How to Reduce Dropout Rates for Your Certification Candidates

BenchPrep

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Passing a certification exam is a key milestone for many professionals. It can increase their salaries and help take their career to the next level. However, many professionals that sign up for their certification exams fail to follow through and actually take them.

Are dropout rates higher than you'd like for your certification candidates? With some effective strategies, you can reduce that number. This guide breaks down everything you need to know about how to decrease the number of candidates not finishing their certifications.

Why Do Candidates Drop Out?

Before you can cut down on certification dropout rates, you first need to know why candidates are dropping out. With a comprehensive understanding of the impediments that stand in a candidates' way, you're better equipped to remove those hurdles. Some common reasons candidates drop out before completing their certification exams include:

- Feeling like they will fail or a fear of failure
- Poor preparation typically caused by:
    - Inadequate amount of prep time
    - Inefficient or ineffective learning programs
    - Inconvenient learning programs
    - Dated, unengaging learning programs
- Feeling overwhelmed by the certification process
- Decreased or lack of interest in completing the exam

With so many reasons to drop out, it might feel like the cards are stacked against your candidates. How can you support them better to follow through more frequently with taking your certification exam? Explore some of the most effective strategies for reducing dropout rates and promoting candidate success.

The Best Strategies for Reducing Certification Candidate Dropout Rates

Encourage Candidates to Learn at Their Own Pace

Each candidate is different, with their own learning styles and grasp of concepts. Because one size doesn't fit all when it comes to learning, one way to reduce dropout rates is by enabling candidates to learn at their own pace. In fact, studies from the National Centre for Education Statistics show 58% of employees prefer to learn at their own pace, showing how this certification approach is exactly what your candidates want.
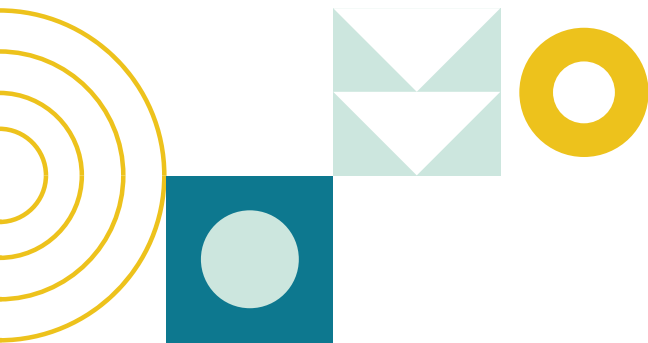
Incorporate Technology into Learning

Provide Personalized Learning Experiences

In the same vein as the benefits of a learn-at-your-own-pace experience, a personalized learning experience is a way to prepare learners for certifications that directly meet their learning needs. It's been found that personalized learning pathways improve learner engagement by nearly 100%. Programs that are designed to factor individual knowledge and testing performance into a certification candidate's learning path are sure to get the best results, as learners become more engaged when material is better tailored to their individual needs.

Improve Time Management Skills

Investing about ten minutes each day in task planning can eliminate two hours of wasted time. Imagine how much improving time management could impact candidates' exam preparation! Study plans that outline learner progress and what still needs to be accomplished help to channel learners' focus while reducing cramming and anxiety.
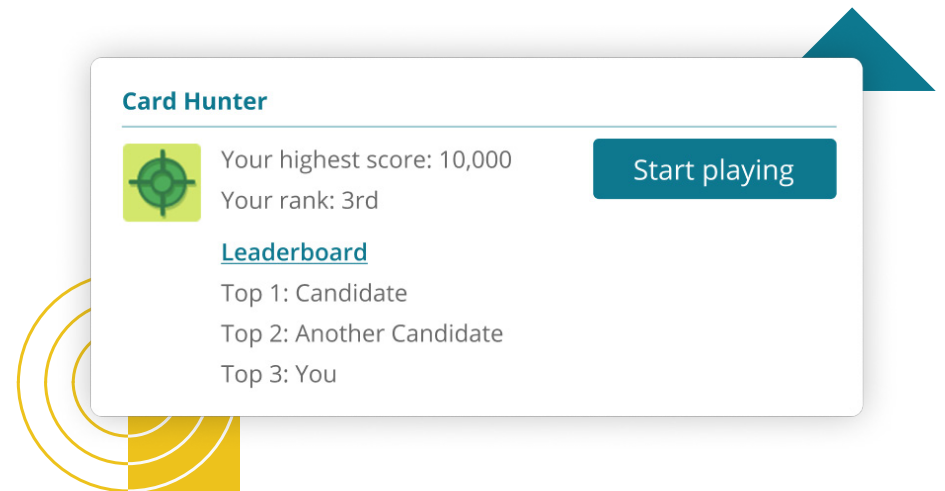
Cramming for a certification exam can make your prep feel like a frantic dash to the finish line. Procrastination makes it hard to avoid stress. Instead, learners need a study plan that is laid out with enough time to cover all the pertinent topics, while also effectively engaging them so they don't fall victim to procrastination. Starting earlier makes it easy to prepare for an exam and comprehend all the essential material. With digital, engaging exam prep techniques, learners can cover more material faster. The right learning program manages time for learners and helps them accomplish more in the long run.

Use Gamification to Make Learning Fun

Are traditional learning programs boring your candidates and causing them to lose interest in their certification preparation? Gamification gives users a fun way to stay engaged in the learning process through features like badges and incentive programs. It also taps into users' natural competitive instincts and leverages that "desire to win" for greater engagement. Gamification is what certification candidates want, too. About 80% of learners say they would be more productive if their work was gamified.

Learning sessions of users who engage with gamified learning models are typically longer and performance improves at a faster rate. Gamifying your certification preparation is sure to better engage and better motivate users, resulting in reduced dropout rates.

Card Hunter

Your highest score: 10,000
Your rank: 3rd

Start playing

Leaderboard
Top 1: Candidate
Top 2: Another Candidate
Top 3: You

Adopt a Blended Learning Approach

Do you want to provide your candidates the benefits of digital learning, but you're hesitant to eliminate the in-person portion of certification prep? A blended learning approach is the best of both worlds.

What does blended learning look like? Its benefits go beyond just meeting in a classroom and then completing lessons online. Blended learning can include webinars, pre-recorded lessons, online classroom discussion boards, and more. These materials engage learners and provide supplemental education to fill in any knowledge gaps prior to candidates taking their certification exams. They can also refresh your candidates' memories of learning material, ensuring higher success rates. With social aspects of blended learning, like online discussion boards, learners can still engage with their peers outside of the classroom and not lose peer-to-peer learning benefits.

Blended learning reduces dropout rates in a few different ways. First, it offers the best learning environment for any student, regardless of whether they prefer to learn in-person or using digital devices. In Cengage's Digital Learning Pulse Survey, 68% of students are in favor of some combination of in-person and online courses. Additionally, "the use of blended learning is considered to be more engaging for students than traditional forms of instruction".

Next, blended learning aids in knowledge retention, as candidates can engage with the learning style that helps them learn best, whether that's audio, print, or visual learning. They can also revisit learning materialat any time, which allows for more study time. This breeds more confidence in performing well and results in candidates being more likely to take the exam.

Another benefit is the speed with which courses can be completed. Instead of being confined to only learning in a classroom on certain predetermined hours during the week, candidates can study whenever they want – again, at their own speed.

Completing practice exams can decrease exam anxiety

Reduced anxiety increases sleep

Eight hours of sleep increases performance levels

Reduce Exam-Related Stress

Too often, candidates fail to take their exams due of overwhelming stress and pressure. According to one study, 85% of students said their mental health had negatively impacted their academic performance. If you want to reduce the number of dropout rates, eliminating exam-related stress is a good place to focus your attention.

While some people will always have a little bit of nervousness before taking an exam, feeling unprepared is often the biggest driver of anxiety, which can lead to unmanageable stress. To ensure your candidates don't fall victim to this issue, you need to have learning technology in place that offers the features and capabilities your candidates need to feel confident and prepared going into exam day, complete with practice tests, different question types, mock exams, and more. The more familiar with the testing process certification candidates are, the more comfortable they'll feel when taking the exam. Provide your candidates with the ability to complete as many practice tests as they need to in order to reduce the stress around the actual exam.

Provide Remediation to Put Learners Back on the Right Track

If learners feel like they're failing or not making progress, many will simply give up and drop out before the exam. Traditional, non-personalized exam prep models have no way of putting those discouraged learners back on the right course.

Instead of a certification preparation that just shows that the learner got an answer wrong, your candidates need remediation tools that help them not only understand why the question was wrong, but helps them channel their focus moving forward with prep to address their weaknesses in the future.

Comprehensive and successful remediation pinpoints strengths and weaknesses. When a learner gets an answer right, they also need to understand why the answer is accurate. Remediation tools do this by linking back to lesson plans, offering explanations, providing additional questions similar to the ones missed, or connecting learners with instructors who can offer further insight.
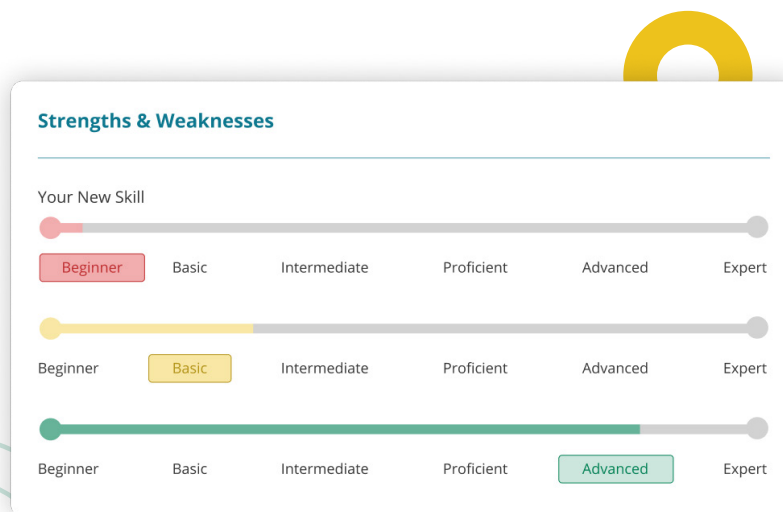
Another valuable aspect of remediation is self-assessment. While some learners might think they have an adequate understanding of a topic, that's not always the case. Providing self-assessment tests helps them see how their actual strengths and weaknesses compared to what their perception is. With these assessments, they can be placed on a more personalized and effective preparation course, which better meets learners' needs and helps them focus on their weaknesses.

Prioritize the Right Topics

Trying to organize certification preparation on their own can be a huge challenge for many learners. When certification exams cover a lot of material and complex topics, learners often don't know where to begin, which causes them to feel overwhelmed and is why many simply drop out. If you want to reduce the number of certification dropouts, prioritization is key.

Many learners struggle to identify and properly weigh where they should spend the most time preparing for an exam. It's tempting to focus on areas where you excel, while procrastinating in areas that present more challenges. In an LMS that prioritizes the prep experience, learners' strengths and weaknesses are highlighted, helping them to prioritize and put more effort into areas where they struggle.

Strengths & Weaknesses

Your New Skill

| Beginner | Basic | Intermediate | Proficient | Advanced | Expert |

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| Beginner | Basic | Intermediate | Proficient | Advanced | Expert |

As an organization that offers certifications and credentials, **your ultimate goal is to see your learners to succeed**. In order for that to happen, learners need a prep experience that leaves them feeling confident and ready for their high-stakes exam.

When choosing a learning technology to help you reach this goal, we encourage you to keep in mind that not all LMSs are created equal. While one LMS may focus on and provide capabilities for an optimal customer training experience, another may prioritize the test prep experience and offer features and capabilities more aligned with that use case.

As you vet learning platform vendors, keep your use case and key capabilities in mind to ensure you are choosing a technology that will set both your learners and your business up for success.
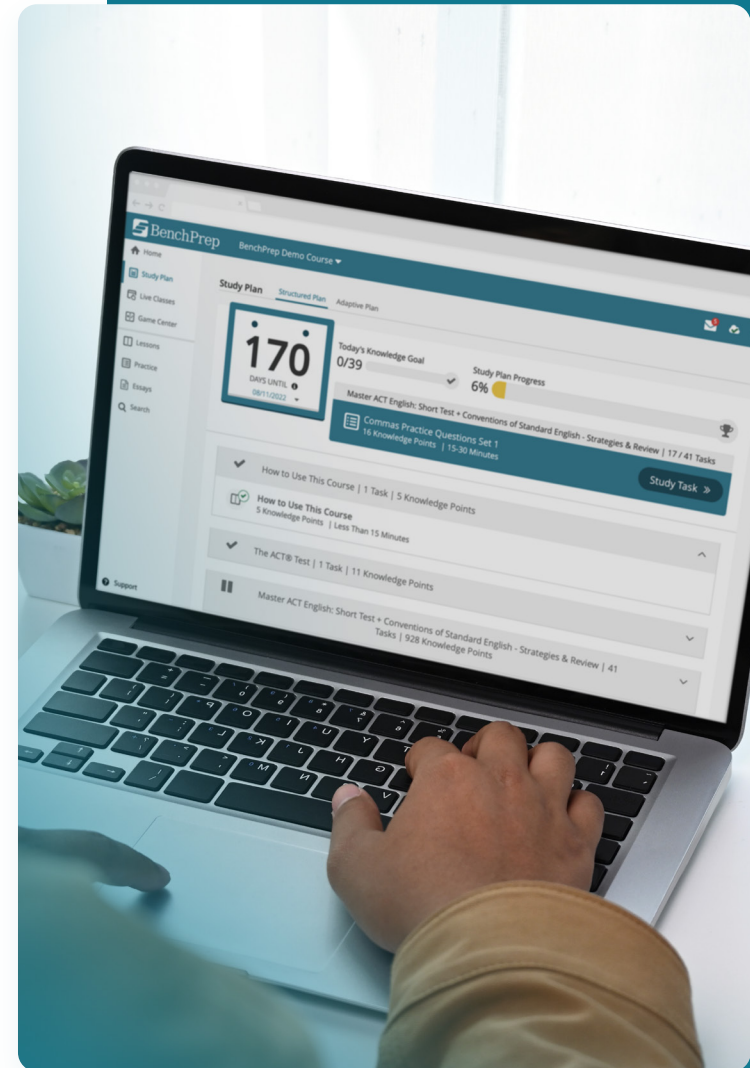
About BenchPrep

BenchPrep is an award-winning learning platform purpose-built to help candidates feel more confident and prepared for their credentialing and certification tests by delivering an intuitive, efficient, and engaging study experience.

BenchPrep helps associations drive revenue by making it easy for learners to search, discover, purchase, and enroll in online study courses rich with interactive learning experiences. BenchPrep's data capabilities also help associations unlock valuable insights so they can make better, more data-driven decisions on factors that affect course content, candidate sentiment, and learner behavior.

Many of the world's leading associations and credentialing bodies trust BenchPrep to power their online study programs, including ACT, AAMC, ASCM, CFA Institute, CompTIA, GMAC, ISACA, and many others.

More than 8 million learners have used BenchPrep to attain academic and professional success.

> "
> BenchPrep's platform has streamlined our processes into one solution, allowing us to focus on our core competencies in developing outstanding learning content for investment industry professionals."
>
> **Christopher Wiese**
> Curriculum & Learning Experience Head; CFA Institute
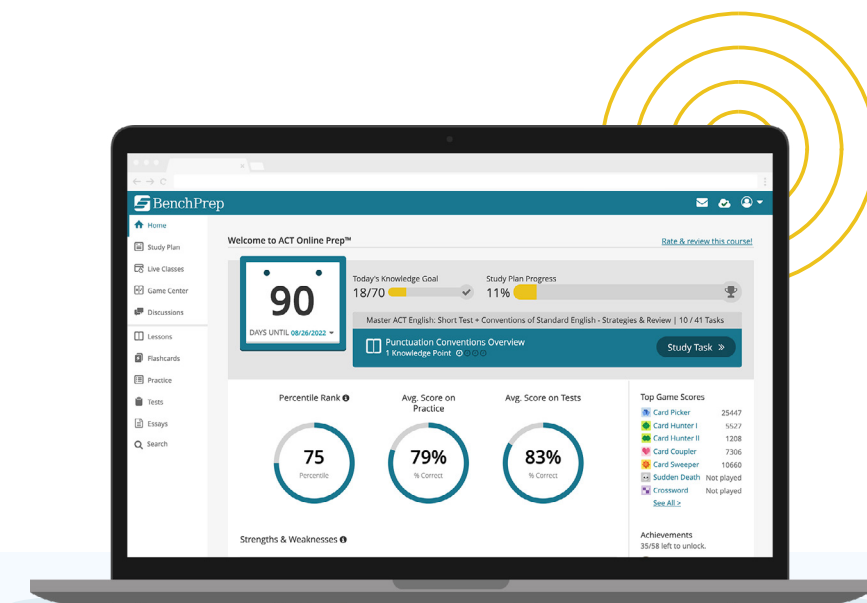
Visit us at **benchprep.com** to learn how BenchPrep's award-winning platform can help your association's learning program.

Additional Resources

We hope you find this eBook useful and encourage you to explore more great BenchPrep thinking and content on our **blog** or in the many case studies, guides, infographics, webinars, and videos you can find on our **Digital Learning Resources** hub.

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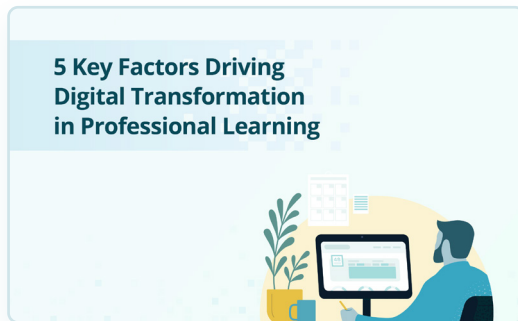
[5 Key Factors Driving Digital Transformation in Professional Learning](#)

**The CLO's Handbook for Choosing Learning Technology to Grow Your Business**

[The CLO's Handbook for Choosing Learning Technology to Grow Your Business](#)

Top Professional Learning Trends Driving Digital Transformation

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Dreaming of Recurring Revenue? Engage Learners Continuously
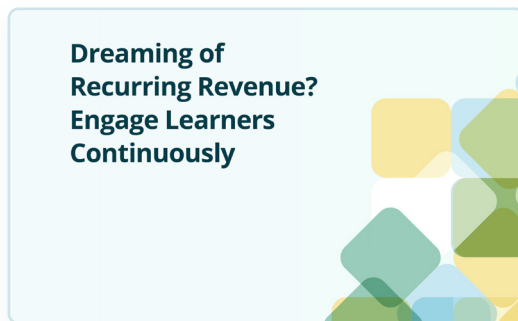
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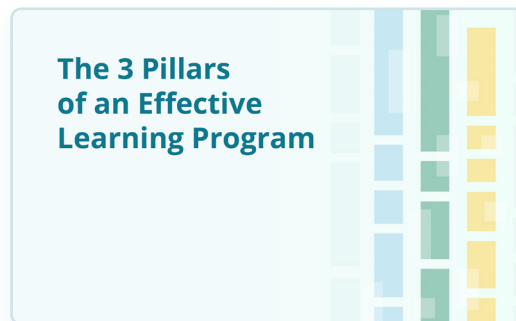
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Roadmap: Convert Your Classroom Resources into Powerful eLearning
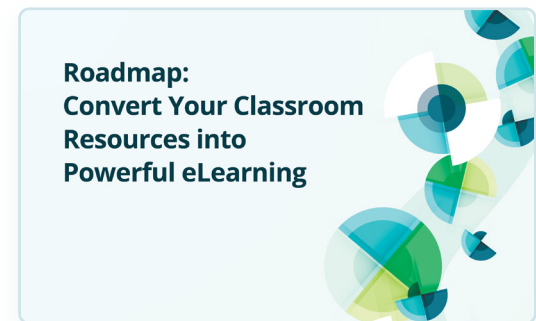
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