

Cluster definition & content curation: *less is more*

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In the previous episodes, we explained to you why the dynamic curation of training content is now the new standard for corporate training, and how it actually works in practice.

Today, we take a look at another crucial part of this process, namely, how to effectively segment your company's population into subsets to which we can then propose different content (which we will call **playlists**), specific to them.

If the segmentation of the population is done well, it will result in highly relevant content which consequently provides a high level of engagement, which is a huge part to the success of the training initiative. However, defining segments that are too specific must be avoided. In fact, if a lot of populations are defined, many arbitrary content choices then must be made: an onerous and unrewarding job because it's not supported by the data.

So let's examine the golden rules for creating useful user clusters and generating dedicated playlists.

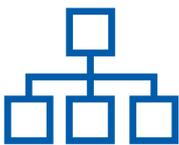
Focus on the truly relevant differences



The criteria you use to decide grouping users together is decisive because the way in which users are segmented will have a profound impact on their future behaviour, and on the data we obtain by analysing this behaviour. Focus on the differences between groups which may have justifiably distinctions and needs.

We need to find out what these differences are in order to determine the best content for each group.

The interesting points are usually the following:



Functional

It's important not to focus on business units that are too specific, for reasons we will examine later. It's better to focus on macro areas that vary according to the type of business (e.g. Sales, R&D, Operations).



Geographical

In the case of multinationals, the country may be relevant or, better still, the language. The reason is simple: speakers of different languages may be interested in content in other languages, but give preference to their own.



Logistics

Making a distinction between headquarters, stores or branches is only relevant if it entails a difference in the network or mechanism. For example, if a section of the population can access only a part of the content, it will have to be isolated in order to configure the playlists and analyse the data separately.

The groups must be few in number and sufficiently large.



With regard to the items listed above, choices must be made in the most concise way possible. This statement may appear counterintuitive since it could be assumed that clustering should be as granular as possible, as with this approach we would obtain more specific information.

In fact this is not the case for structural and procedural reasons:

- **Statistical significance:** if a cluster is too small, it would be reasonable to assume that any data we get from it could be considered random and therefore not significant, just like a vaccine that has not been given to enough individuals to determine if it is safe and effective. **We would be led to believe that we know more, but instead we would actually know less.**

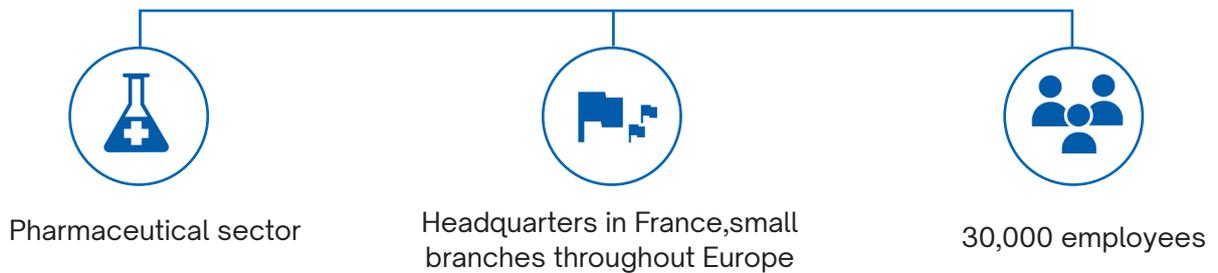
- **Content selection:** if there are too many clusters, even if we have enough data for each cluster (which as we have seen is a risky assumption), we will not be able to give each one enough attention to create accurate playlists for everyone. **It's much better to spend more time, carry out more checks, and make more iterations of fewer groups: dynamic curation works better this way.**

**In short, as far as user clusters are concerned, “less is more”.
So what general rules can we follow?**

The rule is very simple:



Here is an example of effective clusters for a company with the following characteristics:



Clusters:

- R&D_FRANCE
- SALES_FRANCE
- OPERATIONS_FRANCE
- STAFF_FRANCE
- R&D_ABROAD
- SALES_ABROAD
- OPERATIONS_ABROAD
- STAFF_ABROAD

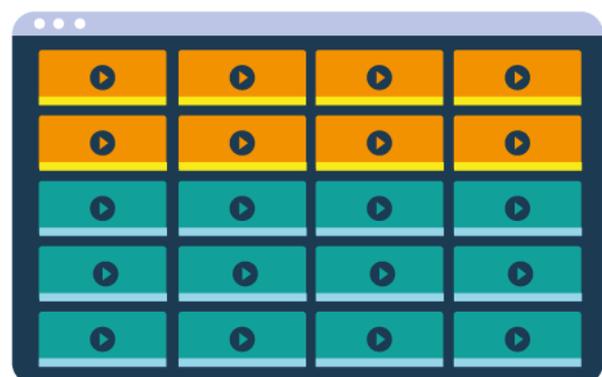
How to create effective playlists for each cluster

Now that we have decided how to segment the corporate population, by isolating the distinctive and relevant characteristics of each group, we can now define which playlists should be allocated to each. **Even for playlists, it is extremely easy to make the mistake of thinking that the more we create the better.** Actually, making too many playlists that are too specific is counter-productive for various reasons:

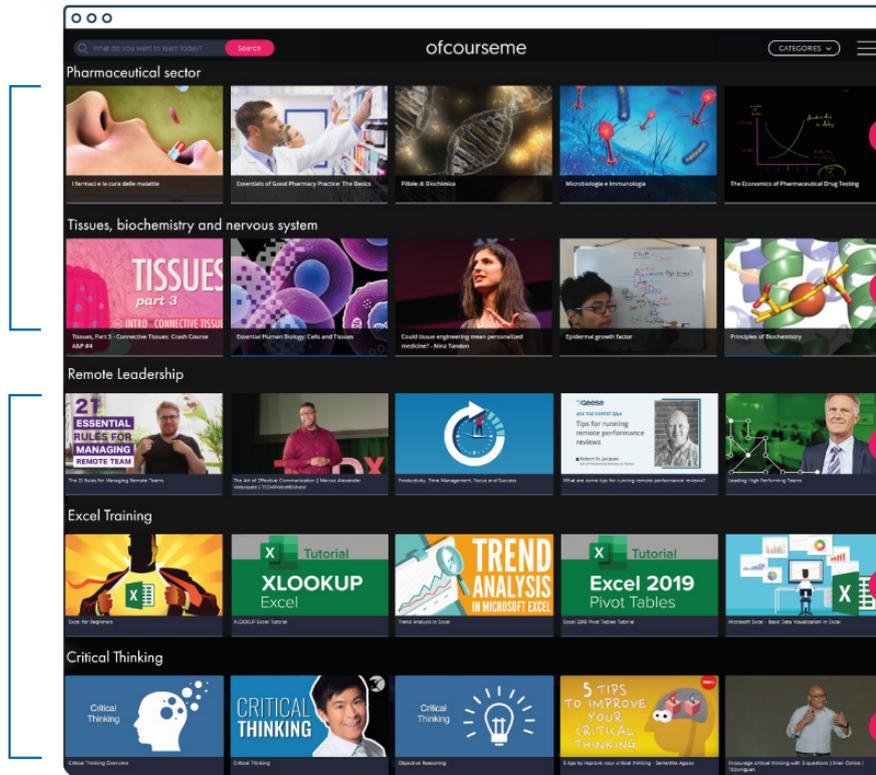
- **Information overload:** when faced with ten or more playlists, people become overwhelmed, similar to when that restaurant menu has too many choices, or when an ice cream parlour has too many flavours on offer. Neuroscience has shown that the best solution is always to offer a few, well-defined choices.
- **Social isolation:** in the spirit of self-sacrifice and to provide excellent service, we tend to think that the maximum contribution we can make is to create completely different playlists for each group. However, by doing this we would isolate them, preventing any cross-fertilisation. It's better to create a couple of specific playlists for each cluster, plus another three or four dedicated to common values or covering fundamental points of the corporate strategic plan.
- **Loss of detail:** it is human to delude ourselves that if we go into more detail in 10, or even 100 topics, with hard work we will still be able to do everything well. But if time is a finite resource, and we're specifically referring to the time the L&D team will devote to reviewing and validating the playlists, either they'll drag the process out by delaying the launch of the initiative, or you'll lose detail and control over the content. In both cases we will have complicated things for our colleagues, though we really thought we were doing them a favour.

So, in our experience, what are the characteristics of a perfect playlist?

- Two playlists dedicated to a single group, at the top of the page, relevant to the group but without necessarily being over-specialised (examples below).
- Three common playlists, further down the page, on corporate values or cross-functional strategic initiatives.



Example of playlist



Conclusion

The key is always to analyse the data and then repeat the process.

Once the clusters of users and educational content playlists have been defined for everyone, we're ready to go live and announce the launch of the initiative.

This can be a tense moment: have we made the best possible playlists? Is it worth doing more checks? Making more changes?

The most important thing to remember about this phase is that it's the starting point and not the endpoint. The critical phase of the process is the analysis of the data, from which we'll learn the changes needed to improve the content – then we'll repeat the process. The secret of dynamic curation lies precisely in the fact that it is an iterative and data-driven process. First you go live, then you analyse, then you take action.

The most important thing is to make a start, then you learn a lot during the process and can make plenty of changes. We've seen several success stories develop using patience over time, thanks to these systematic iterations.