

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

NOVEMBER 2020

WEPS IN ACTION



PRINCIPLE 4

**Promote education,
training and professional
development for women**

Contents

1. Context
2. Actions
3. Challenges
4. Results
5. Recommendations

CASE STUDY: AVON

DEVELOPING AN ONLINE LEARNING COMMUNITY FOR WOMEN

LESSONS LEARNED

- Encouraging women representatives to learn new skills, develop their careers, and increase their earning potentials advances gender equality and women's empowerment on a global scale.
- Providing flexible and adaptable career training for women representatives with a busy work schedule, gives them equal access to engage and learn regardless of the time they have available.
- Engaging local networks and teams to support global content creation and training increases cross-department collaboration.
- Ensuring that new cohort/group of trained women representatives have access to learning content as soon as they join the company shows that they are valued from Day One.

CONTEXT

Avon is a global social selling beauty company, headquartered in the United Kingdom. For over 135 years, women's economic empowerment has been at the heart of its work. A spokesperson for the company said: "We believe that everyone should be able to earn and learn on their own terms."

The company launched Avon Connect, an online learning and community platform in May 2019. As part of their stand4her programme, which aims to improve the lives of 100 million women each year by advancing their earning potential.

Avon's primary route to market is through 5 million self-employed Avon Representatives, mostly women who manage their own businesses. Avon Connect supports representatives to grow as entrepreneurs, learn new skills and develop their networks. It offers topics ranging from make-up tips to financial management.

Senior management drove the initiative as part of Avon's Open Up strategy, which aims to boost representatives' earning potential and passion for the brand. Avon Connect also allows representatives to share their experiences as entrepreneurs, and upload user-generated content.

ACTIONS

Avon Connect is now available in 41 countries. It is delivered through online and face-to-face sessions, supported by the Global Digital Team, the Representative Experience Team within Global Sales, plus some support from Global Marketing and the local training and sales teams.

The goal has been to reach 500,000 representatives per month, giving them the skills and knowledge to create their own business activity.

Representatives can access the platform as soon as they join Avon, and can choose how many modules they take, as well as which topics to focus on. Any new starter can also choose to participate in a 90-day induction course.

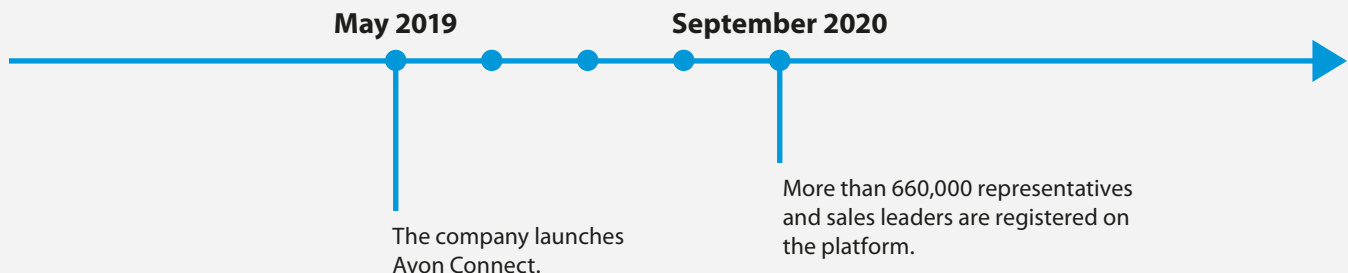
Content includes videos, workshops, PDFs, e-learning programmes and tutorials. While there are certifications for some modules, these are not directly linked to earnings. The aim of the courses is to give representatives the knowledge they need to boost their own earnings.

The modules offered cover product training, beauty tutorials, fragrance training and skin regime training, plus entrepreneurial skills such as financial training, core business skills, sales and marketing techniques, training in building a sales base, and presentation skills. New content is created daily.

Key performance indicators are the percentage of representatives who are registered to use Avon Connect, and the number of engaged users it has every month, as well as over the longer term.

The Global Digital Team produces a monthly performance scorecard and holds monthly calls with all live markets to discuss performance and good practice. Local teams also monitor and drive all their own performance.

TIMELINE



CHALLENGES

Avon's initial challenge was selling the benefits of the new blended virtual learning experience to both internal stakeholders and field staff, who were used to more traditional in-person learning.

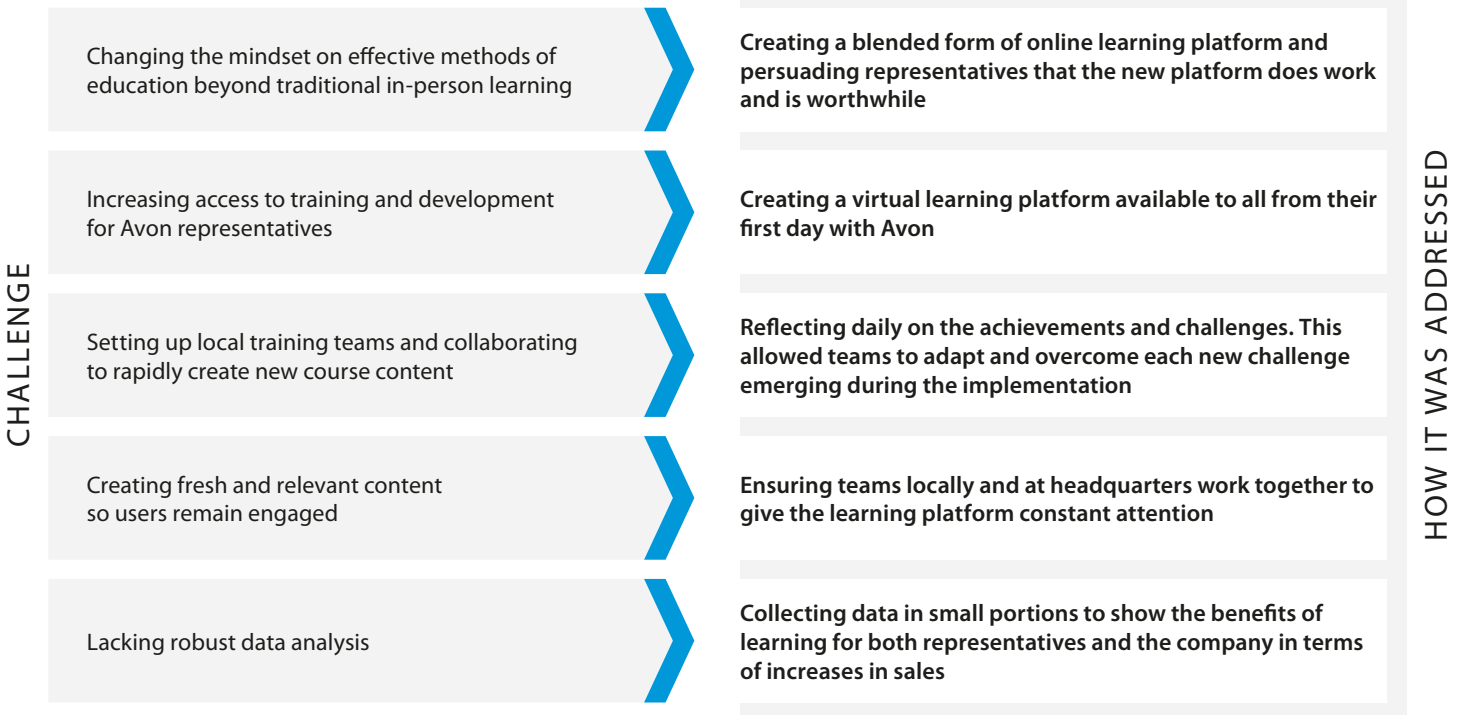
Many of Avon's markets have small training teams, and a cross-functional team needed to be set up to deliver the project in coordinated manner. The project also required the creation of new content and ways of operating and thinking, and the ability to effectively manage the learners' experience.

Data analytics were also crucial to measure the benefit and impact of Avon Connect. Avon collects data in small chunks, to allow it to demonstrate the benefits of the platform not only to its users, but to the business in terms of sales (e.g. order value and frequency of ordering), and retention of the representatives.

Avon learned from the start that the platform had to offer strong reasons for the representatives to visit it, and that the platform needed constant attention and focus to be fresh, engaging and give users a reason to re-engage. This is something the company initially underestimated, but it soon organized teams to meet this challenge.

A spokesperson for the company said: "Our users seem less driven to complete formal learning and more inclined to engage socially or casually with what they want, when they want it. This fits into our purpose to give representatives the ability to earn and learn on their own terms."

Time is a challenge for representatives, who are often juggling their role with another job and family life. Avon made sure to deliver bite-size content so representatives had the choice of how long to spend on their learning.



RESULTS

Avon Connect has allowed representatives to meet each other online, enjoy learning new skills, and boost their confidence. Each market has adapted it for its own needs, strengthening the support it provides.

The spokesperson added: "In total, over 660,000 representatives and sales leaders have participated in the platform. With 130,000 monthly active users we have seen good engagement. Globally, our users consume over one million pieces of content every month. We regularly measure the performance of representatives using Avon Connect and have found that new representatives have 6 per cent higher sales and up to 20 per cent higher retention compared to those not logging in.

"We not only measure our achievements against our key performance indicators, but we also survey learners to see how they feel, asking them to rate statements such as, 'Avon Connect has made me feel closer to Avon,' and 'Avon Connect has had a positive impact on my business.'"

The Avon Connect online platform and community has been successful for several reasons. The company tested the concept in South Africa to see if it would better engage representatives than existing training. Previous research had already shown that representatives like flexibility so they can earn and learn on their own terms – so being able to access learning on the go is key.



RECOMMENDATIONS








Avon Connect provides necessary tools for building a business and community, as well as networks and social communities.


Avon's main recommendations would be:

- Understand your users' needs and availability before designing the course materials.
- Design content with purpose, aligned to clear business outcomes (do not create content for the sake of it).
- Do not be afraid to try things and adapt fast if they do not work.
- Use the analytics of the platform and business performance data to gauge success.


THE ROLE OF WEPs

In 2010, Avon committed to the Women's Empowerment Principles. In 2019, Jan Zijderveld, then Avon CEO, recommitted Avon's support for the WEPs, and worked with Avon country managers to sign the WEPs. Since then, the company has continued to champion women through a range of programmes and activities.

- Principle 1  Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.
- Principle 2  Treat all women and men fairly at work- respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination.
- Principle 3  Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.
- Principle 4  Promote education, training and professional development for women.
- Principle 5  Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.
- Principle 6  Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.
- Principle 7  Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

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EMPOWERMENT
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