

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

You're listening to Work in Progress. I'm Ramona Schindelheim, Editor-in-Chief of WorkingNation. Work in Progress explores the rapidly changing workplace through conversations with innovators, educators, and decision-makers. People with solutions to today's workforce challenges.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Early in the pandemic, online learning platform Coursera launched its workforce recovery initiative, a partnership with state and local governments, giving unemployed workers free access to more than 3,800 job-relevant courses and professional certifications. Here to talk about the initiative and the work that they've been doing is Jeff Maggioncalda. Did I get that right, Jeff?

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

You got that so close to right. My grandfather wouldn't have thought it was wrong.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Well, Jeff is the CEO of Coursera. Jeff, thank you so much for joining us.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

Great to be with you today, Ramona.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

I've been following the work you've been doing since April and working with different governments to make sure these courses are out there. These courses that can help people get the training they need for high growth in-demand jobs. Tell me a little bit about where we're at in this process. You've been doing this for a few months now.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

Yeah. Well, we're well into it. Let me step back first and just say Coursera has been around since 2012. It was started by a couple professors from Stanford, the whole idea being that with the internet and with cloud computing, it's possible for people to get access to very high quality education. And that just wasn't so true even 10 years ago, but in the last eight years at Coursera, we have teamed up with 150 of the top universities around the world. This is Duke and University of Washington and University of Michigan and Arizona State University as well as many international schools. We've also teamed up with 50 industry partners. This is Google and IBM and Facebook and Microsoft, and they're also creating courses on Coursera. And today there's more than 4,600 courses on Coursera that have been created by these top leading educators, companies and education institutions.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

The way that this turned into the workforce recovery initiative really was catalyzed by COVID. One of our partners is Duke. And in January 2020, it was like January 26th, I got a call from our key contact at Duke Matthew Rascoff and he said, "Jeff, we have at Duke, a joint venture with Wuhan University. We have a campus in Kunshan, China, and there's this virus that has broken out and our campus got closed. And so we need access to a product that Coursera offers that's called Coursera for Campus." It's basically a version of this whole catalog so that schools can teach their students with pre-existing high-quality

online content. He said, "Can we get access to a free version of Coursera for Campus so that we can keep our school running in China?"

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

And so we talked to our partners, all these universities who have courses on Coursera, we said, "Hey, we'd like to help out Duke. There's this pandemic that's breaking out in China." They said, "Absolutely let's offer the stuff for free." And so we did. We got that done in February. And then I remember it was about February 26th. The prime minister of Japan said, "We're closing all schools in Japan." And I immediately got the exact team together. I said, "Hey team, all schools in the world are going to close. This pandemic is not going to be contained just to China and it's going to affect all societies." And so what we did is we convened our partners and we said, "We would like to extend what we did for Duke. And we'd like to do a free version of Coursera for Campus for any university in the world that is closed because of COVID." Well, that was on March 12th.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

Shortly after that, 1.6 million students had their schools closed. Nine out of every 10 students in the world had their schools closed, and we went from 30 universities using Coursera for Campus to 3,700 universities in just about five months. Well-

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

That's incredible though. You were right at the beginning of it and that's an amazing number of campuses.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

It was so quick and so effective. We have two and a half million students and 24 million course enrollments already in that... We call it the Campus Response Initiative and we saw that happen. And we said, "Okay, wait a sec. This pandemic is not going to stop." The first major phase is kind of flattening the curve and ensuring people's safety, dealing with school closures is the next big phase. Well, what's going to come after that? Unemployment, unemployment. So in March we said, "We've got to start solving the unemployment problem. It's not here yet, but it's coming and it's coming fast. Let's copy what we did for the Campus Response Initiative, where we gave Coursera for Campus away to schools. And let's give Coursera for Government away to governments who are working with unemployed people."

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

And so we basically took the same play that we had done for campuses and we did it for governments. On April 24th we said, "Coursera for Government is available to any national state or local government agency in the US and internationally, to help people become unemployed because of COVID." And what we find, the International Labor Organization estimates that over 300 million people worldwide will probably lose their jobs due to COVID. And so we put this out there and the program has been extremely successful. So we have now had the Coursera for Government... This Workforce Recovery Initiative started with over 70 countries, over 30 of the US States and cities, and 330 programs have been activated. We now have over 1 million learners, unemployed people using these courses who have done now over seven and a half million course enrollments as part of this Workforce Recovery Initiative.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Who is eligible for this? And is it offered to anybody or you have to be like signed up for unemployment benefits?

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

It's a little bit of a blend. It's definitely not anyone in the world can come straight to Coursera and use the Workforce Recovery Initiative. What we found worked very well with the Campus Response Initiative is that we would go through a university and then say to the university, "You can invite your students to get free access to Coursera for Campus, these 4,000 or so courses." And then the university makes invitations. We basically said, "Let's do the same thing with government agencies."

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

We're not at Coursera validating, are you unemployed or are you not? Are you a citizen or are you not? We simply partner up with the government agency. They then essentially create an instance of Coursera for Government, which is the kind of their website. We help them curate the course collections, the job skilling programs that they want to have that are most tuned to their audience. So maybe in one state, you're really trying to help people with IT. [inaudible 00:07:29] IT jobs, in another state perhaps it's more computer software programming or something like that. So we work through the state or the workforce development agency, and then they invite people and we ask them to invite people who become unemployed, but we're pretty flexible on it. We really want to make sure that people have access to it. So it's really through the invitation from a workforce development agency that individuals get access to this program.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

You mentioned that these are localized, curated sets of classes, which makes plenty of sense because all the jobs that happen in a community it's local, some people may need advanced manufacturing. What are the main focus jobs that you're seeing out there? Where is the big demand right now?

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

The big demand. If you look at where the jobs are, World Economic Forum, just put out a... Every year, they do the Future of Jobs Report, they just came out with the 2020 Future of Jobs Report. And what you find from that list is that the really big growth opportunities for employment are in the digital jobs. Now the care industry, the healthcare industry is also growing very rapidly and many of those jobs are digital, but frankly, a lot of them are not. So that is definitely one non-digital sector that's growing rapidly, but for most part, almost every other job that's growing is a digital job. And so these are computer programming, lots of jobs in computer programming.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

In fact, Microsoft recently published a study. They said there's about 49 million digital jobs today. They say that within the next five years, there will be another 150 million digital jobs created. These are in computer science, a lot of computer programming, a lot of IT support, a lot of data science, analytics, business analysis. People talk about machine learning, which is using data to predict how people are going to behave and then to offer them a certain product based on their behavior. There's a lot on cybersecurity and privacy. So it's a range of a lot of digital marketing. It's a range of digital skills, but I'd say the big theme is people are basically moving from non-digital careers into digital careers.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

Now it's easier to say that than to do it, but now there are emerging solutions and some of them are on Coursera working quite nicely where someone would no college degree and with no background in a digital field at all, can get trained for an entry-level digital job fully online and very affordably.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

If I were to go to Coursera, whether I go through a state or local or national program, or I go on my own, what is the experience? What are people learning in these courses?

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

There are 4,500 courses. They're in data science, they're in business, they're in technology and IT. Frankly, they're also in healthcare, social science, arts and humanities. So the catalog is very broad. When it comes to the workforce development initiatives, the kinds of learning people do is to learn the skills needed to get the jobs. And so it's very much more job focused.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

Now we have certain programs. These are entry-level professional certificates created by some of our industry partners that have been very attractive for people who are looking to make a career switch. And it started with Google. They realized many years ago... In 2017, they realized that they needed a lot more IT support professionals. They also realized that they could really get a more representative workforce. They could make job opportunities available to people who didn't have a college degree. They could learn the skills to do IT support.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

Some jobs require a college degree, but many jobs don't. And so Google created a program to train people to become an IT support professional at Google. And it worked so well that they called Coursera and said, "Hey, we've figured out how to train IT support people fully online. We want to put it on Coursera so everyone in the world can figure out how to become an IT support professional." So we said, "Great." We launched this thing in January 2018. Since then, over 400,000 people have come and taken this Google IT Support Certificate. And it's a five-month program, it's \$49 a month. If through Workforce Recovery Initiative, it's free. So states are letting people train to become IT support professionals for free.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

And then what happens is, as you go through the process and you get your certificate, Google and Coursera have created hiring partnerships. So businesses who need IT support professionals can interview the graduates from this program. And even our college university partners have said, "You know, this is such a good program that if you want to take a bachelor's in computer science on Coursera," say from University of London, "we'll give you academic credit towards your college degree if you finish this entry-level professional certificate program." So it's been very successful. We've seen 400,000 people. Over 60% of them say that they do not have a college degree, over 50% of them identify as Black Latinx veterans and women who are often underrepresented in IT. And almost half of them say that they were making less than \$30,000 before they started this program. So it's been really, really very successful. That's one example, is the Google IT cert, and now many others have followed in that pattern.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

It sounds like this is also a cost effective, time effective way for someone who maybe does make under \$30,000 a year, someone who maybe is working two jobs, three jobs, if they're lucky to have a job at this time, to be able to skill up to something that could in the end pay a lot more.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

Ramona, you're so right. Oftentimes when we work at Coursera with workforce development agencies, I think that they have not yet become familiar with this new model that's not only true for education, but is true in many businesses. Some people call it a platform business model. The basic idea is a company like Coursera, we don't create all the content. We have university partners who create content and industry partners who create content and the content is on a platform. The neat thing about a platform is that other people can help provide the education on top of the platform. So you're right. It's very inexpensive. It's very flexible. Especially when you're looking at someone who maybe has a minimum wage job, an hourly job, and many people have multiple hourly wage jobs. Sometimes they don't have access to transportation. They often have family obligations. Carving time out to drive to a campus at 11 o'clock in the morning to take your class is not realistic for a lot of people. It's also frankly, very expensive to have the building and the professor and all the amenities of being on campus.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

These courses on Coursera are \$49 a month. Again, free if you go through the Workforce Recovery Initiative. You could do them on your mobile phone. You could even download. We found that many people don't have constant internet connectivity. You can download them onto your mobile phone and learn offline, say after you put the kids to bed. You don't have to go to a college campus.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

So what we have found is that the platform is very flexible and affordable. It allows people who have other important obligations in life to learn on their own time and from anywhere they want to, but we've also teamed up with Goodwill. We've teamed up with community colleges. And so if a learner does need extra support, maybe even face-to-face mentoring or coaching, or wants to learn with a group of people, they can certainly do that. And many effective workforce development programs do offer that kind of personalized mentoring and coaching, but they can do that on top of a state-of-the-art digital platform. And not everybody needs the coaching and it does take more resources and money to do it.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

What we've found is working really well is everybody can take the courses at very low cost on Coursera. And then for some populations that a state may think needs extra support or is particularly vulnerable, they can put services... We often call them wraparound services on top of this. Whether that's a community college or whether that's a workforce development partner that provides coaching. And so we think it's really the best of both worlds. It's affordable, scalable, and convenient, and where you need to, you can add additional services on top of that.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

One of the things that the pandemic has shown us is some of the inequities in our workforce, some of the lower wage workers were hardest hit both physically and financially. And this feels like a platform like this, which can basically give you what you need for a job that you need without having to take

many, many other courses and at a higher cost. It feels like it democratizes the whole learning skills process.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

Well, the evidence suggests that it does. If you simply look at the representation of students who are taking these kinds of entry-level digital job training programs, these professional certificates on Coursera, they clearly are not your PhD students and master's degree students and people with MBA. These are folks who are trying to get into a new digital career, and frankly, they haven't had a place to go or felt like they had something that worked in their lives and it is a more accessible on-ramp.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

And the other thing that's really neat about this is that's just an on-ramp, it's a first step. Once you get that entry-level job, you can, if you want, continue to get a college degree online and that entry-level professional certificate could count as credit or online, you could continue to take more and more advanced content so that you can continue to develop more advanced skills and open up the career opportunities in front of you.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

As you look ahead to try to figure out what next to offer. There's a lot obviously, a lot of disruption from the pandemic and a lot of people out of work, jobs that won't be coming back or will change, which has happened every time we have an economic upheaval. The Great Recession, jobs came back. They were different. Are you seeing any trends now? Is it just still too early to really assess that?

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

No. One of the things is because this model that we pioneered with Google is working so well, we've really started to expand it. And the way that we've expanded is to say, "Okay, well, if it works so well for IT support, what other digital entry-level jobs are in high demand and don't require a college degree and the skills can be learned totally online and don't require any previous experience?" Well, turns out there's a lot of jobs like that. And so IBM has now launched a entry level professional certificate in data science, no college degree, no background in data science required in cybersecurity. So you can become a cybersecurity analyst by taking the IBM Cybersecurity Analyst entry-level Professional Certificate. And then data analysts. There's a lot of data analyst jobs. So those are the three from IBM.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

Facebook just launched on Coursera, the Facebook Social Media Marketing Professional Certificate turns out there's a lot of jobs in social media marketing and not enough people who know how to do the job, but you don't need a college degree to learn how to do this job and you can learn these skills totally online.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

Salesforce just launched on Coursera, the Salesforce Sales Development Representative Professional Certificate. So turns out there's a lot of jobs in sales and a sales development representative is someone who kind of tees up the sale for the sales executive to close, but there's more jobs than people who know how to do the job, but you can learn to do that job without a college degree, without any background in sales.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

Google announced three more in UX design, that's a user experience designer job, in program management. So there's a lot of project management jobs that are going unfilled. And another one in data analysis. And then we just announced one with Intuit.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

Turns out there's lots of jobs for digital bookkeepers, and you can become a bookkeeper even if you didn't get a college degree and you don't know accounting as a way to get into finance and accounting. We're going to more than double our catalog in the next 12 months. So these jobs are coming, they're available and the skill on-ramps are becoming more and more accessible. So we are really, really enthusiastic about where things are going and frankly, these digital jobs, not only can you learn from anywhere how to do these digital jobs, but because of the pandemic and working from home, many of these digital jobs can be done from home. So people don't even have to leave their community. They can get a job without having to leave their community, even if that job is not in their community.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

And it's very clear from the businesses that you're partnering with, that certification is important. A way to signal the skills that you have are important, but you don't necessarily need a bachelor's degree or even a BS at this point for some of these jobs that are going to be good inroads to good careers.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

Exactly. And when people say, "Oh, there's a world where everybody needs a college degree." That's not true. Then there are people who say, "No one needs a college degree." Well, that's not true. How about a world where you can get an on-ramp to a good-paying digital job. And then if you want to continue to expand your career, maybe you get a college degree to broaden your opportunity, but it's not a requirement to get in the door. I think it's going to be a blend of these entry-level on-ramps that are less expensive, take less time than a college degree, and are more job focused. And I also think people will get college degrees because they want to widen their range of knowledge and their ability to work in higher levels in broader span jobs.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

My final question to you is 2021, what are your feelings? Where do you see the workforce going? Are you seeing any signs of people being hired through your program, through your partnerships?

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

Yes. When people complete any course on Coursera or any professional certificate, we do a survey six months later to say, "How did it go? What worked well? And what has been the impact on you?" We find that in the Google IT Support Certificate, over 80% of the people say that this has had some beneficial impact on my career. Now whether that's getting hired or getting a raise or just maybe doing their job better, we don't always know, but it does seem to be working quite well. So when we think about 2021 and kind of where are things going? We really think that many, many people will continue to work from home. I mean, a few things.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

First of all, the future of jobs is going to be largely digital, not entirely, but largely digital. Entry-level jobs that are more clerical, that are not digital, are getting automated. And frankly, clerical jobs that are digital are also getting automated. There's a lot of job automation that's going to be gobbling up and automating certain jobs. So really looking for the more creative digital jobs. And that's what this portfolio is that I described and providing on-ramps to get there is the key thing.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

I think that 2021 is going to look like this. The economy is not going to be too bad. The virus will take a... By the way, I'm no epidemiologist. So I'm not an expert on this, but this is sort of the way at Coursera we're setting ourselves up for 2021. We believe that the rate of transmission and the rate of vaccination will vary by region, by country, and by population. So not everyone's going to get a vaccine right away. Many people will choose not to get a vaccine at all. I think that means that we're still going to have a little bit of an unbalanced society. I don't think everything's going to be open. Not all jobs will be back to normal in 2021.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

In any event, most of the future jobs are going to be digital. And so there's going to be a big continuous for the next many years and probably decades. There'll be a major switch from people saying, "I wasn't a non-digital job. I need to figure out how to start a digital career." That's accelerating because of COVID. It will accelerate more in 2021. Then they'll say, "How do I get the skills?" And the ability to get those skills online, even if you don't have a college degree, you don't have to go back to college to learn some of these skills to get these kinds of jobs. And we think this is just going to become something that we think it's working, people will become more aware of it. Government agencies will realize the efficiency and scale of this kind of an approach. And frankly, we think it's going to be a very exciting year full of possibility and opportunity to people who frankly have not had so many opportunities in the past. So we think this is a good chance to improve social equity in our country and other countries around the world.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Jeff, thank you so much for spending time with me. Really a great program and great contribution. I really, really appreciate it.

Jeff Maggioncalda, Coursera CEO:

Thank you. It's been a pleasure chatting with you.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

My guest today has been Jeff Maggioncalda, CEO of Coursera. I'm Ramona Schindelheim, Editor-in-Chief of WorkingNation. Thank you very much for listening.