Top 10 Tips for implementing a Learning Management System (LMS)

A Webanywhere Free Guide

OUR TOP TEN TIPS FOR LMS ADOPTION

- Develop an appealing design.
- Set up hierarchies correctly (vital for reporting).
- Cleanse your user data.
- Know the limitations of the LMS!
- Be careful with video, think about bandwidth.
- Ensure you can assign learning programs 'easily'.
- Check automated tasks are running correctly in the system.
- Use 'roaming' to understand different learner journeys.
- Think about how you will pull data from any legacy systems.
- Test, Test - and Test again.

Looking at this list, you're probably thinking

1. What does all this mean?
2. How do I ensure I don't go wrong?

Hopefully, after reading the rest of this article you'll feel more confident!

Learning Management Systems are evolving fast with the incorporation of exciting new plugins such as social media / talent modules and performance management.

But forget the 'nice to haves' for a moment. Often, companies start off on the wrong foot by allowing their LMS vendor to dictate the project development which stifles creativity.

Before starting, ensure you have a procurement checklist from which to build a set of LMS requirements. We have developed a document to support you here – just email us for your copy.

So here goes - our Top Ten Tips for LMS Adoption

Tip #1 – Design is Everything

If the platform is dull, boring or confusing, people will not use it. An LMS should have 'kerb appeal' and be easy and fun to use. Users will also benefit from a platform that is easy to configure and enables instructional designers to engage properly with your audience. Learning that is designed for a factory operative will probably be different to that for a divisional manager.

Tip #2 – Set Up Hierarchies Correctly

Most LMS platforms won't work properly if consideration hasn't been made for your learning organisation. You'll need to think about how your corporate structure, departmental hierarchies and who needs to manage individual or groups' learning objectives. After you've established this, you can be assured that learning content will be assigned correctly and,

Tip #3 – Cleanse your User Data

Continuing on data configuration, you need to consider how data is to be imported or migrated to the LMS. Typically this is managed using CSV or Excel templates, or integrated HR systems.

In every case it's critical that duplicates are removed and that the data has been properly cleansed prior to upload.

Tip #4 - Know the limitations of the LMS

Fourth on our list is to recognise that the LMS won't be able to resolve all your training challenges overnight! You need to understand what the system is capable of. For example, if you try to 'fork' the software too much you'll experience problems when it comes to upgrading (and incur extra costs in doing so...)

Tip #5 - Be careful with video

Using video is becoming the norm for business training. However, using more video will result in an associated increase (and cost) in bandwidth requirements. If 'learning on the go' forms part of your plans, you'll need to judge whether employees will actually be able to access your learning videos when out of the office, or if there are security rules around your corporate firewall which may cause problems with playing the content.

Tip #6 - Ensure you can assign learning programs 'easily'

Ok, so you've developed hundreds of great learning modules and uploaded these to your LMS. Now it's vital that you're able to assign these to cohorts of learners easily. In our experience some LMS products are better than others at achieving this important goal...

Totara LMS, for example, incorporates a Program Management function that enables administrators to achieve this easily. The ongoing and regular assignment of new or updated learning content can be automated for groups of users, making your life much easier.

Tip #7 – Test that automated tasks are running correctly

Within every LMS there will be background system operations continually working away, making sure that automated tasks such as scheduled reports and email alerts are running. For these tasks – or crons - to work correctly, your IT department or other specialist support team of IT must ensure that your LMS is configured correctly.

Tip #8 – Test learner journeys using 'roaming'

By logging in as different user types (i.e. Manager, Learner, Director, etc) you can begin to consider how alternative learner journeys could be created in order to deliver the maximum engagement (and therefore best learning outcomes) for each user type. This process, called roaming, is important to ensure you have achieved the successful learning design.

Tip #9 – Test your legacy data

Ninth on our list of Top 10 Tips is to thoroughly test and cleanse your legacy data. If you need to migrate from an existing LMS, you'll need to bring the data with you.

Don't wait until two days before the LMS licence subscription renewal date to begin the procurement of a new LMS - you need to be planning for data migration well in advance. If you leave this too late you are running risk of (i) the incumbent vendor not releasing your data, and (ii) potentially losing the data. Data needs to be archived for training records, so try to avoid this risk.

Tip #10 - Test, test and test again

The last of our top ten tips for implementing an LMS (and building on the previous three tips!) is to TEST, TEST and TEST AGAIN. The need for robust quality assurance is probably the most important tip of all.

Think about it - if you were a learner logging into the platform for the first time, and something didn't work / a link was broken / an image overlapped, would you have confidence in the system when logging in next time? Probably not.

Testing is critical to making sure that things are working as expected and should run in parallel with the project roll out (not just at the end). Think about how you can incorporate test strategies and plans into your roadmap, make sure it's regular and documented well.

Conclusion

So, once you've established what you need then it's just a matter of linking your requirements to the 'right' LMS solution, right? Well, at first glance most business e-learning platforms might seem to serve your purpose - but you also need to consider the service design, development and business support processes that the vendor offers, and most importantly, their track record.

The future of course management

Webanywhere specialises in learning technologies that enable the concepts described in this paper, and stretch the learning potential of an organisation's most important asset - its people. To discuss social learning, multi tenancy or the effective implementation of a learning management system in your organisation, contact our workplace learning team on 01535 604026, or email workplace@webanywhere.co.uk.

Webanywhere UK
Orchard House
Aire Valley Business Centre
Lawkholme Lane
Keighley
West Yorkshire BD21 3BB
Tel. 01535 604026

Webanywhere Poland
Klimczoka Business Area
ul. Klimczoka 9
40-857 Katowice
Tel. 32 6304137

Webanywhere US
210 West Rittenhouse Square
Suite 401,
Philadelphia,
PA, 19103
Tel. 866 713 0496

www.webanywhere.co.uk/workplace
workplace@webanywhere.co.uk

webanywhere
stretch beyond