners watch videos, complete practice exercises, can engage with coaches. |