

MARKETING PLA



module 5

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

MARKETING PLA

module 5

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Introduction to This Module

30 minutes

Marketing Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) effectively is the best way to build support for PLA within and outside your institution. The more your colleagues and community understand the benefits and advantages of PLA, the more they will see PLA as an integral part of an institution's mandate, embedded into the overall philosophy of learning.

This module enables participants to develop effective strategies for generating support for PLA within their own institutions and attract candidates (individuals and employers) to the services provided.

At the end of this module participants will be able to:

- Identify and apply a range of strategies for marketing the concept and process of PLA within their own organisations
- Identify and apply a range of strategies for attracting candidates (individuals and employers) to the flexible services being provided
- Identify local circumstances, obstacles and target groups
- Develop a strategy for evaluating the effectiveness of the overall marketing approach applied in their own context

Recommended Reading

Simosko, Susan and Cook, Cathy. *Applying APL Principles in Flexible Assessment: A Practical Guide*, London: Kogan Page, 1996.

Facilitation Plan

9:00 am:	Warm-up
9:30 am:	Marketing PLA Internally
9:40 am:	Defining the Market
10:05 am:	Break
10:20 am:	Choosing Strategies
11:00 am:	Marketing PLA Externally
11:15 am:	Identifying Target Group Benefits
11:40 am:	Developing Marketing Strategies
12:30 pm:	Lunch
1:30 pm:	Evaluating Strategy Effectiveness
2:30 pm:	Wrap-up

You can introduce the schedule for the module based on your own ideas or patterned after the suggested plan. The timing for each part of the module is included as a guide. It can, of course, be adjusted to fit your circumstances. A full day is ideal, but the module can be adapted, depending on the needs and range of knowledge of workshop participants. Review the plan of the module with the participants, confirming when breaks will be, the time the day will end, and any other “housekeeping” details that are necessary.

Warm-up

It is important to begin the day by having participants meet, introduce one another (this includes you, the facilitator), and have some interaction. Purposes need to be clarified.

You will need to address the expectations, potential challenges, and issues that participants may have about the module. This will assist you in further planning and adapting the module.



Activity

Have participants pair up, introduce themselves, and briefly discuss what, if any, marketing experience (in anything) they have. Then ask them to share any concerns they have about marketing PLA at their own institution.

Have each participant (briefly!) introduce his or her partner and share one concern the partner has about marketing PLA.

Write concerns on a flip-chart Parking Lot, and point out that you will try to address these concerns as the session progresses.

- ! *If participants have been involved with other PLA sessions, they are familiar with the Parking Lot. Review the concept of the Parking Lot sheet that is used for short-term storage of out-of-context or contentious ideas. At the conclusion of the day any items remaining in the Parking Lot should be analysed to determine how they should be addressed.*

At this point review the purpose of the module (T1 and T2).



Ask participants to discuss reasons why marketing services and products are important. Your participants may come up with some of the following:

- However good your product or services, however much you believe they are needed, you still have to promote or sell them to potential candidates. If potential candidates do not hear about your products and services, they will not know what services there are to offer.
- The more a product is advertised, the more embedded it becomes in all the other services provided at the institution.
- The bottom line is that the more people know about your service the better.

When discussing marketing PLA within an institution, point out the following considerations:

- *Avoid jargon.* Keep language understandable for the intended audience. Clear, readable, and understandable information is best to help people understand.
- *Raise awareness.* Target all groups. Remember that how you market to faculty will differ from how you market to support staff.
- *Put PLA in context.* Make sure when it is marketed that it is seen as a part of programs and services, rather than a stand-alone service.
- *Use a variety of ways to market PLA.* The more ways you use to market PLA, the more successful and known it is likely to be. (Simosko and Cook, 175)

Defining the Market

Participants will need to be clear about the groups or individuals within their institutions who need to “buy-in” to PLA. Clarifying this will help them to assess the needs of each target group. This in turn will make it easier for them to identify key messages, concerns, benefits, products and services geared to attract the attention of each group and ultimately meet their needs.

Have the entire group identify the areas that need to be targeted within their institution. Target areas should include those listed on the following page:

- Faculty
- Administration (Senior Managers, Alumni Associations)
- Educational Advisors
- Public Relations
- Registrar's Office
- Registered Students
- Faculty Association
- Support Staff
- Student Services



Activity

Divide the participants into small groups of four. Ask each group to select a separate target area (Faculty, Student Services, etc.). Ask them to identify:

- Key concerns of the target group
- Information their target group needs

Provide flip-chart paper to each group for recording ideas.

When 15 minutes are up, ask groups to share their answers. After each group reports, ask if there are any comments or additions from other groups. If there are additions, add them to the list, pointing out that as a group, there are always new ideas that can be added. Post the list for each target area.

Ask the group to prioritise the concerns across all areas. Which will be most critical to help embed PLA within their institution? Try to identify the top four. Once these have been highlighted, ask each group to analyse the underlying factors that have led to this concern:

- Are these external or internal factors?
- Is job security affected?
- Do the cultural/historical backgrounds of the institution influence the factors?

Ask each group to clarify the factors. Only by addressing these specifically, can PLA be properly marketed within an institution.



Break

15 minutes

Choosing Strategies

Emphasise to participants that they have a wide range of strategies available to them for marketing PLA internally. This next session will help them make choices about the most appropriate strategies for marketing PLA within their institution.



Discuss with the whole group various ways that their PLA service could be marketed. How can you tell people about PLA? As participants give you ideas, write them down on a flip-chart. Would they be appropriate for internal marketing? If not, put them aside for the afternoon sessions, which will address external marketing. To summarise, show **T3a**, **T3b** and **H1**, adding suggested ideas. If needed, review any strategies that are not clear.



Discuss the considerations to be made when developing any marketing materials (**T4**, **H2**).



Activity

Ask participants to return to their small groups, and choose one of the mentioned methods or strategies for marketing PLA internally at their institution. Have groups choose different strategies, if possible. Let them know they will do a five-minute presentation at the end of the working session.

- Have a group recorder list the messages or “pitch” they wish to get across to their target group. For example, if the target group is Administration and the strategy is a board meeting, then what would be the key messages they would wish to deliver?
- Provide each group with felt markers, large pieces of coloured paper, pastels, blank transparencies, and so on. Have groups develop their particular strategy to market PLA within their institution. For example, if a group chooses a board meeting, they might develop a presentation of the key messages to deliver. (The felt markers, crayons and paper could be used to make graphs or design a cover overhead for their presentation).

When finished, ask each group to do a five-minute presentation to give all participants a flavour of their particular strategy.

Ask each group to be the intended audience so they can give feedback on the presentation. You may need to review points of good practice in giving feedback. Ask listeners to consider these questions:

- What was the overall feeling of the presentation?
- Were the messages clear?
- Did the presentation address real concerns?

End the morning’s session by discussing the importance of being positive, but realistic in the marketing strategy.

Introduce this session by informing participants that now they will look at external marketing strategies. This process may be a bit easier since they have already worked at marketing PLA internally

Ask participants to identify the local groups they most need to reach. These groups will be different from institution to institution, but generally will include employers, employees and particular groups of potential candidates. Write a list of potential groups on an overhead transparency or flip-chart.

Identifying Target Group Benefits



Activity

Remind the group that to market successfully, you need to identify the primary benefits for each target group. Ask the participants to return to their small groups, pick a target group, and brainstorm how PLA could benefit each target group. Ask a recorder to write down the ideas produced.

! *Circulate among the small groups so you can ask helpful questions to spark ideas, as necessary.*

When the small groups have finished, ask the participants to present their findings. Other comments or suggestions can be included at this time.



Again, stress the fact that although PLA cannot be everything to everybody, it can offer much to employers, employees, and candidates. Use transparencies **T5a, T5b, T6a, T6b, T7a, T7b** and handouts **H3, H4, H5** to summarise the benefits.



With the group, discuss methods and strategies for marketing PLA externally. Write the participants' suggestions on the flip-chart. How would external differ from internal marketing? Discuss as you show **T8a** and **T8b**.

Developing Marketing Strategies



Activity

As in the activity for External Marketing, ask participants to return to their small groups and to choose one method or “strategy” for marketing PLA externally to their target group. For example, one group may wish to use an information session to the general public as an example. What would be the messages they would wish to deliver?

Give out various sizes and colours of paper, felt markers, and other creative tools, and ask them to design one particular marketing tool (presentation brochure/ads/billboard/video/etc.) for their chosen strategy. Tell the participants that each group will give a five-minute (maximum) presentation of their marketing strategy to the group.

After each group presents, point out that groups could continue meeting to brainstorm and develop other strategy ideas.



Lunch

60 minutes

Discuss with the participants that there is no point going through a planning process if there is not some sort of review system in place to analyse the effectiveness of the strategies used.

Brainstorm with participants a list of criteria that could be used to analyse strategies for effectiveness, and write down their suggestions. They should include ideas such as cost, time, durability (shelf-life), suitability (for a specific or wide range of audience), and versatility (adaptability to a variety of situations? Point out that some strategies meet all criteria favourably, while others fit well with only certain criteria. Give examples (such as newsletters or meetings) to illustrate this point.



Activity

Ask participants to get back into their groups. They should then select one strategy from each of their two target groups (internal and external) and look at the effectiveness of implementing the strategy, both within and outside institutions, according to the criteria they have developed.



Distribute handout **H7**, which contains a form to be used for their evaluation. Have participants list the criteria they have developed. Show **T9** as an example.



Ask them to address this question:

"How will we know our marketing strategies are effective?"

After a few minutes for reflection, elicit responses from the group.

To end the module, ask participants what their responses are, given today's session, to the following questions:

- What needs to happen next to market PLA internally and externally?
- Who needs to do it?
- By when?

Congratulate participants on their hard work. Point out they should now have the basis for a sound action plan that can be used for marketing PLA within and outside their institution.

! If you have not had time to cover other issues (the Parking Lot), point out that the participants may wish to form a PLA interest group and continue to participate in discussions around these issues and others that develop.

Remember to ask participants to complete the evaluation form.

Strategies for Marketing PLA

Internally

- ✓ Newsletters
- ✓ Divisional meetings
- ✓ Institutional calendar
- ✓ Faculty association meetings
- ✓ Education Council
- ✓ Board meetings
- ✓ Support-staff meetings
- ✓ Flyers
- ✓ Posters
- ✓ Lunch meetings
- ✓ Logos
- ✓ Success stories
- ✓ Information sessions
- ✓ Letters

H1



Considerations for Marketing PLA Materials

- ✓ Is it eye-catching?
- ✓ Is it too long?
- ✓ Is it jargon free?
- ✓ Who is your target audience?
- ✓ What is the approach or “pitch” to take? (bandwagon, first on the block, etc.)
- ✓ How is the timing?



Benefits to Employers

- ✓ Reduces turnover (increases loyalty)
- ✓ Promotes good employees internally
- ✓ Clearly defines skills needed for a particular job
- ✓ Clearly defines skills and knowledge of employees in the company
- ✓ Encourages employees to have an active say in what employees need
- ✓ Rewards employees' past performance
- ✓ Retrains and moves employees into other positions
- ✓ Influences institution's curriculum
- ✓ Links individual development needs of employees to the needs of the business
- ✓ Builds on in-house training
- ✓ Allows assessment in the workplace (less time lost)

H3



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Benefits to Employees

- ✓ Increases mobility and marketability
- ✓ Increases self-esteem
- ✓ Increases company loyalty
- ✓ Provides access to more advanced jobs within the workplace
- ✓ Promotes the institution to employees
- ✓ Increases sense of goals
- ✓ Eases transition back to learning

H4



Benefits to Candidates

- ✓ Gives credit for what candidates know and can do
- ✓ Opens doors to employment
- ✓ Opens doors to advanced training
- ✓ Takes less time
- ✓ Builds confidence
- ✓ Helps clarify goals
- ✓ Helps in self-understanding
- ✓ Encourages people to focus on the outcomes of their achievements
- ✓ Frees candidates from traditional classroom training
- ✓ Encourages candidates to build on their own strengths
- ✓ Fosters positive change



Strategies for Marketing PLA

Externally

- ✓ Public information sessions
- ✓ Ads in newspapers
- ✓ Articles in newspapers
- ✓ Meeting with local businesses
- ✓ Radio (open lines, news, features)
- ✓ TV
- ✓ Web Page
- ✓ Billboards
- ✓ Direct mailouts
- ✓ Public service announcements
- ✓ Guest speaker for
 - Colleges
 - Clubs
 - Associations
 - Unions
- ✓ Brochures/flyers
- ✓ Video
- ✓ Continuing education flyers
- ✓ Posters
- ✓ Speakers' bureau
- ✓ Logos

H6



Evaluating Strategies for Effectiveness

Criteria	Strategy

Purpose

This module enables participants to:

- ✓ Develop effective strategies for generating support for PLA
- ✓ Attract candidates to PLA services

T1



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Marketing PLA

At the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- ✓ Identify and apply a range of strategies for marketing PLA within their own organizations
- ✓ Identify and apply a range of strategies for attracting candidates (individuals and employers)
- ✓ Identify local circumstances, obstacles and target groups
- ✓ Develop a strategy for evaluating the effectiveness of the overall marketing plan



Internal Strategies

- ✓ **Newsletters**
- ✓ **Divisional meetings**
- ✓ **Faculty association meetings**
- ✓ **Education Council**
- ✓ **Institutional calendar**
- ✓ **Board meetings**
- ✓ **Staff meetings**

T3a



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Internal Strategies

- ✓ **Flyers**
- ✓ **Posters**
- ✓ **Lunch meetings**
- ✓ **Logos**
- ✓ **Success stories**
- ✓ **Information sessions**
- ✓ **Letters**

T3b



Considerations for Marketing PLA Materials

- ✓ Is it eye-catching?
- ✓ Is it too long?
- ✓ Is it jargon free?
- ✓ Who is the target audience?
- ✓ What is the approach or “pitch” to take?
- ✓ How is the timing?

T4



33

Benefits to Employers

- ✓ **Reduced turnover**
- ✓ **Internal promotions**
- ✓ **Skills defined for jobs and employees**
- ✓ **Performance recognized**

T5a



35

Benefits to Employers

- ✓ **Links employee & business needs**
- ✓ **Builds on in-house training**
- ✓ **Links institutions to workplace**
- ✓ **Influences curriculum**

T5b



37

Benefits to Employees

- ✓ **Mobility & marketability**
- ✓ **Self-esteem**
- ✓ **Company loyalty**
- ✓ **Access to advancement**

T6a



39

Benefits to Employees

- ✓ **Allows assessment in the workplace**
- ✓ **Provides sense of goals**
- ✓ **Enables transition back to learning**

T6b



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Benefits to Candidates

- ✓ **Gives credit**
- ✓ **Opens employment doors**
- ✓ **Opens doors to advanced training**
- ✓ **Allows less time**
- ✓ **Builds confidence**
- ✓ **Creates positive change**

T7a



Benefits to Candidates

- ✓ **Frees candidates from traditional training**
- ✓ **Builds on strengths**
- ✓ **Clarifies goals**
- ✓ **Enables self-understanding**
- ✓ **Focuses on learner**

T7b



External Strategies

- ✓ **Public information sessions**
- ✓ **Newspaper ads**
- ✓ **Newspapers articles**
- ✓ **Meetings with local businesses**
- ✓ **Radio**
- ✓ **TV**
- ✓ **Billboards**
- ✓ **Logos**

T8a



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External Strategies

- ✓ **Direct mailouts**
- ✓ **Public service announcements**
- ✓ **Guest speakers**
- ✓ **Brochures/flyers**
- ✓ **Web page**
- ✓ **Video**
- ✓ **Continuing education flyers**
- ✓ **Posters**
- ✓ **Speakers' Bureau**

T8b



Evaluating Strategy Effectiveness

CRITERIA	STRATEGY: Video
Cost	Expensive (\$5000 +)
Time	Very time-consuming (months for a professional shoot)
Durability	Durable for a few years or until PLA changes (may become dated)
Suitability	Suitable for a wide range of audience if it is made generic
Versatility	Travels well, can be taken on presentations

T9



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