



## **Strategic Market Entry and Growth in Higher Education Courseware**



**PARTNER**  
IN PUBLISHING



# Empowering Education: Strategic Entry and Expansion in the Higher Ed Courseware Market

## Project Overview

Partner in Publishing (PIP) was tasked with providing strategic guidance and consulting services to transform the higher education courseware market. The focus was on addressing equity issues in introductory STEM courses, which often act as barriers that exacerbate educational disparities. The goal was to ensure that factors such as race, ethnicity, and income do not determine student success in postsecondary education.

“I will say I felt the most connected when it came to the explorations. They were created with a lot of intention and I appreciate the real-life application of those activities. I think the first exploration I did was the one involving climate change and it really opened my eyes to how times have changed and with that global warming. Being able to see how it has affected [where I live] and the lives of everyone here was such a great educational experience that I didn't think I would be getting from the [STEM] courseware.”

*STEM Student User*



## Challenge

Introductory STEM courses in higher education are marked by disproportionately high DFW (drop, fail, withdraw) rates, particularly among underrepresented student groups. This creates significant obstacles to student success and persistence in STEM fields. Additionally, the market faces common challenges, including:

- High course material acquisition costs
- Decision-making processes that may limit instructors' ability to choose or change course materials
- Engagement strategies that fail to adequately excite or involve students
- Difficulties in assessing both student proficiency and areas needing improvement



# The Process

To lay the groundwork for success, PIP conducted extensive research to gather data on institutional decision-makers, competitor offerings, pricing, and adoption cycles. The objective was to identify new targets based on student demographics and enrollment patterns. Key activities included:

Conducting market research surveys and interviews with instructors at Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) to pinpoint common challenges and position a new STEM courseware as a relevant and inclusive solution.

Emphasizing the importance of incorporating relevance, lived experiences, and representation into course content and teaching strategies.



"I think that [STEM] has the capacity to provide representation for me because I know in the courseware there are so many cases where they try to show diversity in the scientific community, especially through the videos in the modules."

*STEM Student User*

## Solution

Driving the adoption and growth of an accessible, high-quality STEM courseware required a strategic approach tailored to the unique challenges faced by underrepresented student groups. Recognizing these challenges, PIP positioned the courseware as an inclusive tool designed to empower all learners to reach their full potential in STEM fields.

Leveraging its extensive industry expertise, PIP conducted thorough market research to identify key decision-makers and evaluate competitor offerings. This research informed a targeted outreach strategy that highlighted the courseware's affordability, quality, and relevance to contemporary educational needs. PIP's direct engagement with instructors and administrators helped address critical issues such as high DFW rates and low student engagement.



"The biggest questions I get from my students are, 'Why do I have to learn this?' and 'When will I use this?' when introducing new concepts in lecture. I can see how the explorations tie into their world; it actually connects to them."

**STEM Faculty User**

Additionally, PIP crafted messaging to align with both faculty and institutional goals, underscoring the courseware's alignment with broader equity and inclusion initiatives. This comprehensive approach not only accelerated adoption but also positioned the courseware for sustained, long-term success in the evolving STEM education landscape.

## Results

In less than 60 days, PIP's strategic efforts achieved significant success in the adoption and expansion of the STEM courseware:



### **Pilot Success**

PIP successfully transitioned pilot users to paid users, leading to a notable increase in courseware adoption across multiple institutions.



### **User Growth:**

Through effective scaling strategies, the courseware's reach expanded to 6,000 active users for the Fall 2024 semester, demonstrating strong market penetration within a short timeframe.



### **Institutional Engagement and Adoption:**

PIP conducted 29 interviews across 27 institutions, resulting in 6 new institutional adoptions and the addition of 512 new users. This underscores the courseware's relevance and appeal across diverse educational settings.



### **Foundation for Future Expansion:**

These efforts established a robust groundwork for continued growth, particularly among Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The success achieved positions the courseware for sustained influence and broader impact within the higher education STEM market.



These comprehensive results highlight the immediate and effective impact of PIP's strategic initiatives, paving the way for ongoing expansion and enhanced educational outcomes in STEM disciplines.



“There is more engaging content. I feel like, from my perspective [I’m realizing], ‘Oh, I’ve never bought that idea in,’ or, ‘I haven’t made that real-world connection.’ So, I’m glad that I found this resource or that resource that they have built into [the STEM Courseware].”

*STEM Courseware Faculty User*

## Conclusion

With deep industry expertise, an extensive network, and a proven ability to support both strategy and execution, PIP proved to be an invaluable partner. Seamlessly integrating with the client's team, PIP's proactive approach to problem-solving empowered the initiative to achieve its goal of improving student access to courseware in introductory STEM courses, particularly for underrepresented groups.



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