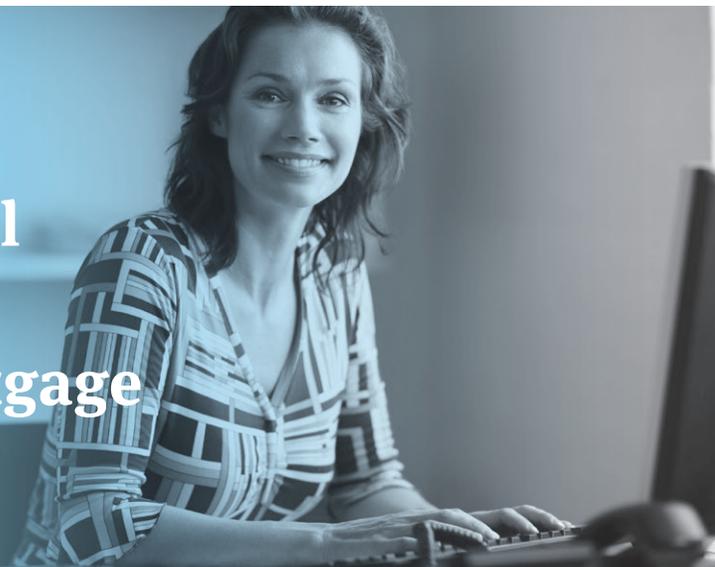


## Enhancing professional development through online learning at Mortgage Bankers Association



### **MBA's Mission**

MBA seeks to create an environment that enables its members to invest in communities and achieve their business objectives. The association creates this environment by developing innovative business tools, educating and training industry professionals, providing a gathering place for the sharing of ideas, acting as the industry's voice on legislative and regulatory issues, and developing open and fair standards and practices for the industry.

Through a wide range of educational programs, trainings, and resources, the Mortgage Bankers Association (MBA) fosters professional excellence in the real estate finance industry—an industry that supports more than 280,000 people in virtually every community in the country. When MBA looked to expand its educational offerings outside the classroom environment, they turned to Blackboard, the leader in online education.

### **The Challenge: Time restraints of busy professionals**

For decades, real estate finance professionals have been taking courses through MBA to manage risk, increase profitability, and improve productivity. But with today's fast-paced, busy lifestyles, more and more people are interested in self-paced or instructor-guided online courses. "It can be really difficult for people to get four or five days off of work to attend a traditional classroom event," says Ann Gambaro, director of content development and lead instructional designer for MBA. "In addition, some of our students are overseas." She says moving courses online was a natural progression and the best way to meet the needs of more people.

### **The Solution: Online courses and designations through Blackboard**

MBA has been using Blackboard in some capacity since 1998. Even upon researching other learning management systems, they found "none of them were as easy to use as an administrator, as an instructor, as a learner," Gambaro says. "It's intuitive, it's easy to use, and a lot of our learners are already familiar with Blackboard because they used it in their schools."

MBA has introduced an online component to most courses. Even MBA's flagship program, the School of Mortgage Banking, which has been offered as a classroom program since the 1950s, now has an online component.

## 2014 MBA Course and Product Offerings

- › 70 Web-Based Self-Study
- › 13 Classroom-Based Courses
- › 8 Instructor-Guided Online Courses
- › 12 Resource Guides
- › 16 Webinar Recordings
- › 35 Designation/Certification Courses/Exams

Total: 154 products offered through Blackboard in 2014

In 2014, MBA offered 154 courses and services through Blackboard. From web-based self-study and instructor-guided online courses to resource guides, webinar recordings, and certification/exams, the Blackboard-based products accounted for 74% of MBAs education revenue for 2014.

### Expanding the pie through corporate sales

Blackboard has enabled MBA to offer courses to mortgage companies, commercial banks, life insurance companies, and others in the mortgage lending field. These corporate clients sign up dozens to hundreds of people to take classes through MBA's eTicket program within Blackboard. "Blackboard allows us to custom brand for certain customers. The corporate branded university is a great feature for those who want to sell their courses to corporate clients. With Blackboard, you can brand at the top," says Gambaro.

### Tracking certificates and designations

But it's not just Blackboard's educational ability that has helped MBA succeed. It's the customization and support capabilities, as well.

Blackboard integrates with MBA's association management database. "Our learners can register for a course through our MBA store online, then 20 minutes later they can take the course in Blackboard. When they pass, that information goes back into our management database, and they're issued a certificate of completion. It's so convenient that it's not a separate system," Gambaro says. "The information passed from Blackboard to our association management database also allows us to track student progress toward our certificate and designation programs."

### Seamless support

When it came time for MBA to upgrade last year, Gambaro says she kept waiting for a hiccup, "but it never happened. That's a big deal."

Blackboard's support technician led the upgrade and assisted MBA's techs with their servers. "The whole process went a lot more smoothly than any of us thought it would," Gambaro says.

### The results: More courses, more students

In the past few years, MBA's education department and reach has seen a generous uptick in both number of courses offered and number of people they serve each year.

"We started with a couple of online courses back in 1998. Now we have 50 or more self-studies at any one time," Gambaro says, adding that they now offer about a number of instructor-led online courses a year as well. "We're able to reach more and more people through online learning."