

CASE STUDY

Making Better Bets

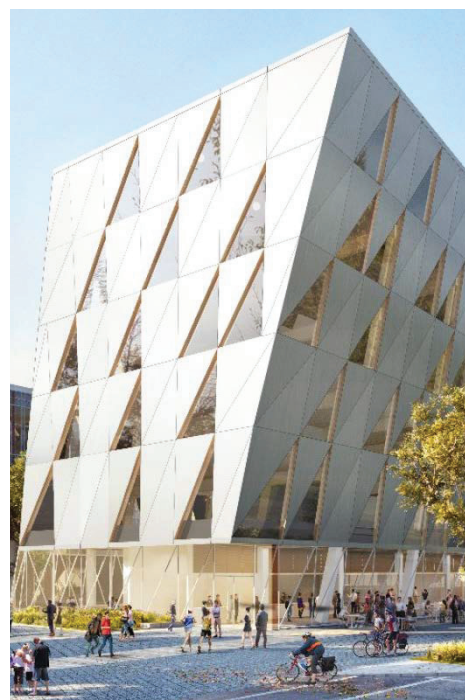
Making Better Bets: Using Labor Market Data to Craft New Programs, Ensure Quality, and Deliver on Promises

A higher education innovator experiences remarkable growth

In the five years between 2015 and 2020, the [School of Continuing Studies at Toronto's York University](#) increased student enrollment by 1000%. In this period, it won national recognition for innovation in its curriculum, began forging new partnerships with peer institutions in other parts of Canada, and generated sufficient revenue to self-fund a dynamic new building. It also offered thousands of students in person and online learning opportunities that equipped them with an advantage in the marketplace. Assistant Vice-President of Continuing Studies Tracey Taylor O'Reilly puts it this way: "We are supplying an urgent, unmet national and international need for accelerated, university-level programs that empower students to pursue their career ambitions." Since 2016, Lightcast has been supporting the School of Continuing Studies in this effort.

The Challenge

Back in 2014, as it planned a new approach, the School of Continuing Studies saw multiple problems it needed to overcome. As is true at many schools, the market data it used to plan was of variable quality. While educators understood that labor market knowledge was an essential element in offering curriculum that would allow students to get jobs and build skills, the school lacked a way to confidently research and prudently invest in new programming. Putting new programs into the market meant the challenge of finding dependable data sources and ability to reliably predict demand. Taylor-O'Reilly recalls: "We were determined to build a research and development system that would identify the largest employment gaps in the country, and develop student-centered accelerated programs that would put our students on the fast track to high-paying in-demand jobs" A key question then became, how to build a reliable market research process to achieve this vision?



THE CHALLENGE

Developing a reliable, robust market research process to launch student centred accelerated programs.



THE SOLUTION

Integrating labor market data into development work, allowing staff to respond to demand, engage prospective students, and monitor results



THE RESULTS

Increased enrollment by 1000%. National recognition for quality programs. New university partnerships. Sufficient revenue to self-fund a new building.

The Solutions

York's School of Continuing Studies began utilizing tools from Lightcast that allow them to more fully understand the labor market in real time, and better prepare students to thrive in it. The school integrated the use of labor market data into all three areas of its development work: crafting new and updated programs that respond to demand, engaging prospective students, and administering for quality and results. This has led to an integrated system that allows staff to map labor market data changes, invent programs, and test them immediately in the field. Staff monitor the efficacy of programs frequently: are students getting jobs, building skills, making desired career moves?

The results are impressive, by any measure. The school can now move a new idea from research, to curriculum design, to market in with a high degree of confidence. "We have become leaders in Canada in offering first-to-market, innovative new programs that address emerging professions," says Taylor O'Reilly. Staff now use their hands on familiarity with the subtleties of the labor market in virtually all areas of their work: program design, implementation, evaluation, improvement, and management. Their collaboration across these functions is strengthened by their shared use of Lightcast data, which increases the frequency and reliability of feedback on how courses are progressing, and allows for rapid, real time updates to existing courses, in response to new developments in the market.

"The promise of the School of Continuing Studies is to enable students to achieve their full potential. To realize that goal, you need a way to make smarter choices about labour market gaps and programs. With the help of Lightcast, we have gotten to the point where we can take risks, make reasonable bets, and see them translate into great programs in the marketplace," reports Amit Dixit, Senior Market Research Analyst at the School of Continuing Studies. He observes that these successes have expanded the confidence and imaginative reach of staff, who have increasingly created new innovations and partnerships.

In 2018 the school was recognized for its outstanding program in Cyber Security; in 2021 it launched Canada's first courses in DevOps and People Analytics. In 2021, the school also partnered with Mount Royal University in Calgary to offer its Cyber Security and UX Design programs. Such partnerships enable the School of Continuing Studies to grow its national reputation and footprint, while affording its partners an accelerated path to the marketplace. The partner universities see working with York's School of Continuing Studies as an efficient way to increase revenue and support labour market gaps in their regions while maintaining academic quality.

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Amit Dixit

Senior Research Analyst

SCHOOL OF CONTINUING STUDIES

Key Takeaways

The York University School of Continuing Studies has made the frequent, standardized, and nimble use of labor market data a core strategy for achieving its mission to help students to get jobs, build skills, and advance their careers.

Rather than confine its use to the development of programs, the School of Continuing Studies has applied labor market data analysis to its design, marketing, quality, and management work. This has allowed staff to achieve a high level of alignment across function, which has in turn supported their collective exercise of initiative and creativity.

It is possible to accelerate progress from program development to the market while maintaining confidence in the soundness of a team's planning. However, to make better bets, faster, institutions have to make a commitment to understanding and using the labor market data that can provide insight,

guide strategy, and document impact.

Great work attracts the attention and regard of peer institutions, brings prospective partners forward, and fosters ongoing innovation.

If you have questions about our [labor market data](#) or Lightcast's other solutions for higher education, please contact us at lightcast.io/contact. We'd love to learn more about the work you're doing and explore how our data can help!



The York University School of Continuing Studies has made the use of labor market data a core strategy for achieving its mission to help students to get jobs, build skills, and advance their careers.



By applying labor market data analysis to design, marketing, quality, and management work, it's possible to accelerate the program development process while maintaining confidence in the plans.



Over five years, student enrollment increased by 1000%, the school won national recognition for innovation in its curriculum, and generated sufficient revenue to self-fund a new building.

About

Lightcast, formerly Emsi Burning Glass, delivers job market analytics that empower employers, workers, and educators to make data-driven decisions. The company's artificial intelligence technology analyzes hundreds of millions of job postings and real-life career transitions to provide insight into labor market patterns. This real-time strategic intelligence offers crucial insights, such as what jobs are most in demand, the specific skills employers need, and the career directions that offer the highest potential for workers. Visit lightcast.io for more information.

