



# The Value of Working with a Partner Over a Vendor

## Destiny One at UCLA Extension



# How A Strategic Partnership Can Make All the Difference

At colleges and universities across the United States, continuing education and extension divisions come in all shapes and sizes, from large to small, from fully integrated into the campus to completely autonomous. Within this complex environment, the Extension at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA Extension) stands out as a giant.

UCLA Extension serves nearly 20,000 students every year and processes 35,000-40,000 enrollments annually into over 5,000 courses, hosted online and on their own campus. The UCLA Extension is a significant organization already, and they have growth on the horizon.

Facilitating that growth—improving the level of service they currently deliver and scaling it to serve an even broader audience—required a management system that could keep up. In 2016, they turned to Destiny One, the customer lifecycle management software platform developed by Destiny Solutions.

Beyond the functionality of the product, which provides the capacity to develop and deliver offerings more efficiently, improve marketing effectiveness, offer students a more Amazon-like experience, and unite the back-end infrastructure (among other things)—the main factor that made Destiny One stand out was the fact that Destiny Solutions operates as a partner, not a vendor.

## The Differences Between a Partner and a Vendor

Though this is often seen as an exercise in pedantry, the differences between partners and vendors are massive and consequential.

According to Matt Robinson, the program services manager at UCLA Extension, the relationship an institution has with a vendor ends at the go-live. The truth of a vendor relationship is hidden in the word itself: it's built around the act of "vending"—or selling.

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“When you're working with a vendor, you get the sales pitch, you get the vendor's full attention during development and then the vendor's goal is to get you live because a switch turns and you're no longer getting development support—you're getting services support,” Robinson said.

But a partnership—a true partnership—between a company and a postsecondary institution is a more robust and supportive arrangement. Unlike a vendor relationship where you face “a cliff,” as Robinson puts it, in the quality of service an institution receives after implementation, a partnership is a long-term strategic relationship.

## ABOUT

# UCLA Extension



As one of the nation's oldest, largest, and most comprehensive continuing higher education providers, UCLA Extension gives you all the options and a wide range of courses you need. Extension offers:

- The excellence that comes with a UCLA-approved curriculum.
- Open Enrollment—most courses and programs require no admission decision.
- Evening, weekend, daytime, and online courses.
- Locations throughout L.A.-Westwood, Downtown, and more.
- Certificate Programs, transferable undergraduate degree credit, and continuing education credits.
- Courses specifically designed for working adults, college students and lifelong learners.

Whatever your goals, you'll find UCLA Extension provides you with great choices.

## We Only Succeed When Our Customers Succeed: How Destiny Solutions Acts as a Partner

Destiny Solutions' core value reads, "We only succeed when our customers succeed." This mantra is immortalized on posters and hung around Destiny's head office. The company's focus on true partnerships is the main ingredient to the delivery on this promise, and is the secret to its long-term relationships with colleges and universities across the United States and Canada.

### 1 Responsiveness at Every Stage

The first aspect of Destiny's commitment to partnership is its quality of service and insight at every stage of the institution's journey—remaining consistent through the buying process, through implementation and beyond.

As UCLA Extension progressed through the various stages of getting Destiny One live, they worked with Destiny's Sales team, Professional Services team and—after implementation—the Client Services team. While their team's experiences with other vendors had created an internal expectation that the level of service and input they received from Destiny would drop off after implementation, those expectations were misplaced.

"There was some fear that service would drop off after launch but they're still very engaged in what we're doing and very knowledgeable about what we're doing," Robinson said. "We've been pulling on Destiny in much the same way we did during development and getting responses in much the same way we did during development."

### 2 Strategic Support

In a true partnership, it's impossible for one party to be successful without the other. As such, the entire team at Destiny Solutions focuses on finding ways to help partner institutions reach their short-term and long-term objectives.

For UCLA Extension, they're at the start of a period of significant growth, which aims to expand Extension's global brand by creating the UCLA Global Online division. This new division will offer degree and certificate programs to students anywhere on earth. The project's success relies on UCLA Extension's ability to prove a level of expertise and management effectiveness that would make participation from other colleges and faculties more enticing.

"The design of the UC System puts Extension units in a very specific

box, but over the coming years we're going to be launching UCLA Global Online, which is really testing the limits of that box," Robinson said. "We're going to have to see how we can partner with our main campus in different ways, and Destiny comes into play there because we need to have reliable, intuitive software that allows us to manage this. We need to demonstrate that we can take enrollments, usher students, handle marketing, present a web presence, and do it all in a very seamless way."

Additionally, Destiny contributes to its clients' capacity to grow and evolve by driving direct collaboration between customers in unique ways. Beyond hosting the Grow! customer community and annual Grow! conference for Destiny One users, Destiny staff connect leaders and change-makers from partner institutions to find new spaces for collaboration.

"A vendor will manage many clients but they likely aren't incentivized or inclined to connect them. Destiny takes a totally different approach. If we run into an issue, Destiny will help us with it and they'll also connect us to other clients who have had similar issues to see how they addressed it," Robinson said.

"They create opportunities for collaboration both with the company and with other colleges and universities working in the Destiny environment," he added. "They don't just drive collaboration on elements that specifically impact the product, either. They're connecting people to engage with issues that we're facing as players in the continuing education space. That drive to connect people in areas that transcend the software really sets Destiny apart."

“ Whatever comes up, whatever is going on in my space— whether that's higher education, continuing education or even in my particular part of the country or part of the world— we're going to be able to work through it with the Destiny One software pack. ”

## The Operational Health Check: Expanding on Destiny's Commitment to its Partners

UCLA Extension decided to go a step beyond the traditional high-quality service delivered by Destiny Solutions and chose to engage in an Operational Health Check (OHC), an additional service Destiny offers where an implementation consultant comes on site to help ensure colleges and universities are getting the most possible value out of their Destiny One CLM system.

While UCLA Extension initially saw the OHC as a kind of insurance policy, the high quality of service they received from Destiny's support team allowed them to really leverage the OHC, which has now become part of the university's recurring engagement plan.

### **1** The Immediate Benefits of the OHC

According to Robinson, their first OHC engagement was valuable in that it helped his team get up to speed on some of the different aspects of the Destiny One product, created wider confidence in staff's ability to use Destiny One, and helped the team get a better handle on

the management of their division, creating a structure for future growth.

“The structure of the OHC allowed us to gather all of our status updates, bug reports, change request submissions, new release schedule and new release notes—all of those things that we were really struggling to bring together and communicate to our end users,” Robinson said.

Through the on-site structure of the OHC, UCLA Extension was able to leverage the expertise of Destiny’s implementation consultants to further define their business objectives and practices, and ensure they made sense—not just in terms of using the software, but in terms of institutional management.

“It was interesting to suggest an idea around how we think we’d like the system to work and watch the reaction of the implementation consultant,” Robinson said. “They will usually raise questions around why we’re trying to accomplish something a certain way and what we’re trying to achieve. It was surprising how many things resulted in us realizing that we ultimately didn’t want to make a certain change and identifying areas that were valuable to pursue in order to achieve our goals.”

## The Impact of the OHC on Staff Satisfaction

The OHC did more than just ensure UCLA Extension was getting the most out of their investment in Destiny One. For many staff, their entire day occurs in the Destiny One environment and it’s critical to be comfortable in that space. The work of Destiny’s on-site implementation consultant, and the design of the OHC itself, has ensured staff at UCLA Extension are comfortable using their new CLM system.

“The OHC improved the staff experience by helping us understand where we are. Once the system went live, it became very easy for people to simply sink into a routine, taking whatever training they got and moving forward without thinking about how else it might be able to work,” Robinson said. “The OHC gave us the chance to talk about our biggest problems and make sure that we’re understanding how to explain the issues that we’re having, because a Destiny expert was going to be on site and create the opportunity for us to learn and evolve.”

“ If we run into an issue, Destiny will help us with it and they’ll also connect us to other clients who have had similar issues to see how they addressed it. ”

What’s more, the engagement helped staff realize the potential of what they could manage within the system. Many processes that were once manual and time-consuming—like getting new offerings to market, tracking down student information, processing registrations and more—are automated in Destiny One. This creates greater possibilities in terms of what staff can do with the saved time.

“There’s no longer this idea floating around that the system is what it is and we have to simply make do,” Robinson said. “Across our entire staff, there’s a realization that we, as an organization, are in control. Staff realize they can manage their own work and can approach problems in new ways.”

### 3 More Than a One-Time Affair: Ongoing OHC Engagements

Having now participated in an OHC engagement, Robinson expects to make the Operational Health Check an annual part of institutional management at UCLA Extension, with the focus changing to more on-the-ground improvements to the way folks work.

“We envision doing an OHC annually. It can’t be done too frequently because you need to get steady state before you can start looking at how to evolve,” Robinson said. “Annual engagements make sense because the OHC can take a number of forms. Our first health check was really carried out in a single room with a lot of different users coming and visiting; it was very conversational and we didn’t actually do much live demoing. Our second health check would be more observational, with visits to work stations and attempts to see and evolve how the business operates day to day.”

## Benefitting from a True Partnership

Colleges and universities are entering a new era where agility, responsiveness, cost-effectiveness and service are paramount to success. The old models of institutional management no longer work for the majority of institutions, and nor should the old models of outsourcing. To ensure institutional staff and leaders can focus on their main priorities—developing great programming and serving students—forming strong partnerships with external companies is more important than ever before.

Beyond the quality of the product itself when considering and IT investment, institutional leaders should take a good look at the kind of ongoing relationship they will have with the company they engage. Are you dealing with a vendor, whose goal is simply to sell a product? Or are you dealing with a partner, who is as committed to your success as your own team?

“Working with a partner like Destiny Solutions, rather than vendor, puts us a little more at ease in terms of knowing that Destiny understands the Herculean effort of migration and launch,” Robinson said. “Whatever comes up, whatever is going on in my space—whether that’s higher education, continuing education or even in my particular part of the country or part of the world—we’re going to be able to work through it with the Destiny One software pack. This software will grow with us and our needs; we won’t outgrow it or Destiny.”

Navigating the differences between partners and vendors—and making the right decision when it comes to outsourcing critical infrastructure—has never been more important than it is today. The right partnership makes all the difference when it comes to achieving new strategic goals while managing the expectations of today’s higher education environment.

# About Destiny One

Destiny One is customer lifecycle management software for higher education administrators serving non-traditional students. It integrates with main-campus systems, engages students with an Amazon-like experience, optimizes staff efficiency, and provides business intelligence, empowering data-driven decisions. Destiny One lets schools unite, understand and control all aspects of their business at once.

Destiny One manages the entire learner lifecycle:

## Curriculum

Plans and manages courses, certificates and programs

## Marketing

Targets marketing campaigns and defines consistent branding

## Finance

Governs accounting transactions and manages financial information

## Enrollment

Increases registrations by engaging learners and automating the enrollment process

## Reporting

Leverages dashboards and reports to make business-intelligent decisions

## System Administration

Configures workflows, staff roles and permissions, and business rules and fees

## Want to learn more?

Contact us at  
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