

Going Digital?

The Discovery Guide

Seven strategic questions for educational curriculum publishers — to guide digital strategy

HOW TO USE: Work through each overarching question with your team. Use the probes as discussion prompts. Use the notes lines to capture answers, gaps, and next steps.

Many publishers approach going digital by asking how to take what they have and make it digital. That assumption deserves to be stress-tested. Without clear, realistic expectations for how the digital version should perform differently from the print version, underwhelming results are almost inevitable. Use this worksheet to work through the right questions — in the right order — before the decisions that are hard to reverse.

Q1

STRATEGIC QUESTION

What does digital actually mean for your product?

Digital isn't just how content is delivered. It's what the content can do — interactivity, data, differentiation, feedback loops, capabilities that print structurally cannot deliver. Which of those capabilities matter for your specific curriculum, customers, and market?

DISCUSSION PROBES

- What does digital enable for our customers that print cannot?
- What friction does it remove from a teacher's day?
- Are we replacing print, supplementing it, or creating something that stands alone — or all three?
- What data does it generate that helps teachers and administrators make better decisions?

NOTES / GAPS / NEXT STEPS

Q2

STRATEGIC QUESTION

Which parts of your product are genuinely better digital — and which aren't?

Print standalone, digital standalone, and hybrid aren't three versions of the same customer. They're three distinct profiles with three distinct sets of needs. For each version and each component — does digital create more value or more friction?

DISCUSSION PROBES

- For each component of our product, does digital create more value or more friction for the teacher and student?
- In our hybrid version, which components are digital and which are print — and have we validated that approach is helpful for teachers?
- Does the customer's mental model of our hybrid product match what we actually built?
- Are our three versions genuinely differentiated, or is one of them an afterthought?
- If we're rebuilding, what did teachers actually use digitally in the previous version — and what did they ignore?
- Do we know why each customer is choosing the version they're choosing?
- Is the format split in our hybrid by content component, by user role, or both — and is that intentional?

NOTES / GAPS / NEXT STEPS



SPECIAL CASE

Special case: Taking a print product fully digital

Completeness matters — but it's just the starting point. The question isn't "how do we move this" — it's "what does this need to do, and what's the best way to do it digitally?" Print products are organized for print. A true digital standalone requires rethinking the structure, not just the format.

DISCUSSION PROBES

- Have we accounted for the instructional purpose of every print component — and made a deliberate decision about how that purpose is served in the digital version?
- Have we rethought the structure for digital, or replicated the print structure on a screen?
- What does the digital standalone do that the print version couldn't — and is that difference clear to the customer?
- What did teachers love about the print version, and have we preserved that in the digital experience?

NOTES / GAPS / NEXT STEPS

Q3

STRATEGIC QUESTION

Is your organization aligned on what you're building?

Different parts of the organization often carry different assumptions about what the digital product is, what it costs, and what it's for. Digital isn't an upsell — it's a different product with a different value proposition that needs to be sold that way.

DISCUSSION PROBES

- Do sales, editorial, product, and leadership share the same definition of what the digital product is?
- Is digital positioned as a distinct product or as an add-on to print?
- Can your sales team articulate the value of digital on its own merits — without reference to the print price?
- Is digital priced to reflect what it delivers, or what the market will bear above the print anchor?
- What is each version's value proposition in one sentence — and would everyone in the organization say it the same way?

NOTES / GAPS / NEXT STEPS

Q4

STRATEGIC QUESTION

What are your competitors actually offering?

Not what they claim — what they're actually delivering. The most useful competitive analysis is ground-level: what do teachers actually experience, what do districts say after a year, and where is the gap between what was promised and what was delivered?

DISCUSSION PROBES

- What are our competitors actually delivering — not claiming to deliver?
- Where is the gap between what they promise and what their customers experience?
- What do they do genuinely well, and are we competing on that ground?
- When we hear "our competitor has this feature" — do we know why it matters to our customer, or are we just reacting?
- Does that feature make sense in our product, for our customer, in the way they actually teach and learn?
- Are the features we're building driven by customer value or competitive anxiety?
- Where are we unmistakably better — and do our customers know it?

NOTES / GAPS / NEXT STEPS

Q5

STRATEGIC QUESTION

What does your customer actually expect?

Involve customers early — not to validate decisions already made, but to shape the ones still ahead. A teacher has a specific mental model. An administrator has specific questions they need the platform to answer. These conversations don't stop at launch.

DISCUSSION PROBES

- What does the teacher expect to do digitally that we haven't built yet?
- If we're selling hybrid, which components does the customer expect to be digital versus print?
- What does the administrator expect the platform to tell them?
- What does the student experience need to feel like for engagement to hold?
- Have we actually asked — or are we assuming?
- When did we last revisit these conversations? Has anything changed?

NOTES / GAPS / NEXT STEPS

Q6

STRATEGIC QUESTION

How are you designing for teacher adoption?

Adoption is a product requirement — not a training problem to solve after launch. Teachers are stretched. The first moment of value needs to come quickly. If it doesn't, the window closes.

DISCUSSION PROBES

- What does a teacher need to do to get started, and how long does it take?
- What's the first moment where the product clearly makes their day easier?
- What support is in place when something doesn't work?
- If we're rebuilding or switching, what did teachers find frustrating last time — and have we visibly fixed it?
- If teachers had a poor experience with a prior version, how are we demonstrating what's changed?

NOTES / GAPS / NEXT STEPS

Q7

STRATEGIC QUESTION

Are you making the platform commitment at the right moment?

The platform conversation doesn't wait — the right partner is involved throughout. What comes last is the commitment itself: making it when you have the full picture, grounded in customer needs, not demo impressions.

DISCUSSION PROBES

- Have we defined the product before making a final platform decision?
- Do we know which features are must-haves based on customer needs, not demo impressions?
- Is the platform we're considering a thought partner in this process — or just a technology vendor?
- Is this platform purpose-built for educational publishers, or adapted from another industry?
- What happens to our content and data if we need to leave?

NOTES / GAPS / NEXT STEPS



AFTER WORKING THROUGH THESE QUESTIONS
Where did you land?

Working through these questions carefully will lead somewhere useful. Use this space to capture your conclusion and next steps.

DISCUSSION PROBES

- We're ready for a full digital launch — and we know what we're building.
- We're building a leaner version focused on where digital genuinely creates value.
- We have gaps to close before we're ready — and we know what they are.
- We're actively in discovery with a platform partner.

NOTES / GAPS / NEXT STEPS

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