



Top 10 tips for choosing an LMS to deliver major new learning programmes

Introduction

If you are planning a major new learning initiative, you may be faced with the need for a Learning Management System (LMS) to manage and deliver it.

Your organisation might already have the perfect system that you can use. On the other hand, you may not already have an LMS, or you may face restrictions that mean you have to look elsewhere. Your training programme may be for large numbers of staff, possibly internationally based, need compliance and certification elements, perhaps involve non-staff audiences or may just need an injection of new functionality to make it memorable.

Whatever the reason, you may want to implement your training on a new and different platform so here are ten top tips to help you choose an LMS to deliver your new learning programmes.

1. Check what you've already got

It is easier to utilise systems already in use in the organisation, so make sure you aren't re-inventing the wheel unnecessarily. Be pragmatic, you may have to sacrifice some elements of your new programme, so identify what you have in place in your organisation that you can use and compare what it can do to what you want to achieve.

Tip: Be clear why you are not using existing in-house solutions.

2. Learners

Learners are more likely to engage with learning programmes that are easy to find, easily accessible and easy to use.

Use an LMS that has a visual and attractive user interface - one that fits the look and feel of your brand - one that learners will want to use and return to so they can engage with your learning programmes to build their knowledge and skills.

Tip: The learner is the important person here, understand them and put their needs first.

3. Speed is important

Here we are talking about the speed and complexity of the implementation. You do not want a long, involved and complex set-up process to get the LMS working smoothly. Your training project may run for years or be much shorter, perhaps just a few weeks. Select a system that can be branded, configured and implemented quickly and painlessly. This will certainly mean a cloud based system, and one fully supported by a good supplier who will do most of the work for you.

Tip: Put your efforts into the learning programme itself, get your supplier to take care of the LMS.

4. Identify your learning objectives

Latest trends (in features and functionality) including mobile learning, microlearning, gamification, social learning, augmented reality and virtual reality all have their place - but they may not be appropriate for all learning programmes.

First, think about the learning objectives you're looking to achieve. Then look at the features and functionality that can help you achieve those objectives. Don't bother with a complex LMS that has every bit of functionality ever thought of for an LMS. Identify what you actually want to achieve in your programme, write it down in detail and use this as your LMS checklist.

Tip: Identify the features you need to deliver your specific learning programme and don't just buy a full list of functionality if it isn't relevant for your learners.

5. Single or multiple learning programmes?

Whether you want to deliver single or multiple learning programmes, make sure your new LMS can handle multiple content types - not just eLearning courses.

This is particularly important if you're looking to deliver blended learning programmes, which can contain a mix of eLearning and microlearning courses, and videos, PDFs and other performance support materials and job aids.

Remember you may want to use the platform for other projects later on, so if you can, select an LMS that has flexibility and scope for reuse.

Tip: Think about your future learning needs - consider the extra learning programmes you may want to deliver in the future.

6. Cost effective

Cost is an important factor in the delivery of any learning programme. Where you have a single, defined learning programme that needs to be delivered, make sure your LMS supplier can provide you with cost effective project pricing - to help you achieve your business aims.

Tip: Talk to the LMS supplier about project pricing options for limited use on a specific training project as opposed to a full LMS solution.

7. Security

The world is increasingly security sensitive. Your new system needs to be safe, particularly if it is cloud based.

Tip: Make sure your supplier is ISO 27001 certified and can protect the content and user data for your learning programmes, locating it in your chosen region (US, EU, Africa and Asia etc).

8. Compliance

If your training programme is to roll out important new policies or procedures to staff or external partners, then you may wish to ensure that all of your audience have completed the required training.

Strong compliance functionality, perhaps linked to certification, may be a key feature, so do not skimp on this important area.

Tip: Focus on compliance if it's relevant to you and make sure you choose a solution which has comprehensive compliance functionality readily available.

9. Reporting

You will need to know the impact and reach of your training programme so ensure that you can run reports showing how your learners have interacted with your content and any assessment results that are relevant.

Tip: LMS solutions that use Experience API will give you a more powerful analysis of learners' activities than old-fashioned SCORM based systems.

10. Service

Check out the LMS suppliers' service level agreements. To engage and build your learners' knowledge - you'll need a reliable solution!

Tip: Speak to actual customers. How good is the supplier at communicating? How do they respond when there's a problem?

Conclusion

With modern cloud based LMS solutions, implementing a new learning platform for just one particular project is now very easy and can greatly add to the impact and effectiveness of your planned learning programme.

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