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10. Coursera

Learning on demand

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Founders: Daphne Koller, Andrew Ng
Launched: 2012
Funding: \$146.3 million
Valuation: \$402.4 million
Disrupting: Higher education
Rival: edX



Source: Coursera

Daphne Koller, president and co-founder of Coursera, and CEO Rick Levin

Few would argue that higher education has long been an industry in need of some fresh thinking. Which is why, in 2012, Daphne Koller and Andrew Ng, both former computer science professors at Stanford University, decided to launch Coursera.

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The company is a free online education platform that lets anyone, anywhere access courses from some of the best teachers and universities in the world, including Yale, Johns Hopkins, and the University of Edinburgh, to name a few. Courses cover the spectrum—from global health issues to data science, and most everything in between. Some of the 17.5 million learners around the world who have accessed any of the company's 1,800 course offerings are there because they have a deep interest in a given subject.

"We believe that anyone, anywhere should have the opportunity to transform his or her life via access to an amazing education."

-Daphne Koller, co-founder and president

But as the company has evolved, it is now offering new products that address different types of learners. For instance, Coursera now offers a

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series of curated online courses called "Specializations" for folks that want to gain a specific skill set to enhance their career. These offerings typically consist of four required courses in the specialty, and unlike most of Coursera's offerings, they carry a fee — anywhere from \$79 to \$99 for each course—and a project at the end to prove proficiency. Once completed, the learner has a certificate in that particular specialization.

Research by the company completed in September show that nearly three-quarters of Coursera's learners are from outside the United States, with half from developing countries. And those that are receiving the most direct benefits are from lower socioeconomic brackets. Removing barriers like cost, location, and time — things that have traditionally prevented individuals from improving their lives through education — is Coursera's mission and the model is attracting investors.

New Enterprise Associates, Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers and International Finance have together invested close to \$150 million in the company.



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