



# ACADEMY ENGINE™

*Turn customer education  
into a growth system.*

JUSTIN SEELEY

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Justin Seeley has spent the better part of two decades building customer education programs that actually scale, including Twitter Flight School and Walmart Marketplace Learn, two of the most recognized programs in the industry.

His work has reached millions of learners worldwide through more than 100 online courses for LinkedIn Learning, CreativeLive, and Pluralsight. He's a four-time Adobe MAX Master with a background in graphic design, storytelling, and digital education. Today he serves as an eLearning Evangelist at Adobe, where he helps organizations build learning systems that drive real business outcomes.

He will happily talk about customer education strategy at any hour of the day, and his LinkedIn followers can confirm that. He also hosts the Still Learning podcast and writes the Ed Tech Weekly newsletter.

# WHY I BUILT THE ACADEMY ENGINE™

Over the past decade I've had the chance to help build some pretty large-scale education programs for platforms you've probably heard of, including Walmart Marketplace and Twitter's Flight School. The goal in both cases was straightforward: help customers develop the skills and knowledge they need to actually succeed on the platform. Simple enough in concept. Surprisingly messy in practice.

Because what I kept running into, regardless of the company or the budget, was the same pattern. Customer education starts with good intentions and then grows organically until it kind of stops working. Resources pile up. Experiences get fragmented. And at some point the system is doing more to serve itself than it is to serve the people it was built for.

The programs that actually scaled had something in common, and it wasn't just great content or clever engagement tactics. They operated as coordinated systems. Strategy, content, experience design, engagement, and measurement all worked together to move learners from initial awareness to real capability. When those pieces aligned, education became something more than documentation or training. It started driving actual outcomes, things like adoption, retention, and growth.

The Academy Engine™ captures what those programs had in common. It's a way of thinking about customer education as a system rather than a growing pile of courses, articles, and certifications. If you're building or evolving a program right now, this framework is designed to help you think more clearly about what you're actually building and why it either works or doesn't.

— *Justin Seeley*

# CUSTOMER EDUCATION IS AN OPERATING SYSTEM

Customer education usually starts out manageable. A few courses. A handful of webinars. Some documentation that answers the questions your support team is tired of hearing. Then the program grows, and the job changes.

Education starts touching onboarding, adoption, renewals, support, and expansion all at once. It becomes part of how customers succeed with the product and part of how the business protects time and margin. At that point, the work doesn't feel like content production anymore. It starts feeling like infrastructure. Decisions stack up fast: what deserves focus, which audiences matter most right now, where learning should show up, how you'll know any of it is working.

The problem is most academies are still structured like publishing teams. Requests come in, assets go out, the library gets bigger, and the backlog stays full. That creates activity, but it rarely creates coordination. Customers don't experience education as a folder of resources. They experience it as help in the moments that actually shape outcomes.

A library stores knowledge. That's genuinely useful. But a library can't make decisions, prioritize audiences, or adapt when things change. That's what an engine does. Before we talk content, platforms, or formats, the real question is: what is your academy actually designed to power?

# WHY YOUR CE PROGRAM NEEDS AN ENGINE

Customer education has a funny way of expanding whether you planned for it or not. One day you're managing a handful of courses and a webinar series. Then you blink and education is somehow involved in marketing, sales, onboarding, product, renewals, and support deflection all at once. Every team has opinions about what the academy should be doing, and every one of those opinions is at least partially valid.

Every team has a legitimate claim on what education should do. Marketing wants awareness. Sales wants certification. Customer Success wants faster time-to-value. Product wants learning embedded in every launch. Support wants fewer repeat tickets. The problem isn't that any of them are wrong. The problem is that nobody has a shared way to figure out what comes first.

Without a shared framework for making those calls, teams default to output. Work gets shipped, assets pile up, and the academy becomes reactive. It responds to whoever asked most recently rather than moving toward anything intentional. The strain shows up gradually. Priorities shift week to week. Metrics feel disconnected from anything the business actually cares about. Effort keeps increasing without a clear sense of what's actually getting better.

Here's the thing: when education is operating at this level of influence across an organization, more production capacity isn't the answer. What you need is a system for making decisions. A way to figure out what deserves focus, which audiences matter most right now, and how you'll know if any of it is working.

That's the Academy Engine™.

# THE SIX CYLINDERS

## STRATEGY

Define the business outcomes your academy exists to support. Align learning to goals like adoption, retention, and customer success so education drives real impact.

## CONTENT

Turn product knowledge into practical capability. Structure learning so customers understand what to do, when to do it, and how to apply it in real work.

## EXPERIENCE

Place learning where customers already work and make decisions. Design journeys, environments, and touchpoints so education feels integrated rather than separate.

## ENGAGEMENT

Create visible progress that encourages customers to keep learning. Use milestones, credentials, and community to sustain momentum over time.

## EVOLUTION

Continuously refine the academy as products, customers, and markets change. Expand what works, improve what struggles, and retire what no longer drives impact.

## MEASUREMENT

Track how learning reaches customers, how they move through it, and what changes as a result. Use these signals to understand where the engine is working and where it needs attention.

*When these cylinders work together, the academy becomes an operating system for customer success.*



Product Adoption



Customer Capability

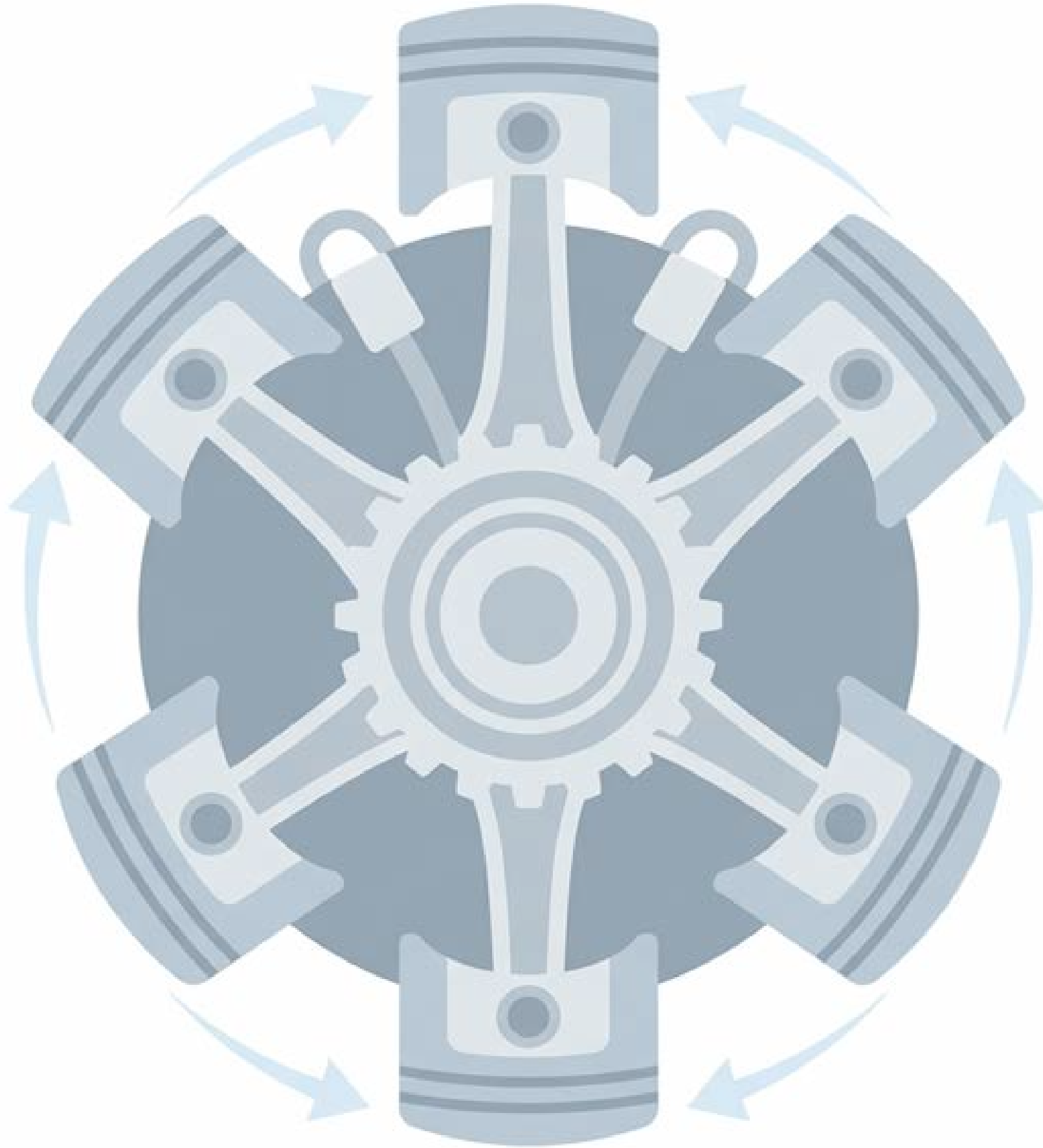


Customer Retention



Market Expansion

# THE ENGINE IS A SYSTEM



This diagram represents movement. Each cylinder influences the others. Strategy shapes direction, content builds capability, experience determines where learning appears, engagement sustains momentum, and evolution adjusts the system over time.

Measurement sits at the center because it connects everything and reveals where energy is building or leaking. When customer education is designed this way, the focus shifts from individual deliverables to the health of the system as a whole.

# STRATEGY DEFINES THE BOUNDARIES THE ACADEMY OPERATES WITHIN

Strategy is what keeps your academy from trying to be everything to everyone. It establishes what you're actually trying to accomplish at a specific stage of growth, which customer segments need the most attention right now, and how you'll know if any of it is working. Without it, decisions still get made. They just tend to be made by whoever's loudest that week.

In the Academy Engine™, strategy is a working agreement about accountability. It answers three questions: Which outcomes matter most right now? Which audiences are most critical to those outcomes? And how will we recognize real progress when we see it? The answers to those questions create useful constraints. They give you a way to prioritize instead of just reacting to whatever lands in your inbox.

You shape strategy through real conversations with stakeholders across marketing, product, customer success, support, and leadership. Those conversations surface who owns which results, where capability gaps are slowing people down, and where education can actually move the needle. That last part matters more than most teams realize. Education can't fix everything, and trying to will burn your team out fast.

Executive alignment makes this cylinder a lot easier to operate. When leadership understands what the academy is designed to power and how its results will be measured, education becomes easier to resource and sustain. You spend less time justifying your existence and more time doing the work.

Within the engine, strategy is what keeps everything else pointed in the same direction. It shapes what content gets prioritized, where experience should focus, how engagement is structured, and which signals measurement tracks. Without it, you've got a lot of cylinders firing with no crankshaft connecting them.

# THE STRATEGY CANVAS

The Strategy Canvas turns the Academy Engine into a working plan. It clarifies what the academy is accountable for, who it serves right now, how success is defined, and who owns ongoing decisions—so execution follows strategy, not noise.

| Stage of Growth (Choose One)                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Primary Audience      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adoption                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Expansion                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Role: _____           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retention                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Enablement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Segment: _____        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Market Positioning _____                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Maturity Level: _____ |
| Outcome Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                       |
| <p>If this strategy works, what measurable shifts occur?</p> <p>Within 12–18 months, we will measurably influence:</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> <p>What capability shift must occur?</p> <p>From: _____</p> <p>To: _____</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                       |
| System Implications                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Strategic Boundaries (This Cycle)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                       |
| <p>Primary Constraint: _____</p> <p>Current Advantage: _____</p> <p>Where is friction visible? _____</p> <p>_____</p>                                                                                                                               | <p>For this cycle, we will <b>NOT</b>:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Build for every audience</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Launch new certification levels</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Take any ad hoc requests</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Expand into _____</p> |                       |

# THE ACADEMY OPERATING MODEL

Customer education rarely begins as a fully staffed department. Most programs start small: a few tutorials, webinars, and documentation answering common questions. Over time the role expands, supporting onboarding, adoption, product launches, and customer success. As programs grow, one question inevitably appears:

*Who owns customer education?*

In practice, ownership takes one of three forms:

## 1. DEDICATED CED TEAM

In mature organizations, customer education operates as its own function. A centralized team defines strategy, produces learning content, manages the academy platform, and coordinates with product, marketing, and customer success. Other teams contribute expertise, but the education team owns the system.

## 2. CS-LED TEAM

Many academies begin within Customer Success. Education grows out of onboarding sessions, webinars, and guided training delivered by success managers. This keeps learning aligned to customer outcomes, though production capacity and long-term program development may remain limited without dedicated education roles.

## 3. DISTRIBUTED OWNERSHIP

Some organizations never centralize education. Product teams create feature training. Marketing publishes tutorials. Customer Success runs workshops. Support maintains documentation. In this model the academy acts as a coordination layer, connecting learning experiences into coherent journeys rather than a collection of disconnected assets.

**Remember:** Regardless of structure, the principle remains the same. Customer education is a system, not a publishing function. Different teams may contribute to strategy, content, experience, engagement, measurement, and evolution, but someone must maintain the coherence of the engine. What matters is that someone maintains the coherence of the engine so learning remains aligned to the outcomes the academy is designed to power.

# CONTENT IS HOW THE SYSTEM DELIVERS VALUE

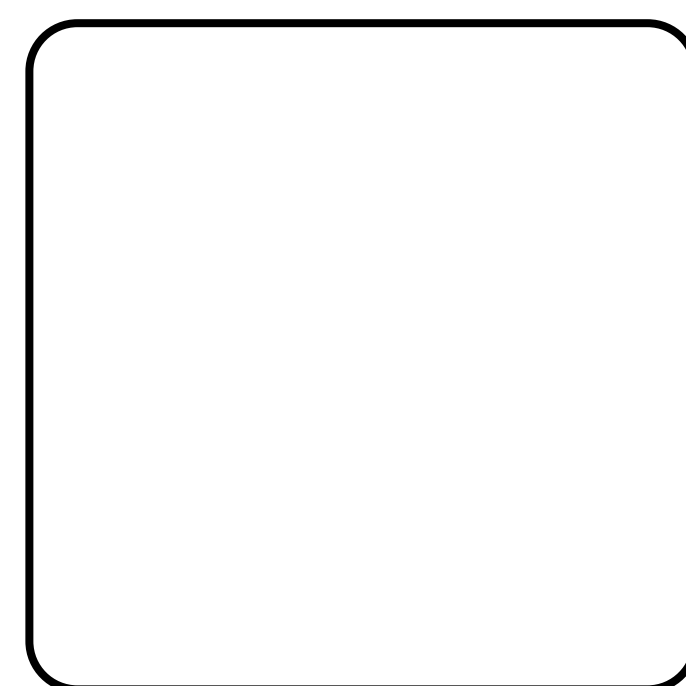
Content is the most visible part of customer education, which is probably why it gets the most attention. In the Academy Engine™, its job is pretty specific: turn information into usable understanding that shows up in how people actually work. Learners finish a course knowing what to do, when to do it, and why it matters. Confidence builds because learning connects directly to action, not just awareness.

The thing that separates a content library from a content system is sequence. Individual courses and modules still matter, but their real value comes from how they connect and build on each other. Learning should move people from uncertainty to capability, with each step setting up the next one. That kind of progression doesn't happen by accident, and it definitely doesn't happen when you're just building whatever got requested that month.

The GROWTH™ framework is how you design for that progression. You start with a clear Goal, meaning what learners actually need to be able to do when they're done. Research grounds the work in real context, real friction, and real constraints. The Outline maps the path learners will travel, including where they'll practice and where they'll need reinforcement. Work unfolds iteratively as understanding deepens. Testing validates your assumptions before you scale anything. And highlighting progress keeps people moving forward instead of drifting off.

Sequencing really does matter. Foundational concepts have to land before advanced ones make sense, and respecting that order is what builds genuine capability over time. Content decisions should follow learner intent and progress, not a backlog of incoming requests. Every piece you add carries cognitive load. The goal is to give people what they need at the right moment, not everything you have all at once.

When content aligns to strategy and connects into the broader experience, it builds real momentum. Each interaction sets up the next. That's when content stops being a static archive and starts doing actual work in the system.

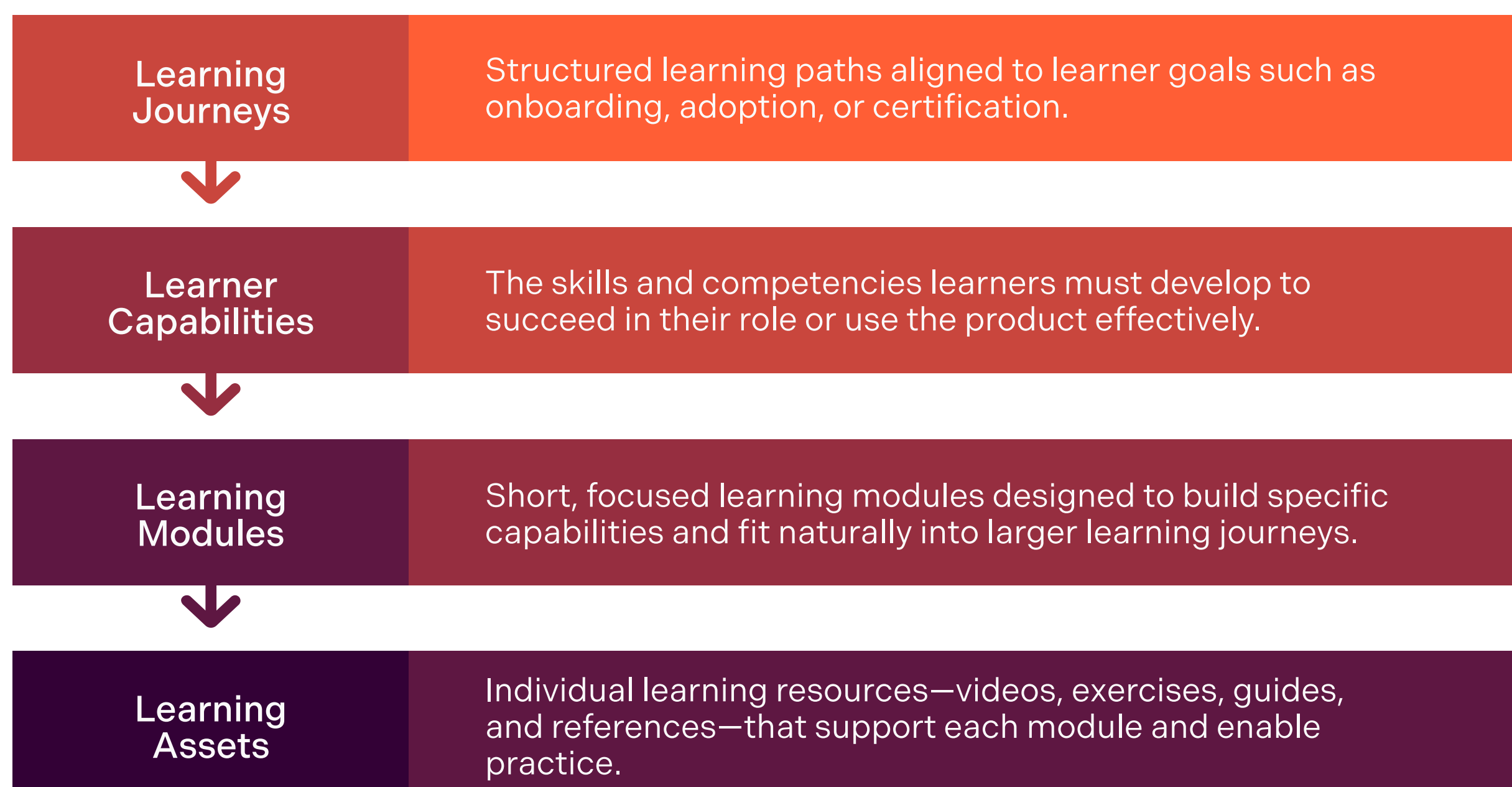


**DOWNLOAD  
THE GROWTH  
FRAMEWORK**

# CONTENT ARCHITECTURE

Content architecture is how you make sure individual pieces of learning actually add up to something. High-performing academies organize content into a clear hierarchy: journeys map to learner goals, capabilities define the skills required to get there, modules deliver the focused instruction that builds those skills, and assets support the practice along the way. Every piece has a purpose, and that purpose connects to something larger.

A strong content architecture also makes your job easier. You can reuse modules across journeys, update assets without breaking everything downstream, and actually see where the gaps are before a learner finds them for you.



## Strong Content Systems Enable

- Learners to clearly understand what to learn next
- Content that supports real tasks and decisions, not just knowledge
- Modules that are reusable across multiple journeys
- Learning that progresses from foundational to advanced capability
- Content that evolves based on learner behavior and feedback

# EXPERIENCE DETERMINES WHERE AND HOW LEARNING SHOWS UP

Experience is all about context. It's about where learning appears, when it surfaces, and how it fits into what someone is actually trying to do at that moment. In the Academy Engine™, experience is a design layer that shapes how education fits into a customer's real environment, rather than just assuming they'll go looking for it when they need it. Spoiler: most of them won't.

Customers run into learning across product interfaces, documentation, onboarding emails, live sessions, community spaces, and search results. Each of those settings has its own level of urgency, attention, and cognitive load.

Good experience design starts by asking what customers are trying to accomplish, what decisions they're making, and where uncertainty is slowing them down. Those friction points are where education has the most to offer.

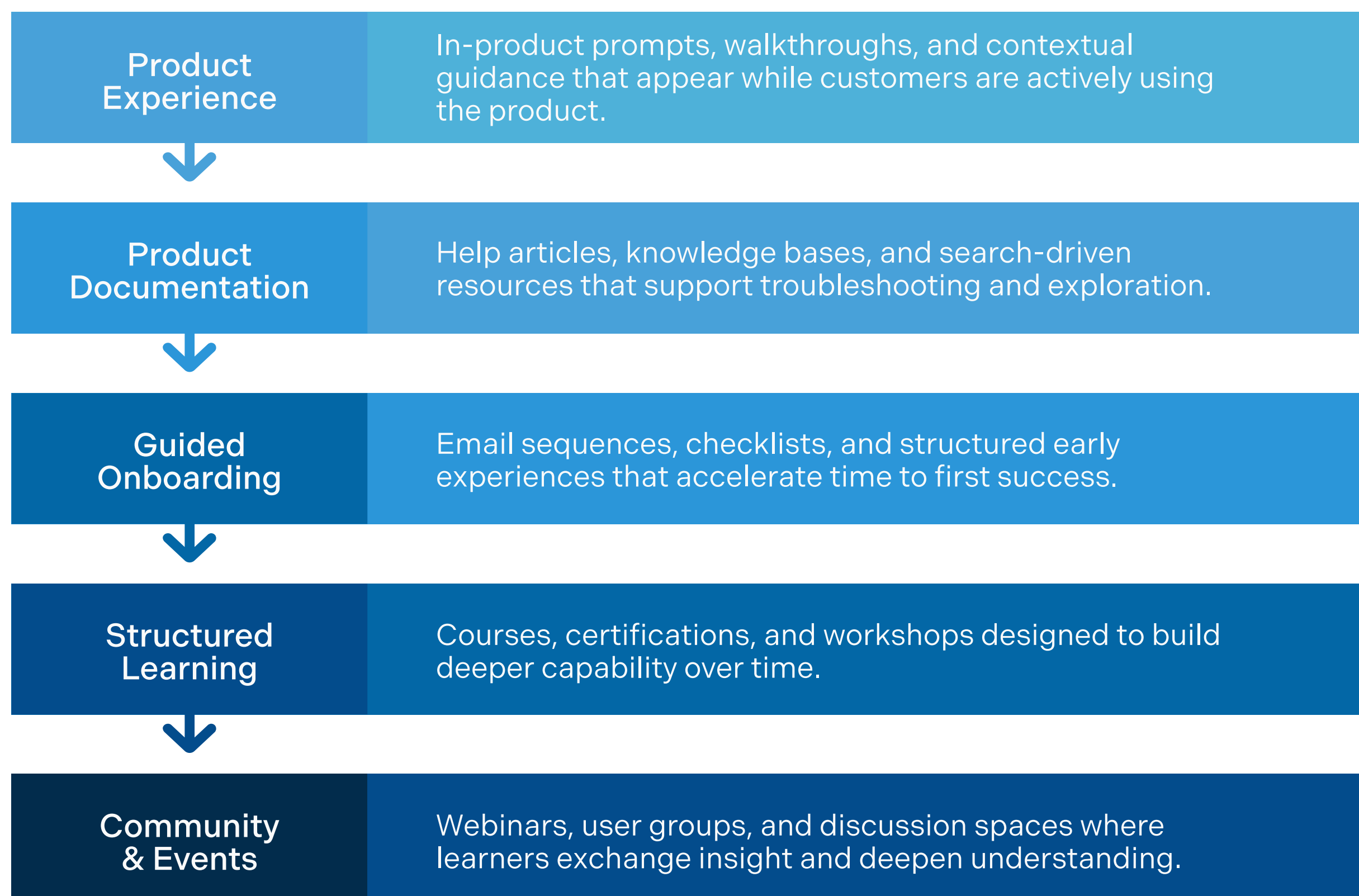
Placement matters as much as content quality. Learning that shows up inside a workflow supports forward motion. Learning that pulls someone away from their task has to justify the interruption, and often it can't. The goal is to meet customers where they already are, using formats that match their intent. A short in-product walkthrough serves a completely different purpose than a structured certification path. Both belong in the system, just in the right places.

Experience also creates continuity across touchpoints. When someone moves from a help article to a webinar, from a product prompt to a full course, the progression should feel like one coherent journey. Consistency in tone, structure, and design tells customers that someone thought about the whole picture, not just the individual pieces.

When experience is designed well, learning reduces friction and builds trust. It makes education feel like a natural part of using the product, rather than something customers have to go hunt down on their own.

# EXPERIENCE ARCHITECTURE

Experience determines where and how learning shows up in the customer journey. Content defines what gets taught, but experience makes sure it surfaces in the right places, whether that's inside the product, in documentation, through onboarding, or in community, so learning supports real work rather than interrupting it.



## Strong Learning Experiences Enable

- Learning to appear in the flow of real work
- Customers to find help at the moment of uncertainty
- Multiple touchpoints to feel connected and coherent
- Learning formats to match intent and urgency
- Education to feel like part of the product experience

# ENGAGEMENT SUSTAINS MOMENTUM ACROSS THE SYSTEM

Engagement is really about solving one problem: getting people to come back. Getting someone into a course or through an onboarding sequence is one thing. Getting them to return after it's done is a completely different challenge. Without a reason to come back, learning stays episodic. You get one interaction, maybe two, and then they disappear. When engagement is built into the system, capability compounds over time instead.

Logins and completions tell you something, but they don't tell you much. Engagement gets meaningful when learners experience visible progress. Skills deepening. Confidence growing. Tasks getting easier. When learning contributes directly to how someone performs their job, returning feels practical rather than optional.

Relevance is what keeps attention over time. Learners stay connected when education supports real responsibilities and reflects where they actually are in their growth. The next step has to feel like a natural extension of the last one. Structured journeys, progressive certifications, and milestone-based advancement create that sense of forward motion. Disconnected requirements don't.

Recognition reinforces the momentum. Credentials, badges, and public acknowledgment carry weight when they signal real capability. When learners can demonstrate expertise to peers, managers, or customers, education starts carrying professional value beyond the platform itself. In mature academies, those credentials become part of how people identify themselves in their field.

Community adds another layer entirely. Discussion forums, peer showcases, expert sessions, and shared problem-solving link learning moments together and signal that the academy is a living environment, not just a content archive that occasionally sends reminder emails.

Within the Academy Engine™, engagement connects content, experience, and measurement. When it's designed with intention, learners return because progress is visible and advancement feels earned.

# ENGAGEMENT ARCHITECTURE

Engagement keeps the learning system moving after the course ends. Content builds capability and experience determines where learning appears, but engagement gives learners a reason to keep going. Progress has to be visible, achievements have to mean something, and learners need to see their development reflected in real work. When those things are in place, participation becomes a habit rather than an obligation.

The best engagement systems don't feel like engagement systems. Learners are just noticing they're getting better at their job, their peers are recognizing it, and the next step actually sounds worth taking.



- Strong Engagement Systems Enable**
- Learners to return because progress is visible
  - Achievements to signal real capability
  - Credentials to reinforce professional identity
  - Community to sustain learning between formal programs
  - Participation to grow through momentum rather than obligation

# MEASUREMENT KEEPS THE SYSTEM HONEST

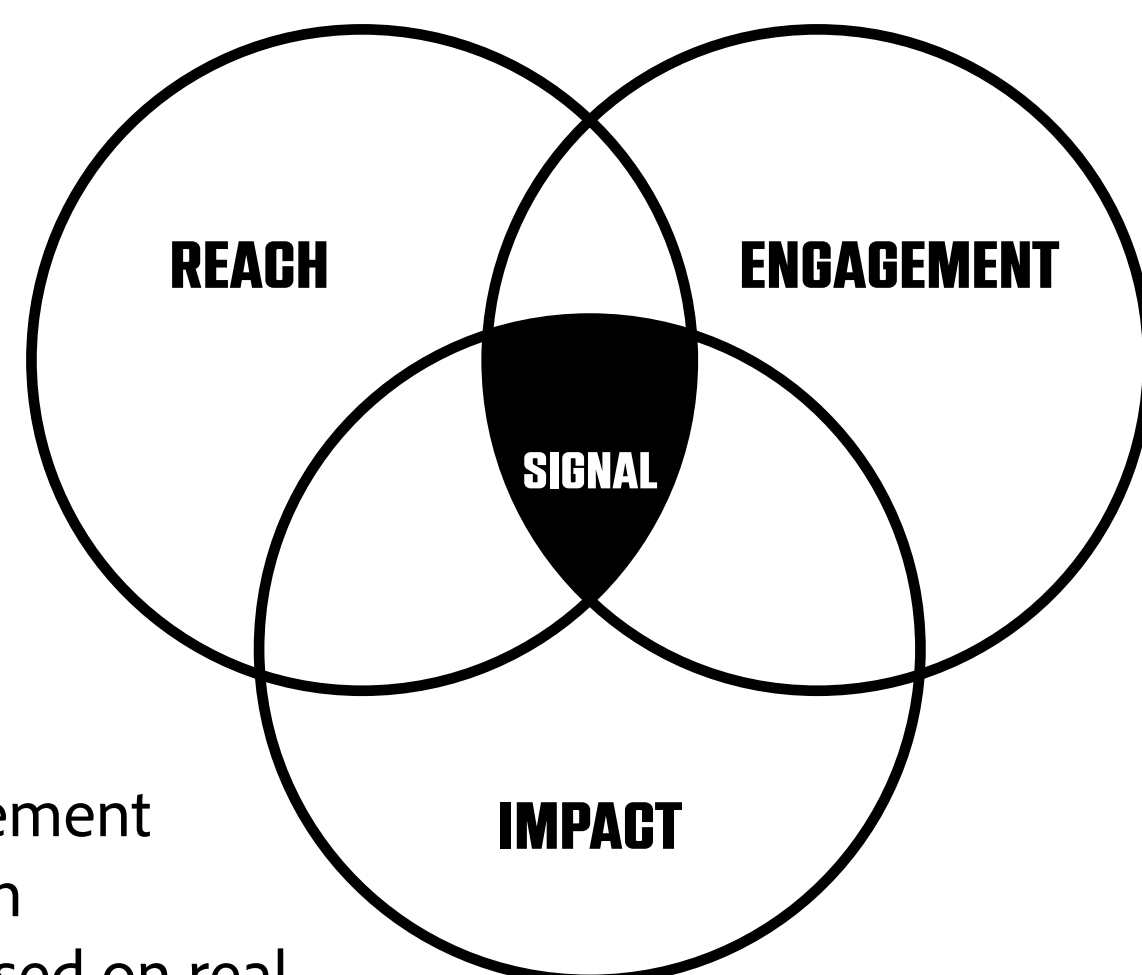
Measurement is what keeps the Academy Engine™ pointed in the right direction once it's running. It gives you visibility into what's actually happening across the system and tells you where to pay attention next. In this framework, measurement isn't something you do at the end of the quarter to build a slide for leadership. It works as an ongoing feedback loop that helps you make better decisions in real time.

Education generates signals constantly. Learners enroll, disengage, come back, apply what they learned, and sometimes just stop. Without a way to organize those signals, you end up with dashboards full of activity metrics that don't actually tell you anything useful. Measurement brings focus by connecting data to practical questions rather than just tracking what's easy to count.

The REI framework structures visibility across three connected dimensions. Reach shows who education is touching and whether priority audiences are actually showing up. Engagement reveals how learners move through experiences, where they slow down, where they drop off, and where they stay involved. Impact connects learning to outcomes beyond the academy itself, including adoption shifts, performance improvements, and retention patterns that actually matter to the business.

These three dimensions work together. High reach with low engagement points to one kind of problem. Strong engagement with limited impact points to another. Tracking them as a system keeps you from celebrating one number while the overall picture quietly gets worse.

Measurement also makes diagnosis possible. Gaps tell you where something needs attention, whether that's in strategy, content, or experience design. Patterns over time show you whether your adjustments are actually working. Because measurement feeds every other cylinder, it's what makes evolution possible. It keeps the Academy Engine™ adapting based on real evidence rather than gut feel and good intentions.



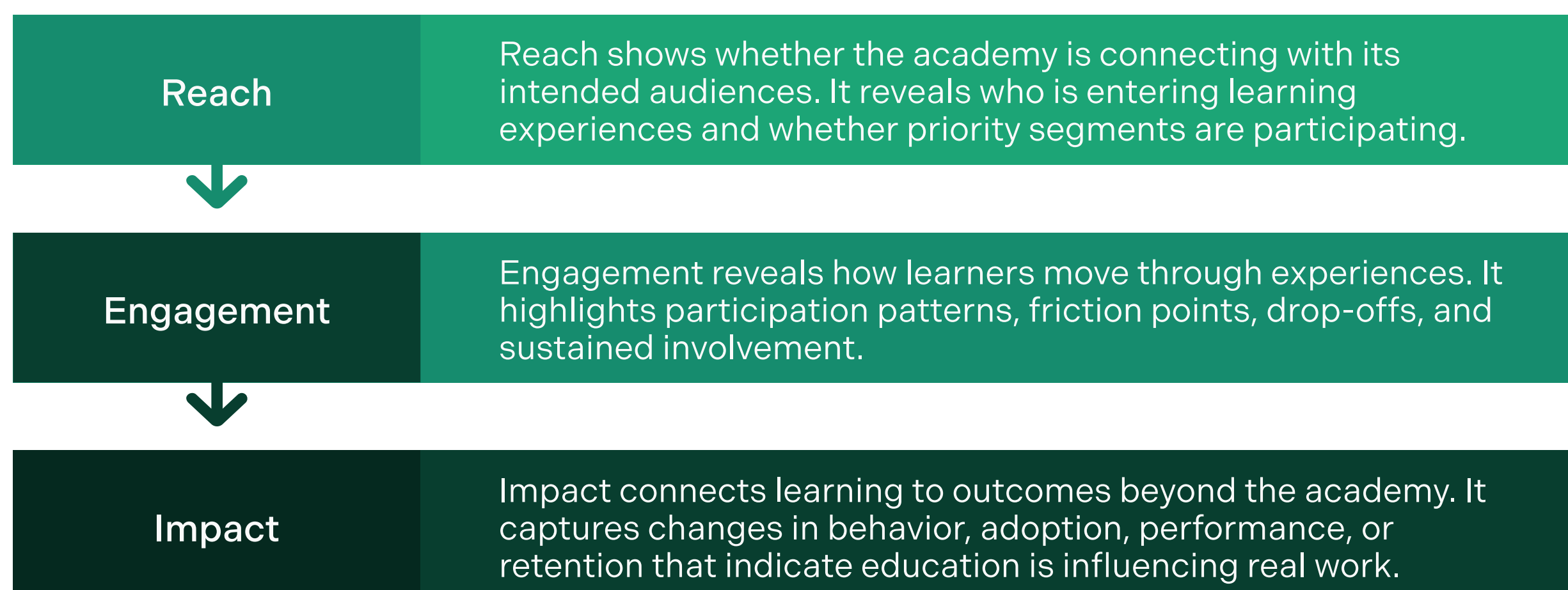
# MEASUREMENT ARCHITECTURE

Measurement turns activity into insight. The REI framework structures that visibility around three practical questions: who education is reaching, what learners are actually doing inside the experience, and whether any of it is connecting to outcomes that matter. That last one is the one most teams skip, and it's the one leadership always asks about.

By connecting participation patterns to business outcomes, REI helps education leaders move beyond surface metrics and demonstrate how learning contributes to real performance and organizational results.

The REI model answers three practical questions:

- **Reach:** Who are we reaching?
- **Engagement:** What are learners doing within learning experiences?
- **Impact:** Why does it matter to the business?



## Strong Measurement Systems Enable

- Clear visibility into who education is reaching
- Insight into where learners progress or disengage
- Evidence linking learning to business outcomes
- Early detection of friction within journeys
- Continuous improvement guided by real signals

# EVOLUTION SUSTAINS RELEVANCE AS THE BUSINESS EVOLVES

Everything changes. Products ship new capabilities, markets shift, customers get more sophisticated, and internal priorities move around constantly. A system that can't adapt to those changes will eventually stop being useful, no matter how well it was built. Evolution is what keeps the Academy Engine™ aligned with where the business is going rather than where it was when you launched.

Evolution in the Academy Engine™ isn't a big periodic overhaul. It's continuous refinement driven by real signals. Measurement shows what's gaining traction, where learners are stalling, and which capabilities are expanding across your customer base. Those insights point you toward where to go deeper on content, where to reorganize journeys, and where to retire materials that made sense two product versions ago but don't anymore.

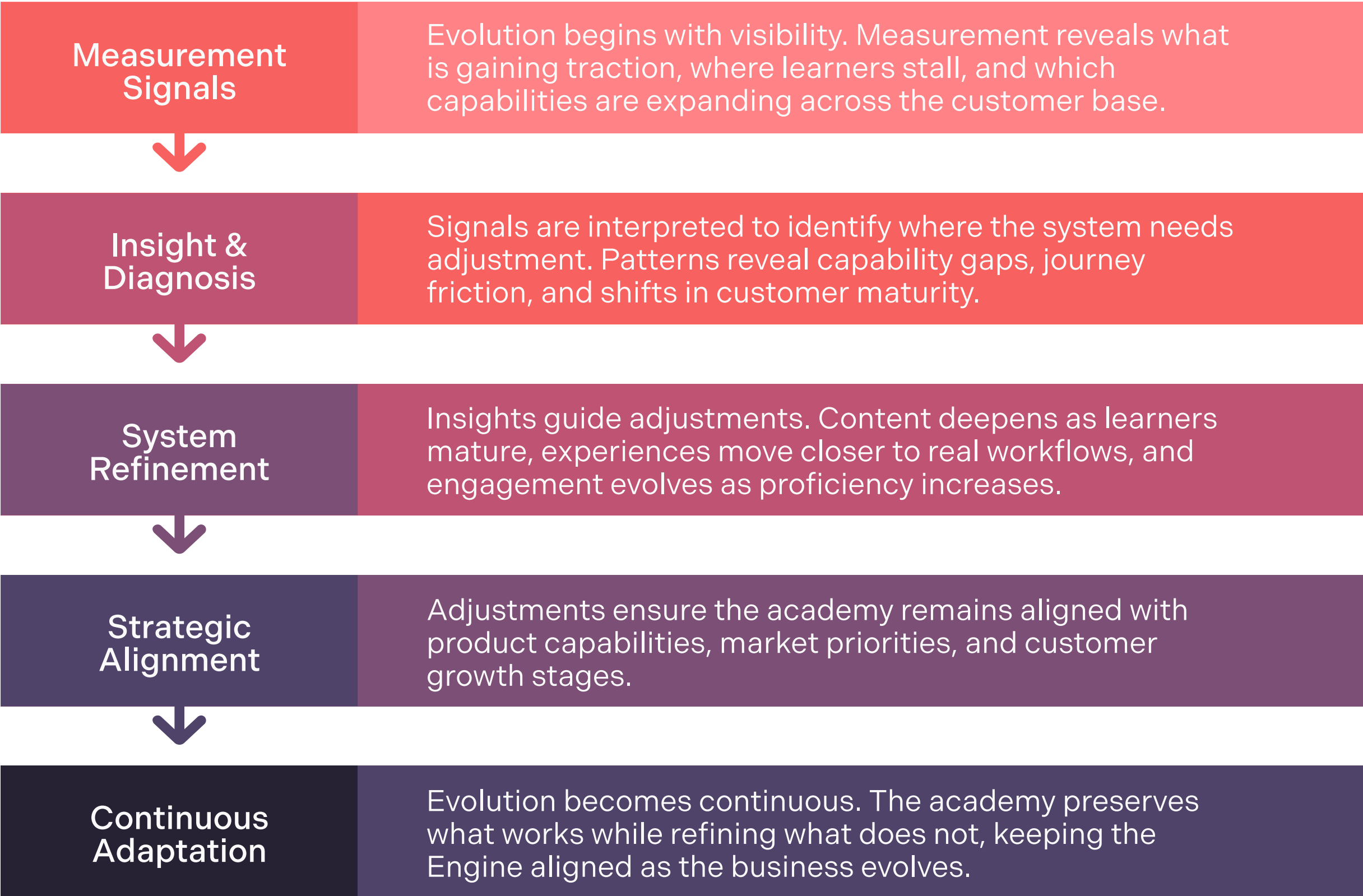
Content naturally evolves as audiences mature. Early-stage programs focus on onboarding and building foundational confidence. Over time the focus shifts toward advanced workflows, optimization, and specialized expertise. Experience evolves right alongside it. Learning surfaces move closer to high-impact moments, and entry points start reflecting how customers actually work rather than how you assumed they would back when you designed the thing. Engagement mechanisms adjust as proficiency increases and expectations rise.

Clear ownership is what keeps this from falling apart. Without someone accountable for the ongoing health of the system, updates fragment and drift. With that accountability in place, evolution stays coherent and connected to strategy.

When evolution is embedded into how the Academy Engine™ operates, you're not starting over every time something changes. You're adjusting deliberately, keeping what works and improving what doesn't. That's what keeps the engine relevant over the long run.

# EVOLUTION ARCHITECTURE

Evolution keeps the Academy Engine™ aligned with a business that never stops changing. Products evolve, markets shift, and customer maturity increases. The engine has to adapt alongside those changes rather than scramble to catch up after the fact. Measurement signals drive that adaptation, keeping the system relevant as the business grows.



**Strong Evolution Practices Enable**

- Learning systems to adapt as products and markets evolve
- Content to deepen as customer maturity increases
- Experiences to move closer to real workflows
- Engagement mechanisms to grow with learner capability
- Continuous improvement without restarting the academy



# THE ENGINE

*in Action.*

# Walmart Marketplace

## How Walmart Improved Seller Success Through Embedded Education

### OVERALL IMPACT

**137K+**

Monthly Active  
Users (MAU)

**41%**

Year-over-year  
growth

**500+**

Learning resources  
launched

**50+**

Video tutorials  
produced

**200K+**

Marketplace Sellers  
Supported

*\*Metrics reflect program performance during the first year following launch while the author led the initiative.*

### THE CHALLENGE:

As Walmart Marketplace rapidly expanded, sellers needed clear guidance on how to launch and grow their businesses on the platform. Education resources existed across documentation, help articles, and training materials. The experience was fragmented and difficult for sellers to navigate.

Walmart needed a scalable education ecosystem that could support hundreds of thousands of sellers while reducing reliance on support teams.

### THE OUTCOME:

The Marketplace Learn initiative transformed seller education from a fragmented collection of resources into a cohesive learning ecosystem.

By centralizing education content and establishing scalable production workflows, Walmart made it easier for sellers to find guidance, learn platform best practices, and solve operational challenges independently.

The new model improved the accessibility and consistency of seller education while enabling the team to support a rapidly growing marketplace audience at scale. As adoption increased, the knowledge base grew to 137K monthly active users, reflecting the growing role of education in helping sellers successfully operate on the platform.

### THE APPROACH:

Walmart Marketplace redesigned its seller education ecosystem to eliminate fragmentation and create a unified learning experience.

Learning resources were consolidated into Marketplace Learn, a centralized hub that brought training, documentation, and practical guidance into one destination.

The initiative focused on:

- Unifying seller education resources into Marketplace Learn
- Establishing scalable production workflows for new content
- Expanding video tutorials and structured onboarding guidance
- Improving architecture to support self-service learning

### STRATEGIC TAKEAWAY:

Marketplace Learn demonstrates how customer education can evolve from scattered resources into a unified learning ecosystem. When documentation, tutorials, and onboarding guidance live in one destination, learning becomes easier to discover and easier to apply. Sellers gain confidence faster and support teams spend less time answering repeat questions.

This reflects a core principle behind the Academy Engine: education delivers the greatest impact when learning experiences are integrated across the customer journey rather than scattered across disconnected channels.



## How Twitter Scaled Advertiser Education to Over 150,000 Learners

### OVERALL IMPACT

**150K+**

Monthly Active  
Learners

**30K+**

Certifications  
Issued

**30+**

Courses Launched  
in 9 languages

**\$5M+**

Ad Revenue  
influenced

**45+**

Average Net  
Promoter Score

*\*Metrics reflect program performance during the first year following launch while the author led the initiative.*

### THE CHALLENGE:

As Twitter's advertising platform expanded, advertisers needed structured education to successfully plan, launch, and optimize campaigns. Training content existed across documentation, webinars, and internal resources, but there was no unified system capable of educating advertisers at global scale.

The program also needed to serve two very different audiences:

- large advertising agencies managing complex campaigns
- small and medium-sized businesses learning how to advertise for the first time

### THE OUTCOME:

Flight School quickly became a cornerstone of Twitter's advertiser education strategy, enabling the company to scale structured training for advertisers worldwide. The program enabled advertisers to build practical campaign expertise while providing Twitter with a scalable system for onboarding and educating global advertisers.

By connecting structured learning paths, certification programs, and multimedia training experiences, Flight School helped advertisers improve campaign performance and deepen engagement with the platform.

### THE APPROACH:

Twitter created Flight School, a structured education platform designed to help advertisers build practical marketing expertise.

The program combined:

- Progressive learning paths from beginner to advanced
- Certification programs validating advertiser expertise
- Video courses and interactive learning experiences
- Live training delivered online and in person
- Scalable infrastructure supporting global learners

Rather than functioning as a content library, Flight School operated as a structured learning ecosystem for advertiser enablement.

### STRATEGIC TAKEAWAY:

Flight School illustrates how customer education can evolve from training into a strategic growth engine. By connecting structured learning paths, certifications, and multimedia training experiences, Twitter created a scalable system that helped advertisers build real campaign expertise while driving measurable platform adoption.

Programs like Flight School demonstrate a core principle behind the Academy Engine: education delivers the greatest business impact when strategy, content, experience, engagement, and measurement operate as an integrated system.

# CYLINDER HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Rate each statement from 1–5.

1 = Not in place    3 = Inconsistent / informal    5 = Clear, intentional, and aligned

## STRATEGY

- \_\_\_\_\_ Clear business outcomes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Priority audience defined
- \_\_\_\_\_ Leadership alignment
- \_\_\_\_\_ Agreed success signals
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prioritization follows strategy

Score (÷5) \_\_\_\_\_

## CONTENT

- \_\_\_\_\_ Built around learner outcomes
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sequenced intentionally
- \_\_\_\_\_ Based on real context
- \_\_\_\_\_ Content lifecycle managed
- \_\_\_\_\_ Demand does not dictate output

Score (÷5) \_\_\_\_\_

## EXPERIENCE

- \_\_\_\_\_ Shows up in workflow
- \_\_\_\_\_ Entry points match usage
- \_\_\_\_\_ Channels feel connected
- \_\_\_\_\_ Format fits intent
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reduces friction at key moments

Score (÷5) \_\_\_\_\_

## ENGAGEMENT

- \_\_\_\_\_ Visible learner progression
- \_\_\_\_\_ Credentials signal capability
- \_\_\_\_\_ Activity beyond launches
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reinforcement built in
- \_\_\_\_\_ Community or recognition present

Score (÷5) \_\_\_\_\_

## MEASUREMENT

- \_\_\_\_\_ Tracks Reach
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tracks Engagement
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tracks Impact
- \_\_\_\_\_ Data informs priorities
- \_\_\_\_\_ Diagnosis precedes reaction

Score (÷5) \_\_\_\_\_

## EVOLUTION

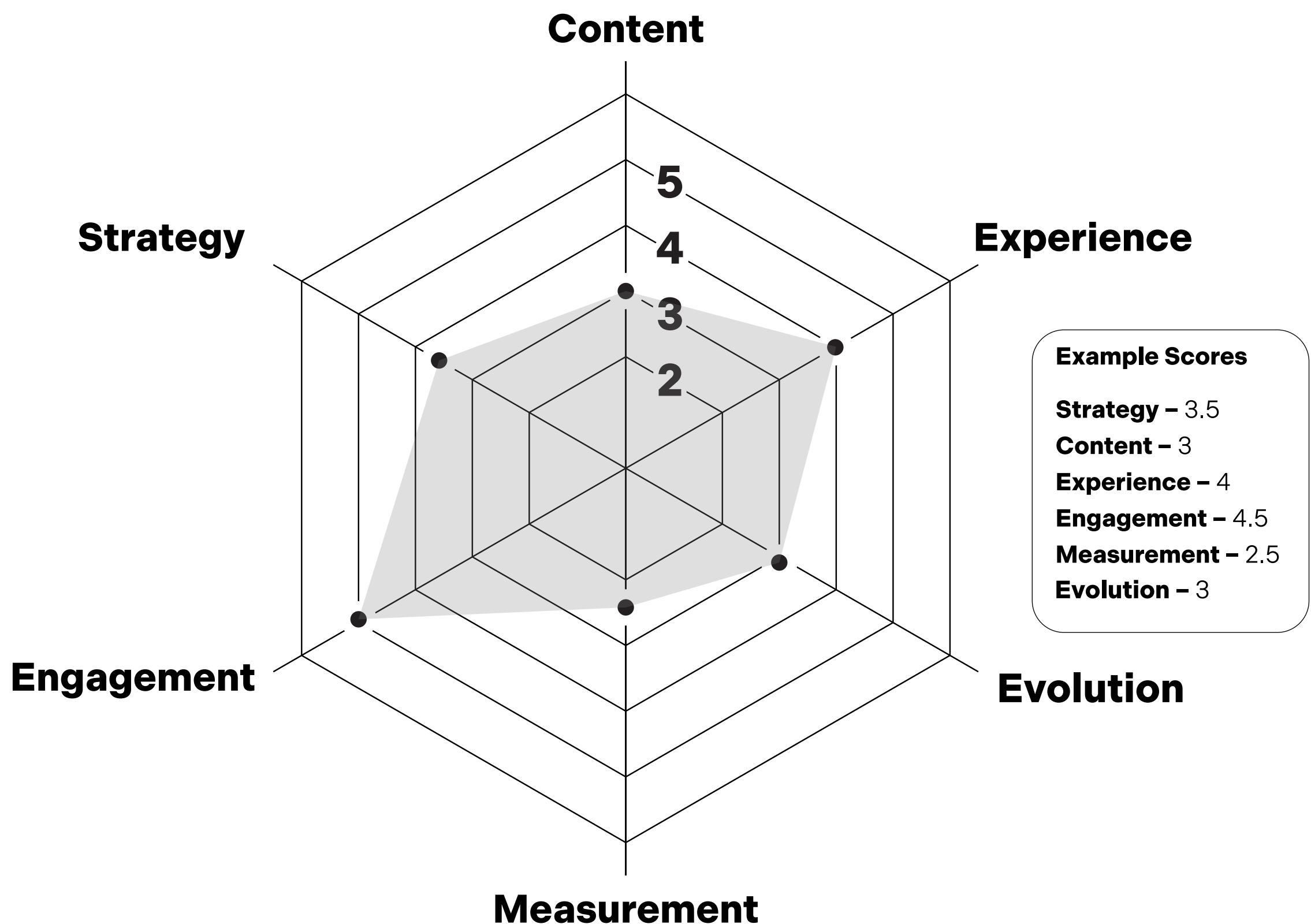
- \_\_\_\_\_ Regular review cadence
- \_\_\_\_\_ Clear ownership defined
- \_\_\_\_\_ Outdated content retired
- \_\_\_\_\_ Journeys evolve with maturity
- \_\_\_\_\_ Changes align to strategy

Score (÷5) \_\_\_\_\_

Be honest. This is for diagnosis, not presentation.

# ENGINE HEALTH SNAPSHOT

Plot your scores to see where your Engine is strong — and where it needs attention.



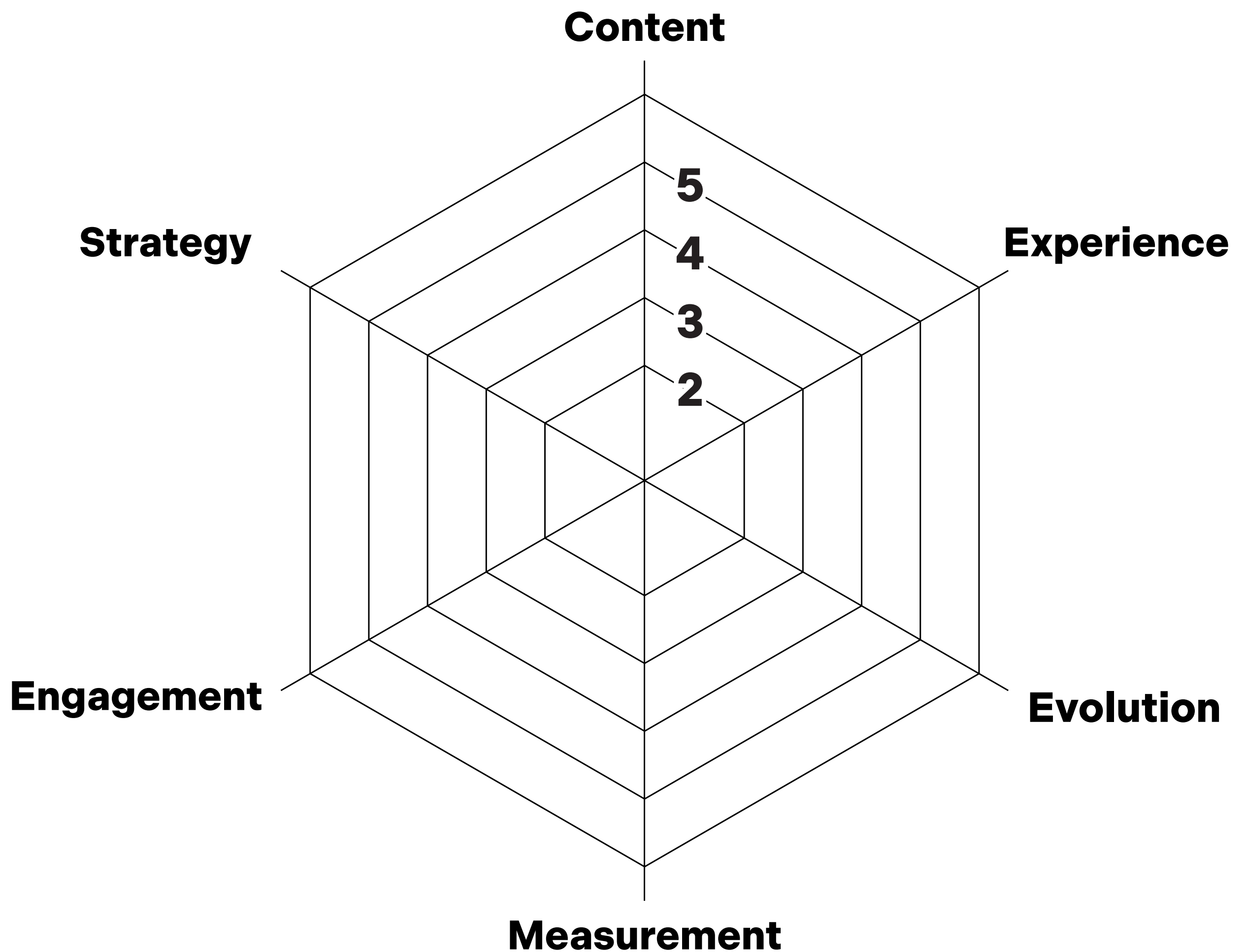
1. Calculate the average score for each cylinder ( $\div 5$ ).
2. Plot the number outward from the center on its axis.
3. Connect the points to form your Engine Health shape.

## How to Interpret Your Shape

- Wide and even → System is balanced
- Deep dip → This cylinder is limiting growth
- Sharp spike → Investment may exceed strategic alignment
- Small overall shape → The Engine lacks power

# PLOT YOUR ENGINE HEALTH

Use your averages from the Cylinder Health Assessment.  
A distorted shape reveals imbalance. A small shape reveals underinvestment.



# HOW TO START WITHOUT STARTING OVER

Most teams don't need to blow up their academy and rebuild from scratch. What they usually need is to stop layering new content on top of a system that was never really designed as a system in the first place, and start treating what they have as something worth tuning.

The fastest path forward almost always starts with strategy. Pick one primary outcome for the next 12 to 18 months. Name the audience that matters most to that outcome. Agree on two or three signals that will tell you whether it's working. That's genuinely enough to start making real decisions.

From there, fix the flow before you build anything new. Map your existing assets to the customer lifecycle and take an honest look at what you find. Where's content duplicated? Where are there gaps in progression? Where does the sequence break down? Fixing the architecture of what you already have will do more for learners than launching five new courses on top of a broken foundation. I've seen this mistake made more times than I can count.

Measure simply to start. You don't need a sophisticated analytics stack on day one. Track who education is reaching. Track what learners are doing inside the experience. Track whether any of it is connecting to outcomes that matter to the business. Use that data to decide what to refine next.

Make progress visible. Learners need to know where they are and where they're headed. Clarify capability levels, tie milestones to real performance, and recognize demonstrated skill in ways that carry actual professional weight.

And own the evolution. Assign clear stewardship. Review the system on a regular cadence. Retire content that no longer serves where the program is going.

The academy should change because the business changed, not because someone finally found a free afternoon to update it.

# EDUCATION IS BECOMING INFRASTRUCTURE

Customer education has moved well past help articles and product tutorials. As platforms get more complex and customer expectations keep rising, education is becoming a core part of how organizations drive adoption, build real capability, and sustain long-term success. The teams treating education as a strategic system are the ones able to scale alongside their products and their customers. The teams still treating it as a content backlog tend to stay stuck.

The Academy Engine™ is a framework for building that system. When strategy, content, experience design, engagement, measurement, and evolution all work together, you can move from fragmented resources to a learning ecosystem that actually functions as one. Education stops being a support function and starts being something that helps customers build genuine capability and achieve meaningful outcomes.

Every program will look different. Products evolve, markets shift, and customers mature at their own pace. The Academy Engine™ isn't a rigid blueprint you follow step by step. It's a lens for designing and refining the systems that help customers learn, grow, and succeed. How you apply it depends entirely on where you are and what you're building toward.

If you're building or evolving a customer education program right now, I hope this framework helps you think more clearly about the architecture behind what you're creating, and the role education can play in shaping the future of your platform.

You can find additional resources & tools by following me at [linkedin.com/in/justinseeley](https://www.linkedin.com/in/justinseeley)

# CREDITS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

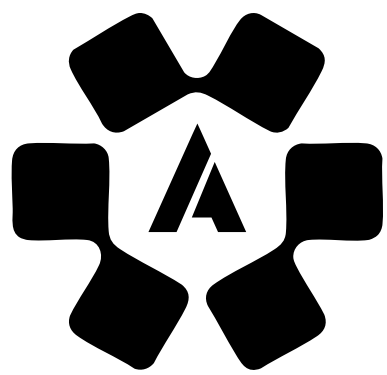
This framework didn't come out of nowhere. It came out of a lot of conversations, experiments, and hard-won lessons over the years, and there are people who deserve real credit for that.

Jim Conley, my manager at Twitter, shaped a lot of how I think about this work. The time we spent building Flight School together planted seeds that eventually grew into what you're reading now. I learned as much from him as I did from the work itself.

The team behind Walmart Marketplace Learn is one of the most dedicated groups of people I've ever had the privilege of working alongside. Launching that platform with them is still one of the things I'm most proud of in my career.

And to my colleagues at Adobe, who reviewed, challenged, and pressure-tested this framework as it developed, thank you. Your pushback made it better. That's the best thing you can say about a good collaborator.

To everyone who contributed ideas, feedback, and perspective along the way, thank you!



*Continue learning about the*  
**ACADEMY ENGINE™**

# A FRAMEWORK FOR BUILDING SCALABLE CUSTOMER EDUCATION

At some point, every customer education program outgrows the way it was built. What started as a few courses and a webinar series is suddenly expected to drive onboarding, adoption, renewals, and product launches all at once. The content library keeps growing, but the results don't keep up.

The Academy Engine™ is a framework for getting ahead of that. It's built on the patterns behind programs that actually scaled, including Twitter Flight School and Walmart Marketplace Learn, and it gives you a practical way to think about customer education as a coordinated system rather than a growing collection of assets.

## Inside you'll learn how to:

- Turn fragmented help content and onboarding resources into a unified learning ecosystem
- Design structured learning paths that build real capability, not just course completions
- Connect your education program to adoption, retention, and customer success
- Scale learning across global audiences without losing relevance
- Build a program that evolves alongside your product and your customers

## About the Author

Justin Seeley has built customer education programs for some of the most recognizable platforms in tech, including Twitter Flight School and Walmart Marketplace Learn. He's also created more than 100 online courses reaching millions of learners worldwide.

Today he works as an eLearning Evangelist at Adobe and speaks regularly about the future of learning, customer education, and what it actually takes to build programs that scale.

