

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

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LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Learning Management System Basics: Functions And Features eLearning Pros Must Know

The term "Learning Management System" (LMS) makes an appearance quite frequently in eLearning articles, tip sheets, and beginner's guides. As such, it's important to get a good grasp on what a Learning Management System entails and the benefits it brings. Is a Learning Management System really worth the resources? Or will a more manual approach suffice? What are the advantages of investing in an LMS, and which features should you look for? Are there different hosting and pricing plans you need to keep in mind? This article will address all these questions and give you the insider scoop on Learning Management Systems so that you can decide whether a new LMS is right for your online training program or not.

PRIMARY FUNCTION OF AN LMS

The role of a Learning Management System varies depending on the organization's objectives, online training strategy, and desired outcomes. However, the most common use for LMS software is to deploy and track online training initiatives. Typically, assets are uploaded to the Learning Management System, which makes them easily accessible for remote learners. In some cases, the LMS may even have built-in eLearning authoring tools that allow you to develop online training materials without additional third-party software.

Think of a Learning Management System as a vast repository where you can store and track information. Anyone with a login and password can access these online training resources whenever and wherever. For self-hosted Learning Management Systems, users must also have the LMS software installed on their hard drive or access to the company's server. Whatever the installation option, the thing to bear in mind is that LMS users fall into two categories: First, online learners who use the Learning Management System to participate in online training courses; second, your eLearning team who relies on the LMS platform to disburse information and update the online training content.

WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM AN LMS?

Learning Management Systems are beneficial for educational institutions and corporations alike. Extended enterprise online training is yet another application for Learning Management Systems. For example, companies are able to deploy online training resources to external sales channels, franchisees, and even customers. It's vital to identify your organizational and training objectives before you start the LMS selection process, as LMS vendors typically cater to different consumer groups. Some specialize in eCommerce, while others are known for their sales online training features. For instance, the power to integrate CRM software.

LMS DEPLOYMENT OPTIONS

a. Cloud-Based (SaaS)

These LMS platforms are hosted on the cloud. The LMS vendor maintains the system and carries out any tech upgrades or updates. Online learners and collaborators login to the Learning Management System with a user name and password. There's no need to install any software, which makes it a great option for organizations who want to get started as soon as possible. The downside is that some cloud-based Learning Management Systems cannot be customized. For example, there are fewer opportunities to incorporate branding or personalize the dashboard.

b. Self-Hosted

Learning Management Systems that require software downloads. The LMS vendor may offer direct download from their site, or you must request physical software discs. However, the former is more common these days. Self-hosted LMS platforms allow for greater creative control and customization. The disadvantage is that you usually have to pay for updates, and the system may require IT know-how.

c. Desktop Application

The LMS app is installed on the desktop. Some desktop apps are even accessible on multiple devices, making it easy for your entire eLearning team to collaborate.

d. Mobile Application

Learning Management Systems that are accessible whenever, wherever via mobile devices. You can upload online training content so that online learners can track online training initiatives on the go.

LMS CUSTOMER TYPES

a. Large Enterprises

Larger organizations can use these Learning Management Systems to track hundreds or thousands of employees. Not to mention, deploy global online training initiatives. In some cases, they may even feature extended enterprise features so that you can keep franchisees and sales channels in the loop.

b. Small & Medium Businesses (SMBs)

Small and Medium-sized Businesses (SMBs) benefit from this type of Learning Management Systems as they can utilize fewer human resources. These tools also scale along with your business to adapt to your ever-changing training needs.

c. Freelancers

LMS platforms designed for eLearning freelancers who work with multiple clients and need to deliver a diverse range of deliverables. These Learning Management Systems may feature built-in collaboration tools, which allow you to fly solo or work with a remote eLearning team.

LMS LICENSING TYPES

a. Open Source

Open Source Learning Management Systems are generally free and based online. You're able to modify the source code in order to suit your needs. In addition, many open source options have active online communities, which means that you can get tips and troubleshooting assistance if you do encounter a problem. The drawback is that you typically need some degree of programming experience.

b. Free License

There are a number of free LMS options, usually open source systems. However, the money that you save on licensing or monthly fees may be spent on IT staff, especially if you don't have any programming experience. In addition, you may have to deal with a steep learning curve to get the most from the Learning Management System.

c. Paid License

Paid Learning Management Systems require a monthly or yearly fee. Some even allow you to purchase the software outright. They typically offer more advanced support options and user-friendly features.

LMS PRICING MODELS

a. Licensing

Instead of paying per user, this LMS pricing plan involves a licensing fee. Typically, an annual fee that you must renew on a yearly basis, or an outright upfront fee that grants unlimited lifetime access. However, as technology advances you'll probably still have to purchase replacement software in the near future.

b. Subscription

A subscription fee usually grants you access to all LMS features, or relies on a pay-per-user model. This pricing model involves a fee for each user, or active user. In some cases, the LMS vendor offers different price brackets. For example, the fee covers up to 25 active learners. This is a great solution for smaller organizations who want to minimize online

training costs, but still want to be able to scale the Learning Management System as their company expands.

c. Freemium

These LMS platforms are free for basic features but a fee is charged for more advanced functionalities, such as add-ons or upgrades. For instance, a more comprehensive eLearning assessment engine or advanced reports.

LMS SPECIFICATION SUPPORT TYPES

a. SCORM 2004

This set of standards helps eLearning authoring tools and eLearning content communicate with the Learning Management System. SCORM 2004 enables tools to format eLearning content in such a way that's shareable across the board.

b. Tin Can API

Also known as Experience API, Tin Can spec support is often viewed as the follow-up to SCORM. It allows for external learning activities and tracking, and gives eLearning pros the ability to develop and deploy native mobile apps.

c. AICC

Aviation Industry CBT Committee support allows the LMS and eLearning content to communicate via HAC protocols. In essence, the system relies on an HTML form to transmit the information, then the LMS relays the information back via text.

d. IMS

LTI Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI) was introduced by the IMS Global Learning Consortium. It specializes in apps that are hosted remotely, as well as web-based eLearning content.

LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM BENEFITS

1. Organizes And Safely Stores Big Data

Learning Management Systems allow you to gather all Big Data in one location. This also makes it easier to maintain and update your learning materials. In addition, most LMSs feature advanced encryption so that you don't have to worry about data falling into the wrong hands.

2. Monitors Learner Progress And Performance

Virtually all LMS platforms feature built-in reporting and analytics. Thus, you're able to track various aspects of your online training program. If the Learning Management System lacks sufficient reporting capabilities, you can typically purchase add-ons or plug-ins to boost its functionality. You can track everything from learner engagement to eLearning assessment results. This means that you can identify patterns and trends, especially since many LMSs provide data visualizations, such as graphs and charts.

3. Improves Resource Allocation

There are a number of ways that LMS platforms can help you allocate online training resources more effectively. First and foremost, you can identify aspects of your online training program that aren't meeting expectations. Low learner engagement is usually an indicator that you need to reevaluate an online training module or activity. Secondly, Learning Management Systems help your eLearning team update online training assets more rapidly. Then there's the matter of deploying online training resources on a global scale. Thus, you have the power to keep corporate learners up to date using a single tool.

4. Personalizes

The Online Training Experience You can assign different learning paths or online training resources for individual corporate learners with the help of an LMS. Therefore, everyone gets the individualized online training they need based on their learning goals, job duties, and various other criteria. There's even the option to unlock the navigation so that corporate learners can choose their own online training activities and coursework. All this translates into more effective online training experiences and increased learner satisfaction. Not to mention, improved memory retention and engagement.

5. Improves eLearning Accessibility

Modern learners expect online training resources on demand. After all, we live in the digital age, where information is always at our fingertips, thanks to smartphones and wearable tech. Learning Management Systems allow you to deploy and track online training courses without geographical limitations. So long as they can login to the system, corporate learners have the opportunity to expand their knowledge and hone skills.

TOP FEATURES TO LOOK FOR IN YOUR NEW LMS

1. Reports And Analytics

You must be able to monitor your online training initiatives to determine if they are on target or require minor adjustments. The same rule also applies to individual learner performance. Are corporate learners engaging with the online training content? Is it giving them all the information they need to achieve their learning objectives? These are questions that can be answered with a robust reporting system built into your new LMS. Learning Management

Systems also feature analytics that allow you to monitor online training on individual and group level. For example, determine whether a certain percentage of your audience has completed the online training course requirements or not, or how long they take to complete each online training activity on average. Most will even deliver the analytics right to your inbox via automated email reports.

2. Responsive Design Multiplatform

Friendly online training resources give everyone the chance to benefit from your online training course. Even those who prefer to use their smartphones or tablets to access the learning materials. Thus, your LMS should be responsive, enabling you to create a master layout that features distinct breakpoints. The Learning Management System automatically displays the most suitable version of the online training course based on the user's device. For example, shrinks images down to size so that they don't occupy the entire smartphone screen. Ideally, you should be able to preview each version and make necessary modifications before launch. It's also wise to look for a tool that allows corporate learners to download the learning materials and view them offline. Especially when Internet accessibility isn't an option.

3. Intuitive User Interface Feature

Rich systems aren't of much use if your eLearning team is unable to use the user interface and navigate the LMS platform. The same goes for your corporate learners. Does the tool make it easy for them to access the coursework, or does it present its own set of challenges? The LMS you choose should have an intuitive user interface that aligns with your eLearning team's skill sets and abilities. For this reason, it's essential to get their input before deciding on a platform. In addition, take advantage of free trials and demos to ensure it's user-friendly.

4. Support Services

LMS vendors offer different support services. As such, you need to determine the level of assistance you need based on your eLearning team's experience level and the complexity of the tool. For example, novice eLearning teams might need more extensive support in order to utilize the system effectively. Many LMS vendors also host online discussions that allow you to connect with other users, in addition to online training tutorials, guides, and tip sheets. You may be able to pay for additional support services if you require more advanced options, such as a toll-free number that gives you direct access to a trained tech.

5. eLearning Assessment Tools

You need to assess your corporate learners periodically to identify gaps and intervene when necessary. Therefore, the LMS must be able to support a broad range of eLearning assessment methods. Many even offer built-in eLearning assessment tools, such as eLearning templates. Lastly, there must be LMS reports dedicated to eLearning assessment tracking.

6. Gamification Features

Some employees require extra incentive to actively engage in your online training course. Game mechanics give them the motivation they need in the form of badges, points, and leaderboards. The key is finding an LMS that has built-in gamification features so that you can easily incorporate these rewards.

7. Compliance And Certification Support

This is an essential feature for organizations who provide company policy and compliance online training, as well as those who require more advanced certification features, such as the ability to track individual skill and performance gaps. You can also refer to the LMS records in the event of an audit, which helps prevent violations and fines.

8. Social Learning

Support Social learning gives corporate learners the chance to interact with peers and share their experiences. Many Learning Management Systems now feature integrated social media tools. For example, the ability to track online discussion participation, or incorporate a news feed into your eLearning course design.

9. Localization

Multilingual support is crucial for organizations who plan to deliver worldwide online training resources. Every member of your team should have the same opportunity to develop their professional skills. Some LMSs even feature geolocation features that automatically display the appropriate version of the online training course.

An LMS can help accomplish your training needs, so the best thing you can do is to make the right LMS purchase to fit or even exceed your expectations. If you are working for a large enterprise or an SMB, one thing is certain: an LMS can be a great tool to boost your business growth.

Employee Training

Employee training done right is a burden for plenty of L&D managers and HR managers. As a manager, you need to have clear objectives and take into consideration several factors that will help define if you need an LMS or not. What's more, a corporation might invest a strong cash flow in training new hires or in developing existing workforce skills, but if your LMS solution is not ideal for your needs, the result might not be that satisfying. Don't worry about that, though. I'm going to analyze this thoroughly in the following lines. Delivering employee training and development by using an LMS will make your training process fast and easy.

Employee training and development can bring immense advantages to your corporation. By enabling your employees to take on new responsibilities and tasks, you can keep employee engagement high. If your LMS has gamification features, things can become even more exciting. By maintaining your employees engaged, you increase their willingness to learn

more and expand their skills. In the long run, this will lead to higher retention rates. It will also help talented staff get promotions as you cultivate leaders and experts within your teams.

An LMS can help your employees learn new skills and gain problem-solving abilities. An LMS can also boost the creativity and innovation of your workforce. An LMS can help you create immersive learning experiences that will leave your learners in awe. A great way to accomplish that is by designing eLearning courses based on AR/VR or even creating AI training.

Compliance Training And Onboarding

Compliance training is essential in the fast-paced, modern workspace. Most corporations expect their employees to be able to adapt to their work environment rapidly. What happens though when someone is a new hire or when things change within your procedures, services, or products? Information technology might play a vital role in these changes, especially now that we have the chance to use limitless information.

By using an LMS, you can help your staff feel more empowered. Taking up courses on compliance training can also increase their confidence, especially when it comes to onboarding and safety training. When an employee gets responsibility for new tasks, you allow them to deliver better results.

How Implementing Compliance Training Can Add To Your Business Growth Onboarding and compliance training will undoubtedly help your staff learn from past mistakes. Developing critical thinking skills is a great way to make things work for the better. Your team will be able to resolve issues that come up with flexibility. When employees and training managers both have a knowledge-sharing mentality, you'll notice an improvement in your organization's internal procedures.

Your training program will offer insight into each employee's role within your organization. Such a strategy will also create an environment that has a constant learning and evolving base. All these add up to creating a safer working status by minimizing the risk of having employees who stay behind when it comes to business growth and transformation.

When opting for an LMS to implement compliance training, you'll need robust reporting and assessment features.

Sales Training & Employee Skills Development

Most companies need to boost their revenue. Upping your sales game by using an LMS for sales training is the key to this. If you are looking to train your sales reps for success, there is no better way.

If you're starting your sales training efforts or if you need to improve your current sales training techniques, an LMS is a great tool. Such an LMS solution can help design and implement courses that will bring results. By choosing the right LMS tool for sales training,

you can set up a sales training program pretty quickly. Make sure that you have a goal-oriented mindset from the very beginning.

Developing your employees' skills is key to boosting their career goals as well as your revenue. Define if you need to focus more on your employees' skills training or their leadership development.

What Are Some Must-Have Features Of A Top-Notch Sales Training LMS?

Collaborative learning Mobile-friendly learner portal Multiple tenants support Branding customization Multiple media support Assessments and enhanced reporting eCommerce integrations Flexibility when it comes to licensing management Gamification (badges and leaderboards) An effective sales training program should focus on finding the right way to communicate your value proposition to your buyers. Either you offer a product or service, your organization will strive to improve its revenue if your sales team doesn't follow an aligned strategy. Feedback from your current sales force will help create scenarios around specific issues to avoid future frustration. Sure, on-the-job training is critical, but some organizations want to differ. You might want to do the same if you are keen on getting the results you need.

By using an LMS for sales training, you can:

Welcome recruits by hosting onboarding programs Create seminars on product knowledge Focus on customer interaction training Design case-study based learning from previous interactions with clients Customer Training A customer training LMS is not just an eLearning solution. Companies that focus on customer satisfaction should consider making such an upgrade. To accomplish that, your LMS should include certain features. A customer-oriented LMS can help your customers' online training process. Most importantly, it can keep increasing customer engagement.

When it comes to customer education, you need a strategic partner. Selecting the technology that meets your expectations will get you up and running. Your training team will have an eLearning tool dedicated to assisting in the creation of great customer experiences. They will be able to define a strategy that suits your needs.

From developing coursework to scheduling and delivering effective programs, customer training LMS can be your ideal solution. Your board of ideas will have no limit if you create the right customer training strategy by choosing the most suitable LMS.

Of course, the steps you follow will define your customer training success. You need to design a strategy and build an all-star team to implement these ideas. Emphasize your efforts when developing your training content. What you need is to resonate with your target audience and bring value to the table. Success never comes easy; this is why you need to measure and evaluate your efforts. All of the above might fail if you don't choose the right technology.

What Makes A Top-Class Customer Training LMS?

When looking to create successful customer training programs, your LMS needs to be able to provide at least some of the following:

Friendly and easy to use interface Mobile learning compatibility Social learning capabilities SCORM and Tin Can API compliance Gamification elements for customer motivation and engagement LMS integrations with the tools you already use (e.g., CMS solutions, GSuite, eCommerce, Hubspot, Magento, etc.) Multi-tenancy support Localization/Multilanguage support Extended Enterprise Since many large organizations are dealing with multiple dealers and suppliers, there is a need for training through all sales channels. The same goes for your customer service department.

Whether your niche is into retail or information technology, being able to deliver employee training all around the world is vital. Professional training and coaching on a world-wide level need specific features to work.

An extended enterprise LMS could come in handy, especially when it comes to sales training. Implementing such an LMS can assist in keeping an aligned strategy throughout your sales force. No matter where your sales reps live.

With an extended enterprise LMS, you can train your employees on video-based scenarios to reduce customer complaints. In this way, your customer satisfaction will improve, as will your sales return. If your training needs analysis has shown that you need to improve product knowledge, an LMS is your solution.

Manufacturing and automotive, for example, are some other use cases where LMS implementation can bring training to another level.

What Are The Top Features Of An Extended Enterprise LMS? Must have an intuitive User Interface (UI) Should be mobile friendly Customization and personalization capabilities are necessary Should include good reporting and analytics tools Must have localization support Educational/Academic Training The style of training you need is what defines the kind of LMS you should choose. Here is the first dilemma: corporate LMS or academic LMS? What's best for your training needs? By making the ideal decision, you'll avoid facing problems in the long run. The best thing you can do is pick an LMS solution for education that keeps everyone happy. Students, teachers, and all academic professionals involved can gain a lot from it. There are several details you need to consider.

Those of you who are in the educational field might have noticed that it can be challenging to use an LMS for blended learning. I assure you, it doesn't have to be this way. Blended learning might have a better application if you do it the easy way.

An LMS can be used to create personalized learning and social learning experiences for your students. As the world progresses its digital transformation every day, educators need to find smart ways to apply it in their courses. That said, you can use an LMS to make your teaching less stressful. You can keep information about your students and your courses in one place. Also, you can file grades and assignments without worrying where you've hidden that last day submission.

Furthermore, you'll come out as more accessible to your students. What an LMS does best is giving immediate access and channels of communication to all stakeholders involved. Even if you can't afford an a-class LMS, there are plenty of open-source LMS options out there.

The Importance OF LMS Integrations When choosing your ideal LMS solution, the ability it has to integrate with other software is crucial for your decision. Having several integrations can multiply your LMS's power as well as its utility. Integrations will help your L&D team get even more value, but it will also make this tool more efficient.

LMS integrations bring along several benefits. When your learners are already familiar with some software, having the ability to integrate them will increase user engagement. What's more, it can help deliver better User Experience by saving time and reducing manual tasks.

For an LMS to enhance your training effectiveness, you might need to have a media library and eCommerce. A great LMS integrating with applications you already use, or maybe want to use in the future, will make things easier for your L&D.

Whether you're working in human resources or are in the L&D of a telecommunications company, you will need to combine tools that are already in your training arsenal.

TIPS ON HOW TO CHOOSE THE BEST LMS

For Your Industry When you come to think about it, is there an industry that doesn't need an LMS? Depending on your industry's needs and expectations, you should opt for the ideal LMS that meets your business needs.

If you need to train your extended enterprise, you'll have to focus on localization features. A key element for an extended enterprise LMS is that it offers online training anytime, anywhere. Maybe a cloud-based LMS would be the best solution for this case. Or definitely, an LMS that has a proper mobile application.

What if your company is in the hospitality industry? You'll surely need an LMS that is good for employee onboarding and compliance training. The reason for this is simple: you'll have plenty of seasonal employees that you need to train.

Successful LMS Implementation

For Different Industries eLearning training strategies can have a successful implementation in the banking sector, as well. Plenty of financial services do use an LMS to create courses for

their employee training. To meet your training needs in this industry, you'll need an LMS ideal for compliance training. Sales training and soft skills training are also essential. You may also use your LMS to give certificates to your trainers. This will make employee training more interesting. Your employees will enjoy getting certifications of completion. In case your LMS has a competitive edge by including gamification features, even better.

Retail, of course, is no different. Such companies need extensive customer training capabilities. They are also looking for an LMS that is powerful and flexible when it comes to sales training. Keeping your sales force on constant training will enhance the way they interact with your customers. With such an LMS, you can train new hires in no time. The above is equally important to those looking for training solutions in the food & beverage industry.

A cloud-based LMS could be the solution you need. Being mobile-friendly and cost-effective makes it a good option. Extended enterprises could benefit from an all-in-one LMS that offers mobility. Simulation-based training and the use of customer scenarios can also increase your revenue in the long run.

Evaluating And Selecting Your Ideal LMS Solution Of course, the best way to choose an LMS is to test it by yourself. So, I suggest that you ask for an LMS free trial to get your hands on it. If an LMS vendor doesn't offer a free trial period, then at least ask for a demo. Do a training needs analysis before selecting which LMS vendors you'd like to put to the test.

Getting an LMS doesn't mean you have to spend a fortune. You can find value for money LMS choices for SMBs as well. Selecting the best eLearning tool for your business depends highly on who is going to use it.

Evaluate at least 3-5 LMS tools before concluding. Take a look at the user set up, create a mock-up training course, make some assignments, and extract reports. Make sure to choose an intuitive and user-friendly LMS. Always have in mind that you need to choose an LMS that meets your specific business needs and objectives.