SHAREKnowledge®

LMS for SharePoint

What Everybody Ought to Know about Choosing an LMS

A step-by-step guide to choosing the most beneficial LMS for your needs

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Introduction

How many times have you walked into a store with something specific in mind only to get home and realize that you blew your budget and now are the proud owner of 10 items that you didn't need? Over the years, various LMS systems have tried to be all things to all people – the more bells and whistles the better. With all these added features, shopping for an LMS can be overwhelming and confusing which can lead to the above example.

According to a [survey conducted by *The eLearning Guild*](#), nearly one-third of respondents said they were not satisfied with the LMS product they were using. There could be a variety of reasons for this but one thing is for certain, in order for a successful outcome to happen, a company must know what is most important to them and make sure the LMS does those things. Plain and simple. This e-book will help clarify how to choose the best learning management system software and avoid the exhaustive and costly mistake of selecting an LMS that is poorly matched to your company needs.

Wrong LMS = Waste of Time and Money

The investment of time and money that organizations make in learning management systems is significant and let's face it, nobody likes to lose time or money.

With over 600+ LMS's on the market, it can be quite daunting to choose the right LMS let alone face the consequences that can set you back months or even years in missed learning opportunities.

Having a well thought out plan ahead of time when considering an LMS is a sure way to avoid buyers' remorse. It also is a great way to position yourself for optimal success when choosing a learning management system software.

With the right LMS employed, your business will function at optimal levels for maximum success. Consider these benefits:

- Saves money

- Improves organizational performance

- Increases employee satisfaction

- Faster compliance training

- Streamlines training

- Easily track learner progress

Of course, this is just the tip of the iceberg of real benefits that the right LMS can provide, and the reason why the LMS market is expected to grow by 24 percent between 2017 and 2022.

In 2004, American psychologist Barry Schwartz published a book called *The Paradox of Choice – Why More is Less.* It argued that eliminating the amount of consumer choices will greatly reduce anxiety for shoppers. The following guidelines will set a path for success by eliminating the LMS playing field from 600 to 1 – the LMS that best fits your needs and goals.

LMS Selection Team

Choosing an LMS is not a one-person job. It's important to create a team made up of a variety of departments in your company. These folks will be using the LMS in different ways and their feedback is critical. The features an information technology person deem important may be quite different then the HR perspective, right?

- **Administrators/HR/Training –** These folks have a lot of input in the LMS buying decision. They will be using the system the most and will be concerned about things such as how easy is it to create a new training course, how flexible and configurable is the system and what type of reporting features it has.

- **IT –** Be sure to always have an IT expert on your team. They know the business and IT strategy of your company and can provide crucial input on an LMS. They'll be concerned with on-premise vs. cloud LMS, how much customization is needed and how much maintenance and on-going administration will be necessary, to name a few.

- **Organizational Depts. –** With larger companies, various departments will often times have their own training needs outside of the corporate LMS. It's important to have their input on how they might need the system for their specific needs.

- **Learners –** Don't forget to include your learners before making any big decisions. If your employees aren't using the system, you'll be back at square one. This person on your team will want to know how easy the system is to use, how do I see the courses I've completed and what tech skills are needed to use the system?

Do you have a leader? This person needs to drive the team, an "LMS champion." They should be well versed in your company's learning needs, has the backing of management and controls the budget. They should also be able to bridge the various needs of the LMS team and come to a consensus.

Who will be using the LMS? It's important to define your customers and the ways in which they'll be utilizing the LMS. Come up with a variety of scenarios or initiatives with the customers in mind. Map out exactly what needs to be done and what tools are needed to implement the initiative. One example would be onboarding. If you know that in the next year that your company will be hiring a lot more staff and/or expect changes in user information, it will be particularly useful to have real-time integration features with your selected LMS.

Gathering Requirements

Make a high-level requirements list. Your team of decision makers will be a big help in creating the list. Think about what your company goals are as well as some big projects coming up. Needs will not be the same across the organization so it's a good idea to think about questions that every member of your LMS selection team should answer. Examples, include:

1) What tasks am I going to perform with the new LMS?

2) What is a must-have?

3) If there was another LMS before, what features weren't utilized and why?

Some of the questions might be role-specific, such as:

Administrator/HR/Training

- What training goals do I have?

- What processes do I need to set up?

- How will I show that my goals have been achieved?

- What reports do I need to have?

- Are there any certification requirements?

IT

- What will I need to integrate the new LMS with? HRIS? Active Directory? CRM? SharePoint?

- Will I need to set up single sign-on?

- What are compliance/security requirements?

Organizational Departments

- The sales department might need mobile features or marketing needs product knowledge training.

Once a high-level requirements list has been drafted, it should be fairly easy to work with. One of the biggest traps when shopping for an LMS is asking for every feature that is available that may or may not be needed.

One way to avoid this problem is to develop use cases. This strategy will help you stay on task and focused. With your team assembled, ask each member to come up with their top scenarios that they need the LMS for.

> *For instance, let's say that Sally Smith, training manager, needs to be able to add an e-learning course that would be required for mid-management level staff in all departments but also optional for another department. She also needs to add a test after the course.*

> *Another example, is John Doe who needs to be able to provide comprehensive reporting in order to receive government funds. He also has multiple territories that all have different training needs and requirements. And did we mention that it all has to be done behind the firewall, too?*

Now it's easy to provide a vendor with your list of use cases so they can demonstrate how their systems will do the job. Doing this is beneficial to your team so you can better understand how the system can solve your training needs without just looking at features alone. Different systems can call a feature the same name but what really matters is how easily you can do what YOU need to do in your LMS of choice.

In addition to your use cases you can still have a list of most important features. But always accompany them with appropriate scenarios that will take advantage of the feature.

With all the prep work down, you can now add priorities to each of your use cases/features/requirements to understand what's crucial, what's important, and what's just nice to have.

VET AVAILABLE PRODUCTS

At this point, you have your complete requirements list and you know what is important, along with some "nice to haves." Now, the next step is to narrow your choices of LMS providers. Right off the bat, you'll seek out those vendors that can solve your use cases and have the features to back it up. For instance, if you would like an LMS that will leverage your investment in SharePoint, then this would be a good vetting criterion.

But, be cautious of generic feature lists and LMS comparison sites. Most vendors have very similar feature sets, but what you need is a vendor that can solve your use case scenarios. A good tip when you get to the demo process is to ask them to address how they would handle your specific scenarios instead of just going down a checklist of features that the system has.

PRODUCT EVALUATION

- **Request for information.** An RFI contains a list of all your requirements with a few questions per requirement for vendors to answer. Evaluate the vendor responses with a scorecard that allows scorers to rate how well the vendor meets each requirement on a 5-point scale. After scoring the responses to the RFI, you can rule out some of the lower-scoring vendors and continue evaluating the top contenders.

- **Online demonstrations.** This is a great way to see your top vendors in action. A good approach is to give them all the same use cases ahead of time so you can compare them equally. The more prepared you are, the better. Bring any questions your team has to the

demo and make sure to write down any additional questions you may have during the presentation. To really help narrow down the best LMS, create a score card that each team member can fill out with a rating of 1-5 stars. It can be as simple or as complex as you'd like with use cases, features, price etc.

- **Trial version.** As you continue to evaluate the finalists, you may ask for a trial version of the LMS software where you can explore the finalist products. Hands-on exploration will give you a better sense of the user-interface design, features and capabilities of the product. Be sure to ask if the vendor will guide you through initially before you set off on your own.

PRODUCT SELECTION

The final step is to select a product. Send a Request for Proposal (RFP) to each of your finalists asking for pricing quotes, implementation timeframes and support options. If you followed the above guidelines, you should feel very confident in your choice of learning management system software.

Reap the benefits of an LMS

Who wants to deal with a manual LMS that is time consuming and tedious dealing with different information types using various tools on scattered PCs and servers? Once you decide on the right LMS for your business needs, you'll reap the benefits for many years to come.

- More knowledgeable workforce
- Reduced training costs

- Track regulatory compliance training

- Engage and retain talent

- Prepare future leaders

In today's business environment, an LMS is the backbone for training and development and continues to gain in popularity. One of the biggest advantages of an LMS is efficiency. In fact, many companies report a 50-70% cost savings just by switching from instructor-based training to eLearning.

Train smart by leveraging your existing investment in SharePoint.

Let's face it, training managers are already using SharePoint in their daily work. Some are utilizing SharePoint for its ability to have multiple people create and edit learning material, while others enjoy using it for an HR portal for onboarding. With its flexible permissions, SharePoint scores big points with training managers who want the ease of which to work collaboratively in teams.

Now, how great would it be to tie in all your training needs into one system? Expand on your investment in SharePoint, store all your content in one system, automated learning paths, thorough compliance, full reporting and so much more.

SharePoint is one of the fastest growing applications in the Microsoft history and continues to surge. In fact, 78 percent of Fortune 500 companies are using the application. This means that for those that have SharePoint, there is no additional IT infrastructure needed or management systems to integrate with if used as an LMS. Another bonus is that there is no learner mutiny involved since SharePoint boasts a familiar Microsoft Office-like interface.

Reduced training and IT costs, increased productivity and learning outcomes = MAJOR BENEFIT!

SharePoint is the defining collaboration and information management product on the market today. The latest version provides features perfect for training including social features, team sites, version control, quizzes, compliance for regulated industries and integrates well with other business programs.

Conclusion

Market research shows that the LMS industry will expect a year-over-year growth rate of about 25 percent for the next five years. Choosing a learning management software system can be overwhelming, but armed with a plan of action with specific goals can alleviate the frustration that can come with it. The tips provided in this eBook will allow any trainer to confidently choose an LMS and avoid walking away with "10 features they didn't need."

Being able to choose the right LMS to fit your needs is priceless. With over 78 percent of companies using an LMS, there is a host of benefits including saved time and money, a more knowledgeable workforce, improved compliance training and engaged talent and future leaders.

About ShareKnowledge

ShareKnowledge is the industry leader for corporate learning management in SharePoint. ShareKnowledge exposes every benefit of SharePoint for learning professionals as well as integration with popular webinar services, course schedule integration with your Outlook

calendar, or other email clients that support iCalendar. The latest version of ShareKnowledge also includes advanced compliance features, ad hoc reports, more social features, and single sign-on and form-based authentication. ShareKnowledge was designed to integrate directly and completely with SharePoint, and builds on all existing SharePoint administrative efforts such as Active Directory integration for permissions and security.

As one happy ShareKnowledge adopters shared: **"The deeper you dive into SharePoint, the better you will like a SharePoint-based learning management system (LMS)."**

To find out more about SharePoint, ShareKnowledge, and how they work together to deliver the best learning management available today, contact us:

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