Research Proposal

Recommendation of an Online Learning Platform for Technical Training

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Purpose

The purpose of this research proposal is to compare various *massive open online course* (MOOC) platforms that can support our company. The research will be based on criteria specific to the needs of our company. We are a small software company located in the San Francisco Bay area with a training budget of $1000 per employee. The deliverable of this proposal will be a research report with a recommendation for the MOOC platform that best fits our needs.

Introduction

Mr. David Shannon is the director of engineering at TribeTech. He has requested that we research online learning platforms for use at our company to train our engineers. Specifically, we are looking into MOOC platforms. Many MOOC platforms have a wide range of technical content available, presented as self-paced courses.

Technology is always changing to be more efficient, easier to use, and better performing. We are planning to update many of our products to make use of these advancements. Since some of our employees are not yet well versed in the newer technologies, it has been a challenge to upgrade to the newer frameworks and programming languages. Mr. Shannon believes if we have easy access to training, we can encourage our workforce to take the time to learn. This will enable us to fill those skill gaps, greatly benefiting both the employees and the company.

In the following sections, we will outline the proposed tasks, schedule, budget, and resources, along with the references used for this proposal.

Proposed Tasks

To achieve our goal to recommend an online learning platform for our company, we will need to perform certain tasks. These tasks are presented in the chronological order that they will be performed. The tasks include the following:

- Conduct interviews with engineering managers
- Identify the comparison criteria

- Perform preliminary research on popular MOOC platforms to narrow down options
- Conduct an in-depth comparison of the chosen 3 platforms based on the criteria
- Analyze the comparison findings and make a recommendation in a research report

Task 1: Conduct interviews of engineering managers

The initial step in this process is to get an understanding of the types of courses that would be most valuable to our engineers. We can gather this information by interviewing the engineering managers. We will include questions about which technologies we are targeting in future projects and what are skill gaps we are seeing in our current talent pool.

Task 2: Identify the comparison criteria

As a result of the interviews, we obtain our first piece of criteria to use in the comparison - available content. The next step is to define the remaining criteria that we will use for comparing the different MOOC platforms. Another important one that we have already identified is price. We have a training budget of $1000 per employee and we are allowed to allocate up to 50% of the budget for this service.

Task 3: Preliminary research of popular online learning platforms

There are many different MOOC platforms available. We need to be able to narrow our selection down to conduct an in-depth comparison of the top three contenders. This will require some preliminary research. Some of the popular learning platforms which have technical courses are LinkedInLearning, Udemy, Udacity, Coursera, Pluralsight, and, EdX. Initially, we would like to include these in our research. The goal of the preliminary research is to see if there are any platforms that we can eliminate, as well as to potentially discover other platforms that may also be a good fit.

Task 4: Conduct an in-depth comparison of each platform based on the identified criteria

Once we have narrowed down our options to three MOOC platforms, we will conduct an in-depth comparison of them. We will base the comparison on the previously identified criteria from task 2. To gather this information, we will explore the individual websites for each platform and other third-party sites that can give us different perspectives.

Task 5: Analyze comparison findings and make a recommendation in a research report

The final task is to analyze the results of the comparison. We will pick the one platform that most closely meets the needs of the company. We will include the findings from the comparison as well as our final recommendation in a research report.

Schedule

The project should take 4 weeks to complete. We will start the first task on the week of April 11th, and expect to complete the final task on the week beginning with May 2nd. Figure 1 shows the proposed schedule.

#	Tasks	Date of Tasks (by Week)			
		April			May
		11	18	25	2
1	Conduct interviews of engineering managers	██			
2	Identify the comparison criteria		██		
3	Preliminary research of popular online learning platforms		██	██	
4	Conduct an in-depth comparison of each platform based on the identified criteria			██	
5	Analyze comparison findings and make a recommendation in a research report				██

Figure 1. Project Schedule

Resources

Riva McKnight will be conducting the research for this proposal. Therefore, the primary resource is her time. We will also need access to the engineering managers for the interviews as proposed in task 1.

Budget

Table 1 shows the budget for the proposed research project. We expect the total cost of the proposal to be $2,360. This will cover the expenses for Riva McKnight's salary over the course of 40 hours.

Table 1. Budget

Name	Hours	Hourly Rate (U.S. Dollars)	Cost (U.S. Dollars)
Riva McKnight	40	59	2,360
Total			2,360

References

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