

# Audience Experience, Inc.

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## Memo: Targeting Higher Ed Adult Learners

To: Chris Etheridge

From: Ricky Smith

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**Summary:** Adult higher education learners tend to be above the age of 25 with many responsibilities such as family life, careers and financial responsibilities. The primary reason for them returning to school is to further their careers and improve their current job status. They want things quick, flexible and if possible, affordable. Some students tend to struggle with financial and technological issues. Overall, this group is vast with many ways to reach them.

**Introduction:** This research is being conducted to evaluate the best ways to target adult learners. Since the age range of adult learners is so vast, starting at age 25+, many of them are in different stages of their lives, with more responsibilities than a traditional student. This may include: family, careers and other financial responsibilities.

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This memo will include: An in-depth analysis on who adult higher education learners are, why they choose to further their education, what they expect from their education and what obstacles they face.

**Audience analysis:** Adult learners tend to be above the age of 25 and are either going to college for the first time or returning to school to further their education.<sup>1</sup> Unlike traditional students (18-24), adult learners typically have a career, family and financial responsibilities. So many adult learners tend to look for more flexible options such as online learning, studying part time, enrolling in certificate/non-degree programs.

Adult learners are described as being in a “state of transition”, as they’re likely back in school for a shorter period of time to quickly further their career then return back to the workforce. Adult learners tend to have higher expectations when it comes to what they want and expect to get out of their education. However, many adult learners struggle with stress and anxiety as they feel added pressure trying to complete a degree in an expedited time frame.<sup>2</sup>

One major hurdle for some students above the age of 40, is that they may not feel as comfortable using technology, which is vital since most convenient options involve some form of online learning.<sup>3</sup>

Money is also a big issue for adult learners as many of them are supporting a family while trying to further their degree.<sup>4</sup> With many of them dropping out. According to Mintel<sup>5</sup> and CareerFoundry the rate of adult learners has been decreasing, as the rate for higher education has increased.

**Recommendations:** Adult learners need a form of education that is flexible, succinct and affordable. Courses that they should be able to complete while dealing with family life and their career.

So, the best way to target them would be to have ads promoting the benefits of higher education. Whether that be for students that never completed college or those who want to further their education.

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<sup>1</sup> [SREB-Who is the Adult Learner?](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Educating Part-Time Adult Learners in Transition, Judi Conrad, 1993](#)

<sup>3</sup> [5 Technology Challenges Faced By Adult Learners](#)

<sup>4</sup> [The Challenges of Being an Adult Learner](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Mintel](#)

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Since the age range of adult learners is so vast they could be targeted across multiple platforms such as: Print, TV, IG, Facebook, office spaces, family-oriented areas, billboards, etc. This could be in the form of a flyer or a commercial spot on multiple video platforms.

Testimonials from adults that decided to go back to college and describing how it changed their life. That way adults can see themselves reflected in the ads and will feel a connection.