

Meet Go1, the eLearning library targeting corporate education

We spoke to Andrew Barnes, CEO and founder of Go1, about the shift in attitude to learning during the pandemic, his goal of reaching 1B users, and pouncing on a gap in the market with old colleagues.

What is Go1?

Go1 offers the largest curated eLearning library from top training providers in a single subscription. Integrated with leading LMS and HRIS systems, the company is transforming the way businesses manage their learning and development globally. Our aim is to reach a billion learners worldwide and we're right on track.

We operate across most markets with 3.5M learners onboard, and through our integration with the likes of Slack and Microsoft Teams, we've been able to seamlessly integrate with existing functions to deliver maximum impact. Because we offer a one-stop solution for an enterprise's L&D needs, most of our customers are businesses that want to streamline their offering into a single platform subscription.

What was the catalyst for launching Go1?

The four cofounders had all worked together in a previous business, and through that experience and other career experiences, we knew there was a gap in the market of corporate education. At the time, all of the existing players were focusing on either creating content or developing a learning platform. We felt that the real magic could be bringing those two together in the same way that Spotify has seamlessly brought together a great music application with the largest library of content.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

When we launched in 2015, we did it with the goal of unlocking people's positive potential through a love of learning. So, in that regard, not a lot has changed. We still hold that same goal, it's just gotten bigger!

As we've grown, we've been able to learn more from each other to keep pushing forward with the same ambition: learned from our customers about what they need, from our partners about how we can best share their content, and from our tech about how we can better integrate with existing systems and platforms.

The one thing that we couldn't have foreseen was a global pandemic. That meant we had to evolve the way we operate internally so we could continue to provide the same service to our customers and partners. As have most businesses, we've learned during the past two years but the great thing has been that our digital model means we've been able to help people continue to learn and develop through their existing roles but also those who have taken this global reset as a chance to retrain.

Did you see an uptick in employees using Go1 more while working from home during the pandemic?

Absolutely, and there's a few reasons for that. Primarily, it was because of the remote-first world that we all found ourselves in meant that people who might otherwise have been out and about or stuck in long meetings were suddenly able to set time aside to invest in their learning. But more than that, the

pandemic fundamentally shifted the general perception of work life balance and the desire for people to feel more fulfilled and satisfied in their roles.

Learning and development plays a huge part in that, so we know a lot of people embraced Go1 as a means to finding a healthier balance between work and life as well as getting more rewarding experiences out of their employer.

There was also another interesting conversation that began happening during the pandemic around mental health and humanising the workplace. Employers suddenly found themselves at the forefront of their employees' mental health concerns in a way they never had been previously, and it caught a lot of companies off guard.

We saw a huge uptick in people accessing our content around mental health as businesses sought to upskill leaders and empower managers. That's showing no signs of abating and it's an area we're hugely passionate about: to continue to move the conversation around mental health in the workplace progressively forward.

What has been your biggest challenge so far?

The hardest thing in the early days trying to define a pithy description of what we offer. We knew what we were setting out to achieve but even with the support of Y Combinator and some great early investors, we always had a broad scope which made it hard to label. Over time, we've learned to sharpen the focus and that's helped both internally with team alignment and externally with clearer market messaging.

How are you funded?

Go1.com has raised over US\$280M (£206M) in total funding from investors including Microsoft via M12, Softbank, Salesforce Ventures, SEEK, Madrona Venture Group, AirTree Ventures, Blue Cloud Ventures, Our Innovation Fund, Oxford University, TEN13, and Y Combinator.

What's in store for the future?

Due to the support and backing of a wide range of organisations, we've been able to continue on our mission to unlock positive potential through a love of learning. However, this is still early.

Internally, we talk about a vision of reaching 1B learners – and there is a long way to go on that journey! We will use the latest investment to continue to deliver more for our key stakeholders: to our customers, to our content partners, and to grow the ecosystem of learning globally.

More specifically this means:

Continuing to find the best content creators globally – and being a partner for them to find new audiences, and grow their own businesses in new markets.

More and deeper integrations with platforms to surface content, making it possible to access great content across LMS, LXP, HRIS and other platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Slack and Workplace by Facebook – we want to surface the best learning to people, wherever they are.

We'll continue to research other ways we can make the lives of HR and L&D managers easier, and ultimately provide new learning opportunities to people in their careers.

What one piece of advice would you give to other founders or future founders?

There are many pieces of advice that you may read or hear and appreciate at a surface level, but not truly internalise until you have experienced the situation directly. Learning to be able to operate both in the micro detail and then still jump up to set the broader strategy and think about the macro context is an incredibly important skill to develop. It is tempting to perhaps focus on just one of the two, but learning to operate across both, at the appropriate times, is an incredibly useful skill to develop.

Andrew Barnes is CEO and founder of [Go1](#).