Web Based Online CEU Program Improves Access to Pesticide Education

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Traditional delivery of pesticide continuing education units (CEUs) is a costly proposition from both a time and resource standpoint. Expenditures are incurred from participants in the form of time availability, program cost, and travel expenses. Extension resources are used in terms of agent’s time (classroom, development, registration, etc.), materials (refreshments, office supplies), and facilities. In personal conversations with license holders seeking CEUs, the agent found that in many cases, license holders came up short for the requirements of renewal and were not aware of it until the license renewal was due. In that scenario, quick availability of a CEU program and prompt delivery of a CEU credit was necessary. Therefore, a program was launched to make CEUs conveniently available to license holders with minimum agent effort.

The objectives of this program was to deliver CEUs whenever a license holder requested, expedite the delivery of a CEU credit, minimize cost to both the agent and license holder, and automate this CEU testing and delivery as much as possible. The agent developed an industry-sponsored online CEU webpage (Fig. 1). This format integrates a webpage with online quiz taking software (ProProfs.com). The webpage allows for CEU seekers to scan a list of available CEU programs and choose one to meet their needs. The user then registers through the software, reads the CEU article, and then takes a quiz to confirm subject matter mastery. The software grades the quiz and informs the agent via email that a participant has taken the quiz. If the participant scored above a 70% on the quiz, the agent can then register the participant with the state of Florida and issue a signed CEU (PDF file) via e-mail to the participant.

To date, 92 CEUs have been distributed to license holders using four different CEU programs (article and quiz). The online CEU website has enabled license holders to access programs any time they are available as long as computer and Internet access is also available. The website enables sponsorship from industry in the form of contact information placed on the website. The estimated economic impact from the program to date is $294,400 in terms of professionals obtaining CEUs to continue employment in pesticide application.

The online CEU website allows for agents to maximize their time and automate the CEU process. It also allows clients the flexibility in terms of time and location to obtain CEUs. Industry sponsorship also brings in revenue to the extension office to cover costs. It takes approximately 3 to 5 min to issue, register, and e-mail a CEU. In the future it may be problematic for the agent to handle too many participants and may need staff help. This may be offset by some of the industry sponsorship. Additionally, the website also allows for agents to publish a paper and get statewide readership.

Fig. 1. The online pesticide CEU website allows license holders to quickly and conveniently earn CEUs for pesticide license renewal.

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