

Title:

Web-based Learning Management Systems Used In Partner Support Settings

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Summary:

In many respects, e-Learning has matured as a technology and industry. Today we will look at how web-based learning management systems can be and are being used as part of the partner support function in a company or organization.

What is a learning management system?

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Article Body:

In many respects, e-Learning has matured as a technology and industry. Today we will look at how web-based learning management systems can be and are being used as part of the partner support function in a company or organization.

What is a learning management system?

Learning management systems (LMSs) are web-based software application platforms used to plan, implement, and assess learning processes related to online and offline training administration and performance management. LMSs provide an instructor a way to create and deliver content, monitor learners' participation, and assess student performance. They also provide learners with the ability to use interactive features, such as threaded discussions, web conferencing, discussion forums, and other methods of communication.

Where and why are learning management systems being used in partner support settings?

LMSs are being used in business-to-business, high-process, value-added, and technology-oriented business environments in industries like telecommunications, advanced electronic technology, semiconductor manufacturing, insurance, banking,

medical products, and others. Learning management systems are being used in partner support settings because they can be a cost-effective solution to providing performance support for a company's products and services.

In some ways, partner support operations may be similar to customer support settings, but they possess some distinct differences. More often than not, and by its very nature, a partner channel of distribution exists because the partner adds value to the product and services your company offers. Partner support operations may be more concerned with tactical distribution or other issues because they are responsible for providing their part of the value chain in the delivery of your product or service.

Partners walk a different road with product end users. Partners need the flexibility to provide information and support customer needs, but in a way that supports and amplifies the value their company brings to the partner channel.

Why is it cost-effective to use an LMS for your company's partner support operations?

Learning management systems have lots of functionality that can be used in partner support organizations. A good LMS lets you create multiple partner campuses, which the partners themselves can customize to meet an end-user customer's needs. Each partner can have their own look and feel, with a large selection of capabilities to deliver their unique value-add to the product or service.

Learning management systems can be used to create a library of custom online courses that demonstrate how to use products and services. These courses can be easily updated with the information/service offering unique to the partner's contribution to the product. They can have the same look and feel as the partner's site, to maintain a branded experience. The course can be updated at will, so you're not paying every three months to print new product guides and support manuals.

LMSs can be used to track and monitor your partner's activities, instead of using a bunch of spreadsheets. This is very effective in scenarios where partners must be certified to use your products and services. The learning management system can be set up to notify a partner when their certification is set to expire, using an email tickler so they can recertify on your product. The partner organizations themselves can be configured into a hierarchy within the learning management system, which can be used to manage the partner distribution channel.

What other features in learning management systems can be used for the partner

support function?

A well-designed LMS comes with a help desk feature that can be used for 24/7 partner and end-user customer support. Learning management systems can have integrated web conferencing technology, which can be used in a number of ways to support partners and end-user customers Such as:

- synchronous training used in product implementation;
- web conferencing on a new feature set that can be archived for later viewing;
- actual, on-the-spot tech-support using the "share your desktop" feature so your tech can go in and fix any problems
- and more.

LMSs can have a built-in survey tool that allows you to query your partners and end-user customers with the results stored in the learning management system database for later use. Learning management systems can have a single sign-on/e-Commerce registration feature that can be used to sell add-on features. LMSs also may have events management/seminar logistics add-on applications that can help you manage both your off-site and onsite partner and end-user customer support training. Each individual partner campus that is created can have its own reference area for materials, to help supplement online course content.

A company can realize effective resource planning and substantial cost savings by using learning management systems in partner support settings. The support offered through the functionality of a learning management system can go a long way to cement the relationship between the company and its partner distribution channel, and will have a direct impact on both organizations' bottom lines. Using a learning management system, one or two channel partnership managers or business development managers can manage and direct thousands of partner firms at substantially reduced costs, with the ability to provide precise support requirements customized to that partner's individual needs. In conclusion, web-based learning management systems can be a very useful, cost effective way to manage a company's partner support function.