Preparing for your new LMS
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Preparing to replace your LMS?

In this short paper we will review the key practices to employ to ensure a smooth transition, and 8 tips to help you prepare for a simple, less stressful move to your new LMS.

Many organisations express dissatisfaction with their current learning management solution. For most companies, technology invested in over 5 years ago no longer meets the needs of their people. This is understandable because the majority of tech solutions require upgrading within a 3-5 year window.

It probably won’t surprise you to learn that of all the companies with a Learning Management Solution, more than 32% are looking to replace their technology with something new. Why is this the case?
The problem with most Learning Management Systems

The challenge with most corporate Learning Management Systems is that they were built at a time where it was more important to “tick the box” and ensure that in tender processes different LMS solutions could be compared easily – as a result the most feature rich solutions would therefore be those that were successful and selected by a large number of organisations – regardless of whether the features were actually necessary or going to be used.

Time has proven that this approach is missing some of the vital elements that people are looking for in any software or application solution. Think about your current favourite applications, and what it is about them that makes them indispensable to you. In most cases, you will find at the core a focus on user experience.
What are you looking for in a LMS?

We spoke to a number of LMS customers, and what they were looking for was vastly different to what was being offered in the market. Organisations are no longer looking for a thousand amazing features they neither have the time nor the expertise to take advantage of. The themes from our research came in under four key categories:

1. Make it easy for me to use, and remove features that I don’t need
2. Give me rich reporting and ability to generate reports simply
3. Help me communicate directly and schedule easily
4. Integrate with the systems I use every day to save me time

Read on for our 8 tips for an effective LMS transition.
8 Tips for transitioning to your new LMS

Selecting and implementing your new learning management system should not be taken lightly. When replacing your LMS you have to consider a range of inputs, as well as what you want to get from the system. You also need to understand your working environment, constraints, and what data you will need to archive or integrate into the new system.
This includes understanding all learner data, and all current courses which will need to be added to the new platform. Some of these data sources include:

- Learner profiles (names, emails and unique identifiers)
- Learner data (units completed, marks etc)
- Course catalogues, descriptions etc
- Hierarchy information

You may have a lot of data and content creation to transfer. Additionally, you may have other third-party tools that may need integrating such as development tools, web conferencing facilities and other associated links that need to be made such as with HRIS or other data sources that will be supplying information to the LMS.
## Have a Migration Strategy

Map out the critical elements to your transition and their risk factors. Use the table below as an indicator, check the risks as points where you should spend some time considering what plans you may need in place for each risk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning Areas</th>
<th>Risks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>System Integration</td>
<td>Logins, connections, competing data structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure and Domain Setup</td>
<td>Multiple domains, multiple levels, multiple roles, multiple rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content and Data Transfer</td>
<td>Data mapping, data cleaning, content ownership, content portability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting and Security</td>
<td>Historical data, permissions, business integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Admin selections, training, communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End User Changes</td>
<td>Access points, change management plan, support tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Changes</td>
<td>Governance models, business impact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source Brandon Hall, 2011*
Your organization may have multiple levels, multiple roles, and multiple security levels that go across different divisions. Depending on the system, this setup effort may require you to define factors such as who can access what content, what reports and data will be viewable by certain groups, and who has access to change these rules.

Most LMS platforms won’t work properly if consideration hasn’t been made for your structure also and who will be approving training. You’ll need to think about how your departmental hierarchies work and who needs to manage individual or groups’ learning activities. After you’ve established this you can be assured that learning content will be assigned correctly, approved if required, and most importantly that your final reporting data will be accurate.

It’s critical that duplicates are removed and that the data has been properly cleansed prior to upload. The man-power required to do this post implementation is much greater and will be the source of ongoing challenges if not done correctly.
A system’s reporting settings provide important information for both analysing training, reporting on success and compliance and determining learning gaps. When managed poorly, a lack of reporting functionality can lead to frustration for learning professionals and stakeholders alike, and end-users may be unable to view the information they need to make sound decisions about their learning.

**Know Your Reporting and Security Requirements**

Some steps to ensure your reporting needs are considered and met:

- Identify current reports and assess their usefulness.
- Identify reporting gaps
- Identifying new opportunities or information you would like visibility of
- Assist in defining report layout, location, scheduling
- Make sure you have the ability to formulate your own reports with ease

**Test, Test, Test**

Think about how you can incorporate test strategies and plans into your implementation roadmap. Ensure that the test strategies and plans are well documented.
7 Define Key Terminology

Every system has its own language. Ensure that the words being used for your organization internally are well matched to your LMS solution. Define key terms and ensure mutual understanding and ease of adoption by your existing users.

8 Have a Training and Communications Plan

How many people do you need to train? Who will be using the system and what support will different roles (end user, manager, admin) require when using the system?

Different audiences require their own separate approaches for communication, access standards, reports, reviews, training, education, and on-going support. If this area of the transition is not handled well, it will not matter how good the technology is or how well integrated the systems are – the perception of the system will be less than positive.
Other Questions to Consider

What learning tools do you use or what other learning systems do you need to be able to integrate with your LMS?

> Rapid tools and development systems
> Assessment builders
> Email systems such as Outlook

What systems do you need to integrate?

> Payroll or Human Resources Systems
> Intranet
> Social platforms

What is your internal working environment?

> Current operating environment
> Current web browser versions as standard
> Tools and Hardware the system will need to be accessed on
  - Laptops
  - Desktops
  - Tablets and other devices
Migrating from one LMS to another is by no means an easy feat. There will always be some prior learning data or systems data that can’t be migrated across. The complexity of migrating LMS’s largely depends on the amount of data and the complexities of the data being migrated. The old saying “information in, equals information out” still holds true. Ensuring when you start afresh with a new LMS system that you have good planning in place, and clean data is the key to a successful transition.

Conclusion
Talk to one of our experts today to find out more

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