



White Paper

# LMS

Maximizing the Return  
on Your LMS Investment

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## LMS, Recipe for Success

After investing significant money and time in your Learning Management System (LMS) implementation, how do you get the most out of the technology? How do you utilize the features of your LMS to maximize return on your investment? The following concepts offer simple solutions to help you utilize your LMS to its fullest potential and deliver quality content to all types of learners in your organization.

Balancing content and audience is one of the most delicate and important operations within LMS services. First, avoid the pitfall of introducing your employees to the LMS by forcing them to use the system solely for mandatory training. When employees first experience your LMS for mandatory training, it is hard for them to see the value which the system brings to them. Instead, employees feel that the LMS brings another burden to their workload. Be sure to communicate the benefits that the LMS can offer your employees, and back that up with content that will help them better perform in their position and advance in their career.

Second, implement instructionally-sound, easy to navigate content that is relevant to an employee's job tasks. You might also consider implementing online courses that provide employees opportunities to earn Continuing Professional Education (CPE) and college credits, as this will encourage employees eager to advance their careers to sign up for a series of courses. Today's younger generation, comfortable with Facebook, Twitter and instant access to information on the Internet, often prefer self-paced web-based training, available when and where they need it. More senior, experienced employees often not only prefer, but learn more effectively with short, topic-specific video clips or classroom training that provides the opportunity to network with subject matter experts and their peers. Providing training that accommodates a variety of learning styles will be appreciated by employees and produce greater interest in the learning content offered. Surveys have shown that employees enjoy the opportunity to choose from alternate forms of training, and ultimately perform better on the training when given multiple ways to access it.

Be sure to provide an opportunity for employees to evaluate their learning experience. Encourage them to offer feedback as to how valuable the course has been to their professional improvement as well as how well it provided the knowledge needed to conduct their daily tasks. Administering surveys are quite simple but can be very informative when used effectively. Questions such as "How often will you use the knowledge or skill presented in this course?" or "How important to your job is the knowledge or skill presented in this course?" can shed light on how applicable the services in the LMS may be to your employees. Survey results can also be used to advertise to other employees how successful they might be with their own LMS experiences. Going an extra step beyond surveys by publishing success stories and anecdotal feedback gathered from interviews can also encourage increased use of the LMS. This data will be invaluable in justifying the continued investment of resources in your LMS.

## Use Technology to Improve the LMS Experience

It is rare that an LMS's functionality will perfectly align with an organization's business practices. Directing simple customizations to support critical business needs and ease user confusion can go a long way in helping to gain organizational acceptance. Consider the following:

- Customization of the LMS interface is often a modification that can ease navigation, produce a more user friendly environment, and encourage the increased use of available resources.
- Branding your LMS interface so that it reflects your organization's cultural environment increases familiarity and adds a level of comfort that makes it easier to adapt to the new environment.
- Add self-help resources, such as Frequently Asked Questions, How to contact the Help Desk, and Tips and Tricks to make the LMS experience more effective and efficient. Simple pop-up tips could display helpful information based on the Help Desk calls that are received. Embedded links built within pop-ups could highlight specific courses and give users quick and easy access to those resources.

## Market Your LMS Aggressively

Proper communication is critical to the success of the LMS - from top executives to new employees. Acceptance and support of the LMS is both a top-down and a bottom-up effort. To achieve top-down support, you'll need to sell management on the return on investment that your LMS can deliver. Executive buy-in is critical. This is best accomplished by demonstrating how increased usage and acceptance of the LMS can translate into avoided costs and in some cases true and direct savings. For instance, if you deliver needed training online rather than in the classroom, you have eliminated the need for tuition costs, productivity loss, and in some cases travel costs. Whereas, the difference in cost per person for delivering training in the classroom compared to the cost per person for online delivery would be a calculation of cost savings. The trick for effective measurement is to separate the two calculations. First, eliminate the avoided cost values and then compare the cost of training through both methodologies to calculate true cost savings.

Bottom-up support is achieved through communication and marketing. There are numerous ways to effectively market LMS services to your employees. Like many other organizations, your employees are probably geographically dispersed at various physical locations. Eye-catching posters advertising the capabilities of the system can certainly grab attention but typically their distribution is limited to a few locations. Brochures can also be used to spread the message about the benefits offered by your

LMS. On the other hand, if your organization is “going green” and prefers a more eco-friendly method, emails are often a great idea. Increase effectiveness by targeting emails to specific audiences. Sending notifications to select job series, supervisors, senior managers, etc., describing training that may specifically interest them will show more increase in utilization than will blanket emails sent to everyone in the organization. Consider sending users messages about other courses they may find interesting based on courses they have already completed. Other resourceful, computer-related marketing tools include pop up ads on the company intranet or dynamic splash pages that are continuously updated with new and interesting content and resources available to users.

Another helpful way to produce bottom-up support and to get employees more comfortable with the LMS is to conduct interactive workshops with training coordinators and technical administrators to better inform them of the LMS’ capabilities, the library of online training available, and ways they can incorporate the new online learning resource into a blended approach to their organization’s training requirements. Remember, it is this community that often interacts directly with end-users.

## Measure Your Success

Measuring success is key to getting buy-in from your executives as well as your learners. Be sure to establish a baseline before conducting any type of marketing campaign, then set your target goals and lastly, evaluate the results of your efforts. These seemingly simple steps are critical to understanding what works and what does not. As each organization operates differently, results will differ based on the campaigns that are used. Some might prefer using pop ups and brochures, while others might react more positively to targeted emails.

Typical success metrics can include:

- Courses completed
- Courses started (Sometimes learners get what they need but do not finish the entire course. These cases should also be considered successes)
- Economic value of online training vs. instructor-led training
- Economic value of using electronic processes over paper-based and manual processes
- Economic value of improved productivity
- Economic value of travel costs avoided
- Measuring assignments and completions for a series of training both before marketing and communications have occurred and after, and
- User and course satisfaction survey results

A successful LMS is one that is able to maintain a balance between the content that is presented and the audience. By taking the time in the initial phases to introduce your users to the LMS and assuring that the LMS is instructionally sound, you will maximize the utilization of your organization's LMS. Other elements to ensure that your LMS is invaluable to your organization are: incorporating course evaluation methods, customization and branding, adding resources and help support information, an effective communication campaign, and the capabilities to collect metrics and measure usage. These along with a dedicated organization coupled with well trained and satisfied employees is truly the recipe for gaining your LMS program success.

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