



Product Education: The Unsung Hero Driving Higher Manufacturing Sales

Other industries are using learning management systems to unlock new revenue. It's time for manufacturing to do the same.



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Product education and LMS software

Optimization and efficiency are the beating drums of manufacturing, reshaping procurement and supply chain processes, elevating production, and streamlining sales. The industry looks vastly different than it did just a decade ago, but there's still a key area mired in inefficiency: product education and partner enablement.

Product education is key to teaching your distributors and resellers the unique value and benefits of your products, technicians how to properly install or maintain your equipment, and other partners how to better advocate and serve their customers with your brand. Without the training needed to empower them, these partners simply can't do their jobs effectively. Over time, this won't just mean a decline in sales—your products could become virtually obsolete for your current customers and end users.

But how do you optimize product education at scale?

Learning management systems (LMS) are growing in popularity to solve this exact problem; in fact, the LMS market is expected to [reach more than \\$69 billion by 2030](#). By recognizing product education as the revenue center it truly is, your company could unlock a new level of sales, brand awareness, and growth.



What is product education for you?

Product education is any kind of strategy or practice you use to train and inform your distributors, resellers, technicians, and other key stakeholders about your products, including:

- What your products are
- What they do
- How to work with them (including proper usage, safety considerations, installation, assembly, etc.)

The exact type of product education your partners need from you depends on the products you offer.



What 'products'?	What partner 'audiences'?
<p>Physical devices Ex: Robotics, pressure sensors, industrial valves, CNC machines</p>	<p>Resellers and distributors need product education for sales enablement and higher close rates.</p>
<p>Manufactured systems Ex: HVAC systems, conveyor systems, power distribution systems, automated storage and retrieval systems (AS/RS)</p>	<p>Technicians need product education for better installation, implementation, and maintenance.</p>
<p>Solutions Ex: Factory automation platforms, additive manufacturing/3D printing systems, supply chain visibility systems, digital twin technology</p>	<p>Suppliers need product education to better understand the exact types of raw materials, components, parts, and other goods that are needed for your manufacturing processes.</p>
<p>Process Ex: Proprietary production workflows, custom finishing techniques, unique machine utilization strategies</p>	<p>Logistics providers need product education to better understand the challenges, needs, and nuances of transporting your products.</p>
<p>Services Ex: Robotic rentals, predictive maintenance services, logistics and supply chain management services</p>	<p>Consultants need product education to better understand the production process, decision drivers, and value your products provide end users in order to better provide their services.</p>



A well-developed and executed approach to education is crucial for ensuring your critical audience fully understands your products' features, benefits, and potential applications, as well as how to troubleshoot installation issues or repair equipment.

The **slug** of outdated training and its cost

You're likely familiar with some common methods for handling product education, even if you don't have a full-fledged approach yet:

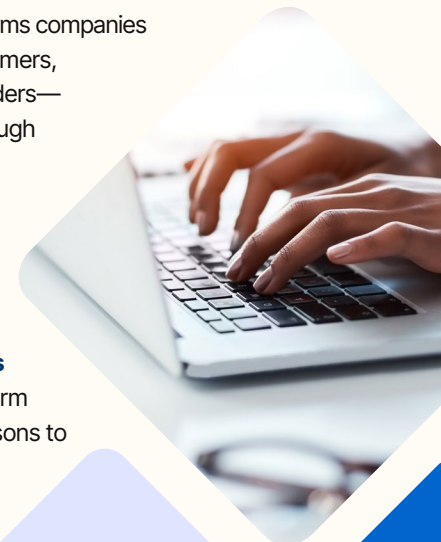
- Pricy in-person trainings, including one-on-ones or larger workshops and seminars
- PDFs lost on desktops
- Scattershot blogs or digital content
- Online courses and webinars lacking engagement and completion
- Detailed (and often dull) product manuals

Consider your current approach to product education: If it's at all scattered, disorganized, or inconsistent, you can imagine how streamlining these processes could make your life easier. But consolidating your product education to one learning management system can actually offer so much more than that. **So, what is an LMS?**

Learning management systems are software platforms companies can use to create a learning process for their customers, business partners, employees, and other stakeholders—particularly about their products and services. Though it was originally developed for HR and internal education purposes, LMS software has evolved to facilitate external education as well.

Now, **LMS software allows trainers to create and deliver educational and training content, monitor participation, and even assess learner performance within trainings.** The platform can be used to build everything from individual lessons to full-scale online academies, and even connect learning patterns to business outcomes like repeat purchases.

Elevating your product education process with an LMS is key to driving revenue growth in today's market.



Mapping Your Product Education System

How effective is your product education program at providing the quality of information and ease of learning your partners need to succeed? That depends both on the materials you use and the way you present them.

To really measure the impact of your product education approach, you need to understand exactly what your partners are getting. Let's take stock of your current strategy and tally the results:

Materials

Check off all the actual educational materials, whether print or digital, that you currently furnish for your partners:

Product instruction manuals	2 points
Educational one-sheets	5 points
Quizzes/assessments	5 points
Instructional/demonstration slideshows or PDFs	5 points
Instructional/demonstration videos	10 points
Recorded webinars	10 points

Total Points: _____

Organization and presentation

Check off each of the systems you use to organize and present your product education:

Hands-on workshops	25 points
On-site demonstrations	25 points
Product blogs/online knowledge base	30 points
Certification program/learning academy	50 points
Learning management system	100 points

Total Points: _____

Scoring

How well do your current materials and presentation style work for your partners? Here's a look at what your score might mean:

Materials:

- **2-5 points:** You may have the basics of educational materials covered, but partners and stakeholders may find them cumbersome to use and/or struggle to find the specific information they need.
- **6-19 points:** You offer more than basic education, but stakeholders may still need more material to directly address their needs.
- **20+ points:** You have a breadth of useful educational materials that provide in-depth demonstrations for your partners — but their impact relies on the right presentation and organization.

Organization and presentation

- **2-50 points:** You prioritize effective and in-depth hands-on learning, but may lack the resources partners need to reinforce what they learn from your programs.
- **51-149 points:** You have a comprehensive mix of hands-on learning and digital resources, but may lack the systems needed to really scale product education with the full growth potential of your company. This could require a major overhaul as operations scale.
- **150+ points:** You have an advanced product education system in place but may need additional features and tools that can really scale your program into increased sales, better brand recognition, and other tangible metrics. **That's where Skilljar comes in.**

Product education: The overlooked building block to manufacturing success?

Precision engineering and design, efficient production processes, skilled and dedicated workers, and high-quality products are all hallmarks of a successful manufacturing company. What happens when you channel this same attention to detail and take an equally systematic approach to product education?

You can expect:



Improved technician skill

Upgrading the product education programs that directly train technicians on how to install, troubleshoot, and repair your products will have an outsized impact on their ability to keep your products working and your customers satisfied. Enhanced training can speed up routine maintenance and increase their capacity to handle service calls, as well as ensure more effective repairs. Over time, technicians could even gain the knowledge base and confidence to handle more complex installations, potentially allowing you to target more use cases for your products.



Enhanced safety

When technicians, distributors, customers and other stakeholders understand your products and how they work, they'll be able to use them much more efficiently. What's more, they'll gain insight into safety considerations and best practices for product operation or handling. This is key to reducing the chance of injury or product misuse, keeping end users and the people around them safe while protecting your brand reputation and minimizing undue scrutiny.

Empowered distributors

Want to turn your distributors into true brand ambassadors? Take product education to the next level by not only demonstrating your products' key features and how to use them, but also using value-based training to reinforce what makes your products stand out amongst competitors. When distributors can speak to a product and its capabilities with authority, they'll promote it by default.

Expanded sales capabilities

Developing better brand ambassadorship is an internal project as well. Product education can level up your internal field teams, helping them better promote products to distributors and resellers—and reinforce more in-depth training. Like traditional marketing, product education needs to be a multi-pronged approach, and these programs increase the number of channels your partners get information from.

Increased brand awareness

This all leads to another benefit that can be difficult to measure: greater awareness of your brand. With better, more scalable training, distributors can offer clear, memorable sound bites that resonate, making a bigger impression on their customers. Over time this can translate to more direct sales or even result in organic word-of-mouth traction if existing customers pass along the same sound bites to other colleagues in the industry.



Effective product education takes **strategy**

By virtue of being a manufacturer with complex and specialized products, your company already has some form of product education system in place—even if that system is disorganized.

Perhaps it's in the form of scattered files, links, PDFs and other materials shared inefficiently via email. Or maybe, at some point, one of your employees realized the need to take a more organized approach to product education and took it upon themselves to build their own homegrown manufacturing LMS, using a Wiki format or blog that's difficult to maintain and suffers from poor navigation. Most likely, the largest part of your product education revolves around in-person trainings—in the form of customer site visits, one-on-one sessions, or larger scale seminars and workshops.

This approach may be getting the job done for now, but it falls far short of the impact that effective product education can really provide. Your current systems (and lack thereof) could be:

Incredibly expensive when you factor in travel costs and lodgings for large, in-person workshops, the cost of space rentals, and the price of high-quality, professional training presentations.

Cumbersome for stakeholders, requiring long-distance travel for seminars, time-consuming meetings during already-busy days, or clunky learning experiences on platforms not optimized for training.

Hurting product or brand perception when training materials lack the same polish and presentation your company is known for.

Difficult to measure in terms of engagement or course completions, further eroding the desire to invest in better product education resources.



The Real Cost of the In-Person Training Model

In-person trainings can be effective and memorable—but also incredibly expensive.

How much is the in-person model really costing you? Let's take a hard look at the numbers:

In-Person Training

Travel

Average cost per participant (including flights, train/metro transit, car rental, fuel reimbursement, etc.): \$ _____

Number of participants per year: _____

Total travel cost: \$ _____

Lodging

Average cost per night per participant: \$ _____

Number of nights: _____

Number of participants: _____

Total lodging cost: \$ _____

Food and Beverage

Average daily cost per participant (including catered meals, per diem, restaurant expenses, etc.): \$ _____

Number of participants per year: _____

Total food cost: \$ _____

Expert Fees

Average hourly rate: \$ _____

Number of hours per training session: _____

Number of experts per year: _____

Total labor cost: \$ _____

Miscellaneous Costs

(equipment rental, venue, materials, etc.)

Total misc. costs: \$ _____

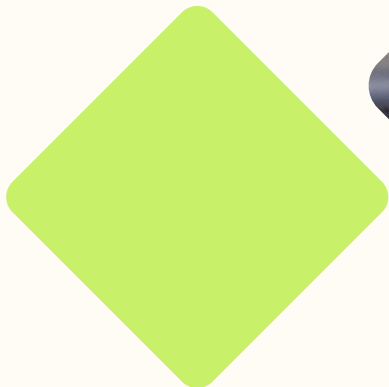
Total: \$ _____

What's more, the cost of in-person events themselves don't account for the additional (arguably, more important) expenses associated with creating training materials and programming necessary for attendees to retain their knowledge.

All of these drawbacks combined significantly diminish the impact product education can have on your revenue, leaving it neglected with the unfair label of nuisance cost center rather than worthy revenue driver.

On the other hand, companies that succeed at product education, particularly in the SaaS industry, have adopted a high-tech, virtual-first approach. Our research has found industries new to implementing a more formal approach to product education are about 10 years behind in terms of adopting these tools that have become the industry standards in software—still relying on live training as their primary education method.

It's time to catch up.



The Product Education Your Partners Need

Product education isn't just complex in its own right—each type of partner needs something unique out of the material, program, or training you offer. Understanding how to meet these different needs is key to creating education programs that work.

Identify your key partners and their product education needs below:

Distributors

Partner Name: _____

Focus/Services: _____

Education Needs: (e.g., unique product value propositions)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Technicians

Partner Name: _____

Focus/Services: _____

Education Needs: (e.g., installation and maintenance requirements)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Logistics

Partner Name: _____

Focus/Services: _____

Education Needs: (e.g., product handling instructions)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Resellers

Partner Name: _____

Focus/Services: _____

Education Needs: (e.g., long-term product value)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Suppliers

Partner Name: _____

Focus/Services: _____

Education Needs: (e.g., material/part quality, use cases, etc.)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Consultants

Partner Name: _____

Focus/Services: _____

Education Needs: (e.g., market landscape)

- _____
- _____
- _____

If you've ever taken an online course or workshop, think back to your experience. How were the materials circulated? Were the lessons interactive? Was the presentation organized and professional?

More than likely, you weren't just reading an instruction manual or a how-to blog—you were immersed in a polished product that provided valuable information, with a framework and user experience (UX) designed to optimize your retention of that knowledge. The most successful product education programs take a similar approach. And you can design your own learning experience the same way you design and manufacture your products.

Build a centralized learning platform

Effective content management is often the biggest challenge when creating an impactful product education program. The solution is to ensure that all learning occurs on an [organized platform designed with education and training](#) in mind. This gives learners an easy way to access all of the information about your products they need, and you a place to store and manage the content that keeps your partners on track.

Creating a hub for all of your training materials with an LMS can also help eliminate the version control issues that plague less centralized approaches, ensuring stakeholders always have access to the most up-to-date information.

Optimize for scalability from the start

Once you have a learning platform in place, you'll have a solid base from which to grow content and educational offerings. Without this foundation, your educational materials will remain scattered across different website links and emails, with learning outcomes hinging on expensive in-person trainings that require logistics, planning, and commitment from partners.

An LMS optimized for product education allows you to plant the seeds of core product trainings and [branch them out](#) into modules as education needs become more intricate and your product catalog grows. These platforms also enable you to educate users with a variety of content and media types, including simple text articles, images and infographics, videos, and virtual, instructor-led trainings (VILT). What's more, this foundation gives you the ability to easily scale your content library and audience size to any heights you want.

Elevate the user experience

Beyond improving presentation, a modern learning management system enables you to create more engaging and immersive content for learners. This lets you organize dense trainings into more bite-sized modules that users can click through at their own pace. It's also easy to add fully interactive elements, such as end-of-lesson quizzes.

Digitize training without sacrificing relationships

Together, these capabilities significantly reduce or eliminate the need for in-person trainings, creating a cohesive platform for learners to move through at their own pace. Partners can find the exact information they need on demand through digital lessons, video libraries, and more in a digital environment that's as polished and presentable as the rest of your brand. And since platforms enable VILTs, it's still possible to remain directly connected to partners without the cost and complexity of in-person events.



Meet Skilljar:

Your blueprint for effective product education

Not every learning management system offers these product education capabilities baked into the core platform. [Skilljar](#) is different, designed from the start with all of the modern features needed to create an effective learning experience for stakeholders. Already, we've transformed product education for leading tech companies like Verizon, DocuSign, and Shopify. You and your partners deserve the same tools.



Leveraging Skilljar for your product education grants you:

- Near limitless scalability, no matter how big your company grows or how much educational material you need to provide your partners. You can even monetize—or charge for access to your learning academy—driving revenue to fund your program.
- Robust video, [VILT](#), and image hosting capabilities.
- A modern digital learning environment that prioritizes UX, unlike clunky and outdated legacy LMS solutions not built for external partner training.
- Intuitive module-building tools that let you transform complex trainings into bite-sized lessons, keeping users more interested and motivated, with better understanding of the material—and higher lesson completion rates to prove it.
- Fast and easy implementation, with streamlined tools to quickly turn your educational materials into effective lessons.
- Dramatically reduced training costs, cutting down and in some cases eliminating the need for in-person events and on-site or in-the-field trainings. What's more, you can reinvest these cost savings into other critical parts of your product education program—or wherever else you need additional resources.
- More consistent and effective training, reducing costly mistakes or safety incidents, and improving overall organizational alignment.
- Higher training scalability, without sacrificing the mind-share and face-time with partners enabled by in-person training.
- Global training, with the ability to deploy product education in multiple languages across the world.

Most importantly, choosing Skilljar as your LMS positions you to be a better resource to partners—helping you equip them with everything they need to sell more effectively and provide better customer service. With this system in place, you stand to not only improve outcomes for your partners, but also [turn your product education into a revenue driver](#) that tangibly improves your company's bottom line. Welcome to the future of manufacturing training.

Chat with our team

