

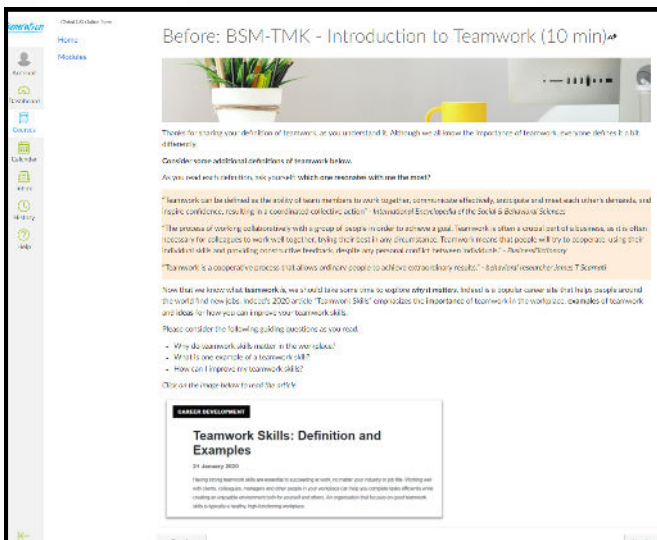
BALANCING CREATIVITY AND CONSISTENCY ACROSS THE GLOBE

Generation cidilabs

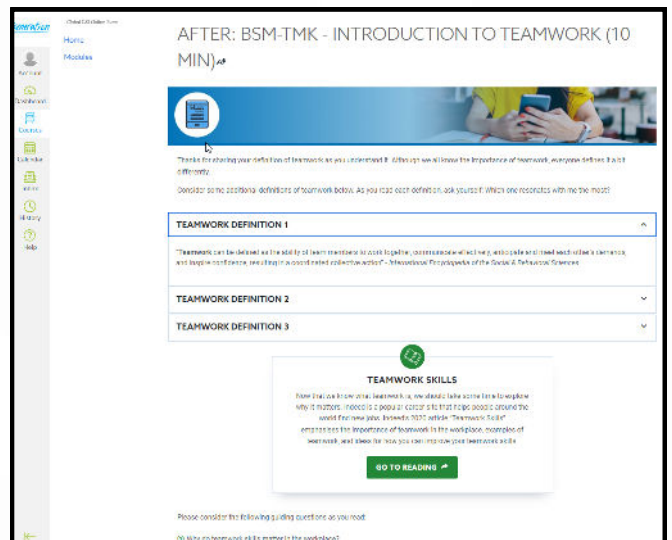
Introduction

Most organizations felt overwhelmed by the rapid changes in education sparked by the pandemic in 2020. Some organizations, however, found a way to use that extreme pressure to make diamonds and to continue to shine thereafter.

Generation: You Employed, Inc., a global non-profit dedicated to driving economic mobility by preparing, placing, and supporting people into jobs that would otherwise be inaccessible, is a shining example of an organization that took a challenging situation and used it as an opportunity for positive transformation. Carli Williams, Online Learning Lead for the Global Curriculum and Instruction Team, and Mat Constantine, Director of Online Learning, leaned into the discomfort of change and developed innovative solutions using tools from Cidi Labs to adapt and serve their diverse learners across the globe.



BEFORE DESIGNPLUS



AFTER DESIGNPLUS

In 2019, Generation was operating in 10 countries with 99% of their courses delivered in person. In 2020, they shifted to 100% online and have since grown to 17 countries, serving approximately 23,000 learners a year. They estimate 72% of those are either in online or blended programs, with programs ranging from 4 to 16 weeks long. That rapid and dramatic shift to online delivery required Generation to adopt new tools to amplify their instructional design capabilities and help them reach more learners with engaging, accessible courses in their learning management system, Canvas.

Balancing Creativity and Consistency Across the Globe

Previously, Mat had made a comprehensive style guide that increased consistency in course design, but the document was one of many resources to consider during the design process and was not always easy to use. As their organization continued to work on online accessibility and design consistency while scaling, it was evident that they needed another, more effective solution. They were also very thoughtful about the user experience their learners were looking for. "Our learners at the time were almost all between 18 and 29 years old, so they were looking for something reasonably fresh and crisp and bright," Mat stated.

Finding a tool that could enable accessible and consistent course content development with limited training for their team, sounded like an impossible feat that would require superpowers to accomplish. While looking for new tools to improve the user experience for designers, instructors, and learners, Carli found DesignPLUS and knew that the ability to create content blocks and manage visual design across many locations would be a huge benefit to them – a way to bring improved content design to all programs. With DesignPLUS from Cidi Labs, Carli and Mat were able to quickly create accessible, consistent, beautifully designed Canvas courses AND scale those changes across the globe. DesignPLUS is the must-have design toolset that allows course designers and educators to create visually stunning, engaging, and accessible Canvas courses, without requiring any technical skills.

Launching with Excitement

Introducing new tools to team members can be a daunting challenge. Beyond finding a powerful tool to support their online programs, Carli and Mat knew they'd have to plan for implementation, upskilling, and a design rollout for their teams to ensure they were ready to use the tools to meet their ambitious goals. Additionally, Carli and Mat wanted the rollout of DesignPLUS to feel special, especially given the constraints of doing everything in a remote working environment. They designed a "red carpet" unveiling event that showed the power and potential of the DesignPLUS tools to create visually engaging courses. "I think the biggest hit [was] showing the before and the after of what a homepage looks like, and how even something as simple as having an accordion makes content so much easier to navigate," Carli shared.

"Cidi Labs helps me sleep better at night when I think about our LMS experience and the experience we're giving to students. DesignPLUS working with Canvas makes me feel a lot more relaxed about that."

Mat Constantine,
Director of Online Learning,
Generation

Balancing Creativity and Consistency Across the Globe

Generation told their team, "With just 2 hours of your time, we can train you how to use this tool that will allow you to design more accessible and engaging course content and improve the learner experience on Canvas." Carli emphasized that showing people the final product and giving them a clear path forward incentivized their team's adoption. One additional key factor that helped them gain buy-in was acknowledging that everyone is busy (a consistent but crucial acknowledgment) and framing training and implementation of DesignPLUS as an investment in their learners. These strategies paved the way for a smooth roll-out and set the stage for scaling their best practices.

"It makes me really proud of what we're doing. I just smile every time that I see this stuff because it really is so much more. It's what we talk about as learning designers. It's actually seeing it in action and making it easy for folks to do that, which is really cool"

Carli Williams, Online Learning Lead for the Global Curriculum Instruction Team, Generation

In response to competing priorities and the limited capacity they knew their team had, they created the first introduction to DesignPLUS as a fun experience to build excitement and inspire others. Regarding the unveiling event, Mat said, "It was a really cool, fun virtual event. We got a huge amount of excitement when we launched DesignPLUS. Their champions of quality design were enthusiastic to adopt the tools after hearing and seeing Carli and Mat share what was possible. The joyous excitement from Carli and Mat helped fuel the adoption of DesignPLUS. "It makes me really proud of what we're doing. I just smile every time that I see the content with DesignPLUS because it really is so much more. It's what we talk about as learning designers. It's actually seeing it in action and making it easy for folks to implement and then impact learners, which is really cool," Carli stated.

Scaling Best Practices

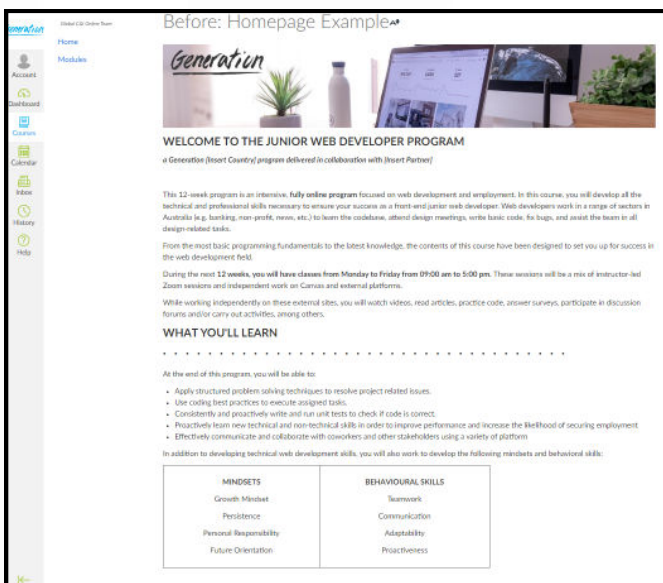
Once design and accessibility were optimized, then it was time to think about scale. Working with Christine, a global design manager and Online Learning Specialist at Generation, and Becca, a graphic designer, Carli and Mat created a series of key content blocks and a homepage template that could be used across all programs around the world. "It makes the process much faster, so it saves us time and money, which especially, for a non-profit, is big," Carli said.

Knowing that the homepage is the first thing a learner sees, Generation wanted to use this opportunity to make a first impression across all 17 countries. They put DesignPLUS to work by adding images for homepages that could be personalized for each country and audience. For example, with courses in India, educators can choose an image that they think will resonate best with their learner profile.

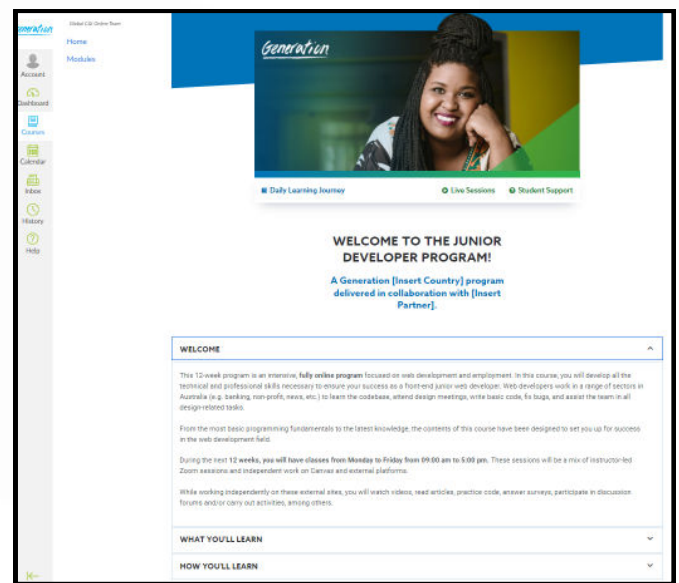
Balancing Creativity and Consistency Across the Globe

The Upload/Embed Image tool in DesignPLUS allowed Carli and Mat to upload dozens of images into Canvas that different country teams could select to customize the homepage based on their audience. Using the Upload/Embed Image tool, each team could tailor their image to put their best homepage forward. If an image isn't quite where a country's context wants it, the tool allows editors to easily crop, resize, and style it - without leaving Canvas.

The Generation team wanted to give curriculum leads and designers an easy way to build course content that was both visually stunning but also ensured everything was accessible and met the necessary standards for all learners to succeed. "We started by identifying recurring pieces of content and creating standard Content Blocks from there," Carli said, describing how they started creating Content Blocks to limit the choices and maintain accessible, engaging designs. Content Blocks enabled individual faculty to creatively arrange their courses with all the requirements met. Content Blocks are a feature of DesignPLUS that allows users to create modular design pieces so designers don't have to start from scratch. One of the primary uses of Content Blocks is the ability to balance a designer's creativity with the need for structural consistency and accessibility. Each block that Generation made went through their accessibility standards, so they knew that no matter what blocks teachers selected, their course would be accessible to all learners. Content Blocks are one of the many tools within DesignPLUS that can help reduce workload and increase consistency.



BEFORE DESIGNPLUS



AFTER DESIGNPLUS

Basking in Benefits

Once DesignPLUS had been implemented into a few programs and had helped them make significant changes, Carli and Mat started sharing their work and gathering feedback from all user types. "The homepage has been a huge hit. That's our first selling point when we speak to people about what the tool can do. They say, 'It looks so much better. It's so much easier to interact with.' That's the first impression for folks when they come into a course. From designers to country teams to instructors, and then participants as well, we've had really good feedback from all of them," Carli said.

Balancing Creativity and Consistency Across the Globe

There were gaps in Canvas that affected the learner experience, especially its layout and visual design. "Canvas is great, but the design options are limited and pages can be a bit bland," Mat says. DesignPLUS has the tools to brighten up those course pages, increasing learner motivation and maintaining precious engagement. DesignPLUS offers a way to craft eye-popping, high-quality courses with three easy-to-use tools: the Multi-Tool, the design tools Sidebar, and the Upload/Embed Image tool. No need to understand or even look at any HTML, CSS, or JavaScript—DesignPLUS is accessible to non-technical users. Carli can see a difference, "I can go into courses now, and if they're using DesignPLUS, I can see consistency across [them]. They look so much better. The user experience is so much better."

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Carli Williams, Online Learning Lead for the Global Curriculum Instruction Team, Generation

DesignPLUS is ensuring that Generation's thousands of learners can easily navigate their courses and that Generation is delivering courses that are beautiful and accessible. "Cidi Labs helps me sleep better at night when I think about our LMS experience and the experience we're giving to learners. DesignPLUS working with Canvas makes me feel a lot more relaxed about that," Mat shared. "We're all really proud now of showing courses on Canvas and showing that homepage, which we're particularly proud of... It's amazing. Now it's a pleasure to open up any new course and show that first."

Are you trying to balance academic freedom and consistency at your institution? Are you trying to scale and apply best practices to thousands of courses? Cidi Labs provides clever, affordable plug-in tools for Canvas that help course designers and educators ignite creativity, dramatically increase productivity, and scale the delivery of high-quality, accessible learning for all learners. Reach out now to learn more and schedule a demo at <https://cidilabs.com/contact-cidi-labs/>.

**DISCOVER YOUR
COURSE DESIGN
SUPERPOWERS**

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