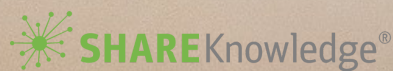




Everything You Need to Know about **LMS Reporting**



A ShareKnowledge Series
"Selecting an LMS"

Selecting an LMS: Reporting

Simple and *easy* generally aren't words used to describe creating reports. More often than not the words *time consuming* and *tedious* are used.

Reports play a very important role in learning and development which is why it should be one of the top things to consider when choosing an LMS.

Creating a report is so much more than providing a document with checkmarks showing a staff member took a course. It should tell a story that clearly defines how your training initiatives have impacted your business goals. And most importantly, how to continue down the path of training success.

If front line managers have difficulty pulling the information needed, it's impossible to check what is working and what is not.

Common challenges that happen when it comes to reporting include,

- Difficulty accessing information due to permission restrictions.
- Creating a report that is too complicated and too many steps involved.
- There isn't an option to customize the report to fit specific needs.

These example scenarios are just a few of the problems that could be avoided by choosing the right LMS.

Information is power. That is why choosing an LMS with excellent reporting features will give you the tools to help make informed decisions about all aspects of your business.

So, what reporting features are a 'must have' when choosing an LMS?

It's true, no two businesses are alike and not everybody will have the same needs. But, here is a list of some of the most valued reporting features:

Selecting an LMS: Reporting

- ✓ **Simple and easy.** When you need to pull information quickly, it's imperative that the report can, not only be created, but reviewed in a few simple clicks so managers can get the information they need to make business decisions.
- ✓ **Integration.** The LMS should be connected to all your business systems so any report can easily and quickly be analyzed against data from your HRIS or any other system.
- ✓ **Customization.** One size does not fit all when it comes to reports. Excellent data reporting tools can compile records from a variety of categories and organize them in any way you see fit.
- ✓ **Permissions.** The LMS administrator shouldn't be the only person able to create and review reports. Each front line manager should be able to access the system without issue and create reports for their department or team.
- ✓ **Automation.** Nobody wants to spend hours every month recreating the same reports over and over again. The ability to save templates so that data can be shared each month automatically allows more time to analyze and use the data versus time spent compiling the data.

The Selection Process

There are a variety of reasons why a company chooses to switch their LMS. According to *TechnologyAdvice.com*, about 66 percent of the time it has something to do with issues related to reporting.

This means that a little more attention should be paid to reporting features during the LMS selection process.

Selecting an LMS: Reporting

One of the biggest reasons for an LMS to have great reporting capabilities is that it should demonstrate a return on investment for your organization. And if your learning program is not meeting expectations, the report will help you identify where improvements can and should be made.

A helpful tip is to create scenarios of how you will use the LMS and what types of reports you may need. This will provide a guide outlining the various types of reporting features that will be most useful.

For instance, department managers often times need to run reports for their departments but some training systems only allow LMS administrators access. So, in this case, they will need an LMS that allows permissions for managers to run their own reports.

In other instances, it might be important for a business to get very detailed, granular information in their reports.

ShareKnowledge LMS has a Question-Level Report that would be very useful in this scenario. It allows users to see how well learners did on a test but also assess the test itself.

If everybody got the same question wrong there is a high chance there is something wrong with the question and you can reword it next time. If the results show a mixed bag, learning professionals, instructional designers and course creators can decide whether it's something that can be addressed with more training or change the wording so the question is understood more clearly, or implement both.

Selecting an LMS: Reporting for Learning Administrators

Choosing an LMS is difficult as it is. Selecting the right feature sets for learning management systems is important but you also need to make sure that reporting is up to par as well. Being aware of your specific needs and pairing that with an LMS that can solve the problem will pave the way to a stress-free reporting process. And, the best part of effective reporting features in an LMS is the positive impact it will have on the success of your business.

One of the prime responsibilities of an LMS administrator is to communicate how learning programs have positively affected your business. And you simply cannot do this without great reporting tools.

Reporting is the gateway to information that will tell you what is working, what is not and what needs to be changed.

But, of course, there are reporting roadblocks that must be considered when choosing an LMS:

- **Not fast.** When a report is needed ASAP, does it take multiple steps to get what you need? A long, tedious process is never conducive for reports needed right away.
- **Not easy to use.** Will you need to bother the IT department regularly just to pull a report?
- **Lack of customization.** Reporting is only as good as the data it can provide. Does the LMS lack the ability to be customized to fit your needs?

Compliance is another reason that reporting features in an LMS are important.

Every year there are more and more regulations created. And as an LMS administrator, this falls on your shoulders. Prove compliance with thorough reports, or face fines.

Selecting an LMS: Reporting for Learning Administrators

Reporting is not just to see who took a class and who didn't. Good reporting can be the difference between success and failure of your business.

And, because of this, it should be one of the top features to consider when choosing an LMS.

So, what reporting features should I look for in an LMS?

Each business has unique reporting needs, but there are some common features that are a 'must have' for everybody:

- **Customization.** No matter what information you need, your LMS should always have the option to customize. Whether you need general information or very specific, there should be no problems accessing this data.
- **Permissions.** An LMS with flexible permissions allow various departments to create their own reports which alleviates the administrator work load so he/she can focus on other important tasks.
- **Automation.** Reports are notorious for being time consuming. But, an LMS that has utilizes automation streamlines the process and reduces the stress of creating the same report over and over.
- **Simplicity.** Pulling a report should be as simple as a few clicks.
- **Dashboard.** Access to information has been a common problem with LMS reporting. With a centralized dashboard, the LMS administrator can quickly see an overview of all learning programs.

During the LMS selection process, keep these features top of mind while exploring additional requirements.

The Selection Process

During the LMS selection process, it's important to know what specific information you'll need from reports.

It's a good idea to consult with your LMS selection committee to brainstorm a list of reports that your business may need now or in the future.

Here are a few questions you might ask yourself:

Selecting an LMS: Reporting for Learning Administrators

- **How are learners progressing?** A course status report will provide this information.
- **Has John Doe completed a safety test?** A course history report is needed.
- **Is there a bottleneck in a course?** A course module report will give this information.
- **Is Jane Doe currently certified?** Certification report needed.
- **What are the attendance levels of Instructor Led Training (ILT)?** An ILT report can provide a detailed explanation.

When choosing an LMS, think about who needs the reporting data, and when. You should be able to get your data with a couple of clicks of a button and, you should be able to let the LMS do the hard work so you don't have to.

LMS reports and analytics are one of the most beneficial features of Learning Management Systems.

- Proves ROI.
- Shows the impact of learning on your business.
- Proves compliance.
- Allows you to make accelerated decisions based on real-time information.

If there is one way to make your job easier, it's with great reporting features. And, in just a few clicks you have all the data in one place that demonstrates the wonderful job you've been doing - whether that be staying in compliance or making sure everybody has completed required courses.

Reporting features should be at the top of any administrator's list when choosing an LMS.

Reporting from the CFO Perspective

Reporting features in a Learning Management System are particularly important for those in a finance position because it provides critical decision-making data.

Without specific information, it leaves you making decisions based on a guess, assumption or estimate.

This is never a good idea when making business decisions.

All data is not the same either. That is why it's important to learn more about the depth of reporting capabilities of any LMS you're considering.

Can your LMS integrate with other business software in order to see the bigger picture of your LMS investment? Are you employees better skilled, more productive, staying with the company and moving the business forward?

All these questions can be answered with the right reporting from an LMS that 'plays nice' with all your other business systems.

It's also important for reports to be in an easy to read format.

Some users struggle to read long numeric reports. Visualizing data will make it easier for many members of your team to understand and interpret learning results.

Compliance can have a huge impact on staff billing hours when reports take too long to create. And, reports that can't demonstrate compliance with regulations can also mean additional fines.

Reporting from the CFO Perspective

With that said, an LMS that provides good reports will give a very clear window on processes, efficiency and costs which will make your job easier.

So what reporting features should I be looking for in an LMS?

Each business has unique reporting needs, but there are specific features that make a CFOs job easier:

- **Integration.** Learning data and performance data often reside in different systems, making it difficult to make comparisons. With integration capabilities, there will be an increased range and depth of reports available.
- **Detailed Data.** For financial purposes, the more granular the data the better. This helps you make educated business decisions such as creating an annual budget for L&D.
- **Automation.** Automation helps streamline processes which will have a positive impact on staff billing hours. It will also offer efficiency to learning processes.
- **Dashboard Summary.** Dashboards that present information in a visually pleasing way help to better understand the analytics from data pulled.
- **Customization.** An LMS should be able to be customized so that it can pull the data you specifically need.

During the LMS selection process, keep these features top of mind while exploring additional requirements.

The Selection Process

Of all the features of an LMS, reporting is probably one of the most important for the CFO.

In fact, a recent survey by *Chief Financial Officer Magazine*, states that this year executives have the highest expectations of their technology investments when it comes to positive impacts in the areas of process efficiency, cost reduction, reporting accuracy and data/analytics availability.

To get a full idea of the types of reporting needed, it's important for everybody in your LMS selection team to have their input.

Reporting from the CFO Perspective

Be sure to write up a list of use cases that you can disclose to any potential LMS provider. Then, during the demo, ask to have the LMS provider show you how a report is created.

Ask yourself questions and write notes about things such as,

- How easy or difficult is it to create a report?
- Who will be pulling reports? The LMS administrator, manager, chief financial officer?
- How easy is it to share a report?
- What does the report look like? Is it easy to understand or difficult to digest?
- What if reporting needs change? Is it possible to still pull the information I need with some customization? Will this cost an additional amount?

Great reporting in an LMS is essential - especially for the chief financial officer. Assessing the risks of adopting new technologies is a tough job, but an LMS that can provide reporting that successfully fills in the blanks will lessen that burden. In fact, it might even show a profound and insightful link between learning programs and the positive success of your business!

Reporting from an Information Technology (IT) Perspective

Keeping the IT department running smoothly keeps you busy enough. Putting out unnecessary fires related to Learning Management System (LMS) reporting can easily be avoided by choosing the right LMS in the first place.

When your staff gets pulled away from important projects to deal with LMS reporting issues, it can quickly surpass allocated staff hours and lower productivity in your department.

It also doesn't fair well since you most likely had a hand in choosing the LMS.

If features such as reporting don't work as expected, how do you explain to the CEO or CFO that the LMS was a good technology investment? Especially since reporting is so important for these folks.

There are multiple systems in place within any organization. And, integration is extremely important.

But, from an IT perspective, this could prove to be a huge burden if the process is too complex and time consuming.

A system that is too complex can even mean that in order to work with the LMS, your staff may need special technical skills.

Compliance is another headache that falls into the IT department's wheelhouse. Good reporting will be necessary to see how employees are complying with learning programs required for industry and federal requirements.

If employees fall behind, your company could face major fines and penalties.

So what reporting features should I be looking for in an LMS?

There are specific reporting features that bode well for the IT department's needs, including,

- ✓ **Simple and easy.** Reports should be intuitive so anybody, no matter their technology expertise, can pull the information they need – leaving the IT department to focus on other jobs.
- ✓ **Integration.** Integration is necessary to get the full picture of your learning programs. Your LMS should easily be able to 'talk to' other systems without unnecessary steps.
- ✓ **Automated Compliance.** While you handle the security side of things, ease your mind knowing that compliance reports can be automated so you know exactly where your business stands at any given point in time.
- ✓ **Customization.** The reporting needs of your business will always be changing to the ability to easily customize is crucial.

During the LMS selection process, keep these features top of mind while exploring additional requirements

The Selection Process

Reporting is a very important piece of the learning puzzle for a variety of job roles from learning managers all the way to the CEO

But, if things go wrong, who do they run to? The IT department.

With that said, it's imperative to listen to the reporting needs of each LMS selection team member. And, jot down notes that particularly relate to your job and the effect it might have on time and resources.

Does Jennifer need a complex report that might consume a lot of time? Maybe David needs to be able to export a report for comparison with other departments and then be able to share it with his manager?

Does the existing system offer a direct integration, or will developers need to configure an API?

There could be a variety of scenarios that must be considered. That is why it's important for the IT department to be included during any LMS demonstrations.

Another way to be as thorough as possible during the selection process is to ask to speak with current clients. Were there any reporting issues and if so, how did customer service handle it?

Selecting an LMS is a big decision and one that can create business value for your company. Good reporting is an important feature to consider because it plays a big part in successfully reaching business objectives. Wouldn't you love an LMS report that is so easy and intuitive that managers can pull the data they need without needing help? It's possible when you choose the right LMS with great reporting features.

Selecting an LMS: Reporting that CEOs Want

"You can't manage what you can't measure." Peter Drucker's quote is a mantra for most CEOs. The challenge is reporting and analyzing what's measured.

Great reporting features in an LMS can provide insightful information about your business. However, if your team can't easily and regularly report on the data you need, then you're limiting your ability to see a true picture of how learning has impacted business requirements and objectives.

Limited reporting keeps your company in a reactive, rather than a proactive position. This further means that you lose a competitive edge and, if related to compliance shortcomings, at a financial loss due to fines, shutdowns and lawsuits.

Your Learning and Development team has to monitor and identify when required training is due and to partner with department managers, so together they can promote meeting these company and government requirements.

With the pace of business, if the data is buried in an LMS that only a select few administrators can access, the turnaround time can be problematic. Whether for performance reviews, external audits or department resource allocation, having instant access to the right data at the right time is critical.

Selecting an LMS: Reporting that CEOs Want

Sadly, many LMS' limit customization of the reports without external parties or additional costs. With other LMS', the reporting area is so complicated that a degree in IT is required to program any and all reports. While there may be a wonderful array of features, the most fundamental reason to have an LMS – reporting – is lost amid the other bells and whistles. As such, the value of the LMS is lost, and the ROI minimal.

On the contrary, an LMS that serves the goals of robust reporting, customized reporting, and ready integration to other business tools, such as your talent management suite, CRM, HRIS and quality control database, is an LMS that will be a valuable asset to the current and future state of your business.

When choosing an LMS, reporting should be considered one of the most important features.

So what reporting features should I be looking for in an LMS?

Each business has unique reporting needs, but there are specific features that will make a CEO's job easier:

- **Detailed Data.** The ability to drill down quickly into report data saves time and is the key to uncovering not only the what, but also the why.
- **Customized Reporting.** It's your data – you should be able to customize what data you want in your reports easily. There should be valuable, out-of-the-box reports as well as freedom to create custom reports on the data you want, without needing assistance from your IT department.
- **Automation.** Automation is a key tool to have in an LMS. Can reports be automatically sent with up-to-date information, allowing you and your management team to be proactive about running and building your business.
- **Integration.** Will you be able to integrate data across systems, to evaluate the impact of training on performance and other business outcomes, such as quality, sales and time to productivity?
- **Business Intelligence Dashboards.** The point of data is to use it to make business decisions. BI Dashboards turn numbers into actionable information.

During the LMS selection process, keep these features top of mind while exploring additional requirements.

The Selection Process

Reporting features are important for multiple stakeholders of an LMS, but never more so than for the CEO.

L&D professionals are expected to ensure that training requirements are met and development opportunities are offered. In the process, they can struggle to demonstrate the ROI of their programs to leadership in the way that others want it. Specifically, there is frequently a gap in demonstrating how learning programs have positively impacted business goals.

This is shown in that only 8 percent of CEOs see the business impact of learning and development. And even fewer (4 percent) saw a clear ROI¹.

The fault for this frequently lies with the technology...the LMS cannot integrate with other business systems. Some of the best known LMS systems can't even integrate with other modules of the same "unified" or "integrated" system. With that as a norm in the industry, or where advertised connectors don't actually work, or are incredibly costly and complicated, the opportunity to associate the Learning data with other parts of the organization is lost.

One way to address this problem is to pay attention to systems that not only provide reports on learning activity but can also integrate with a variety of business systems. This helps to create a 'big picture' snapshot so educated business decisions can be made.

As a CEO, wouldn't you like to report on:

Selecting an LMS: Reporting that CEOs Want

- *How learning programs helped increase revenue?*
- *How they helped decrease costs?*
- *What kind of impact learning had on the average employee's job performance, relative to their salary?*
- *Did additional training decrease quality problems?*
- *What's the best ratio of training to sales figures?*
- *How are Learning programs impacting retention rates?*

It's helpful for an LMS to be able to integrate easily with whatever specific business systems that you have so you can better understand how learning has made an impact on your business goals.

Detailed reporting is a nonnegotiable requirement when dealing with compliance issues. This type of information helps you meet regulatory requirements and proactively manage the people side of compliance. Easy to compile and share reporting will help your Learning department, and you, to foster a culture that works on People development and addressing talent gaps by training within the company. BI tools will accelerate the use of the data for required and proactive management of people, teams and opportunities. Integration ability will give you the competitive edge to be the leading company in your industry.

It goes without saying that reporting is highly important during the LMS selection process. Renowned learning analyst, Josh Bersin of Bersin by Deloitte, argues that 'the single biggest driver of business impact is the strength of an organization's learning culture.' What better way to brag about the wonderful accomplishments of your learning programs than with reporting that demonstrates how employees are exceling and business is profiting as a result?

Good Luck!

We hope you found this resource helpful. Selecting an LMS can be daunting....but it doesn't have to be.

To speak with a consultant today, please contact us to see if ShareKnowledge is right for your business.

