



LMS BUYER'S GUIDE

The **5 Secret Steps** to choosing the right learning management system

STEP 1

IDENTIFY YOUR BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS FOR LMS

1.1 Introduction

With many learning platforms available in the market, how do you narrow down with an LMS selection checklist for your company's needs? You could do it alone and rely on the recommendations of your peers on forums and review sites. But an imprecise LMS selection process that leads to wrong LMS selection can cost you a lot of issues related to migration, waste of time and money, contractual obligations. To ensure what you absolutely want while choosing a Learning Management System for your association, it's crucial that you adopt a selection strategy that will guide you to the system best suited to your organization.

As per a survey, the global learning management market size is presumed to reach USD 38.10 billion in the upcoming years. Several countries across the globe have directed their attention towards the development of the learning ecosystem to offer a customized, scalable as well as a self-paced learning environment. There are many factors to consider when choosing a Learning Management System for your business. Considering which features are best for your situation, along with cost, the ability to customize the platform, and the quality of customer support are important things to consider while choosing a learning management system.

1.2 What do you want to achieve with your LMS?

Instead of diving straight into choosing a learning management system, it's much wiser to take a step back and identify your business requirements or needs. LMS being an enterprise-wide system requires an acknowledgment of stakeholders before shortlisting or choosing a learning management system for the business. Further, it's also important to have some kind of idea on the return on investment before investing in this IT asset.

Starting the drill, your needs should be specific, achievable, and time-limited while choosing a learning management system. Take, for example, you cannot have a target of expecting a boost in your sales, instead, be specific and have a measurable goal which means an increase in sales by 30% in a span of 6 months. This brings clarity to the table and a realistic project roadmap during LMS selection.

Speaking about requirements while choosing a learning management system, they are basically categorized into two parts: Functional and Technical requirements.



1.2.1 Functional Requirements

An LMS delivering all the right perks without wasting resources on unnecessary functions tops the wishlist for any organization that attempts to choose a learning management system for their needs. Functional requirements are the actual LMS features that learners and administrators will be using while operating an LMS. Listed below are must-have LMS features you should look for while choosing a learning management system:

- **Support for SCORM courses**
- **AICC**
- **Tin Can**
- **LTI**
- **Customization and branding**
- **Integrations**
- **Talent management**
- **Workforce management**
- **Compliance platform**
- **Human resource information system (HRIS)**
- **Enterprise resource planning (ERP)**
- **Customer relationship management (CRM)**
- **Payment processor**
- **Content management**
- **Built-in gamification tools**
- **Support for mobile learning**
- **Blended learning**
- **Testing and assessment**
- **Reporting and Tracking**
- **Extended enterprise (Multi-tenant) Ecommerce**



When you keep a check on features while choosing an LMS, you will be safe from falling into the trap of buying a solution that's chock-full of features that you will not need or use, and ultimately, you'll be able to right-size your LMS. Download a complete version of LMS features for your desired LMS selection checklist.

1.2.2 Technical Requirements

Technical requirements are considered when the business thinks to deploy after choosing an LMS. Here are some of the technical requirements we have seen over past 10+ years of experience working with 500+ clients:

- On Premise or cloud
- GDPR
- 503 (Accessibility) compliance
- HIPAA
- CFR 21 part 11
- SOC2
- Scalability
- PCI compliance (if you are selling courses online)

Check with your IT team to see if you have some specific technical requirements which your new LMS selection checklist needs to comply with.

An LMS may either be deployed on the cloud or on the servers of a company itself. Opting for an open-source LMS or a freemium LMS can also be the wisest choice during LMS selection. Coming to a conclusion on hosting methods while choosing a learning management system is important as it will cost you money and affect the way your LMS serves your needs.

1.2.2.1 On-premise LMS

An on-premise LMS might be the best choice during LMS selection:



Absolute control over your system and data – no other person can control your LMS.



Clouds are secure, but businesses handle sensitive information that should not leak at any cost might want to keep the information to itself and all inside their own walls.



On premise LMS requires self-maintenance – if you can afford a qualified IT team ready for work, maintenance then the LMS selection is apt.



Independence from the internet – unreliable internet connection will no longer be a problem.

1.2.2.2 Cloud-based LMS

Cloud-based LMS might be the cream of the crop:



Faster LMS Deployment

If you want to fasten your LMS deployment as per your LMS selection checklist then cloud-based LMS can be your option.

However, to be precise, not every business can wait for systems to be ready, and a private cloud solution will be deployed sooner than an installed one.



Offers Flexibility to Learner

Being on the internet simply means any laptop computer with access to the internet can connect to it. Learning on tablets and smartphones can be added for maximum accessibility.



Ready for the Future

The disproportionate majority of LMSs are now cloud-based, much software is too. Scaling is easier as well if your business attempts to choose cloud based LMS.



Economical and low maintenance

With cloud-based LMS, you will experience low maintenance and your existing IT staff will have less to worry about.

Furthermore, if you're working on a penny-pinching eLearning budget, there are two common types of LMS solutions to look for while choosing a LMS:

1.3 Open-Source LMS

Open source LMS platforms are free to use but usually require some tech experience. This is because they are based on an open-source code that requires programming and HTML knowledge. However, while choosing a learning management system know that open source LMS typically have active online communities where you can find tips, tricks, and advice, as well as online training tutorials and FAQs. An open-source LMS is devoid of any license fees but on the other side fees for setting up the platform, hosting, arranging storage areas, customizing, upgrading, support, and maintenance are included after the LMS selection.

1.4 Freemium

Free alternatives turn out to be the best choice in LMS selection checklist as it requires less tech know-how but has limited features. In some cases, in the process of choosing a learning management system, the LMS vendor provides a basic version of their paid offerings. It's the same LMS, minus the support services, and built-in assets. You're able to add on extra features and services for a monthly fee.

STEP 2

2.1 Which industry is in the need of LMS for enjoying sky-high success

The adoption of learning management platforms has now skyrocketed across small and medium organizations. It's no secret that organizations across the globe have made learning management systems a staple during training sessions for their employees or customers.

While every business has its own way of providing training, choosing a learning management system increases engagement and efficiency for both business and employees. With that, let's take a look at some of the sectors that have benefited the most from choosing an LMS.

2.1.1 Healthcare sector

The healthcare industry is among those that are effectively using LMS to improve patient care and stay competitive. A healthcare learning management system (LMS) helps hospitals effectively track learners' progress, training courses as well as guides in improving the learning experience while reducing cost.

2.1.2 Educational sector

The transition from the brick-and-mortar program to online learning has enhanced teaching traditional courses with a variety of web enhancements and has included the roll-out of a complete online program. Choosing a learning management system for schools and universities can give students a platform to learn at their own speed and collaborate with other learners on the same platform. In this LMS selection process, know that this platform is designed to help schools and colleges deliver better outcomes for students and improves the teaching experience for faculty.

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2.1.4 Banking and Finance

The BFSI Industry has been a forerunner in adopting the newer ways of imparting training and having a LMS selection checklist is the best go-to technique. Choosing a learning management system helps companies in the banking and finance industry to keep employees up-to-date with current regulations and improve competency management using one centralized, web-based system. The web-based functionality offers consistent training to take place at any time, depending on the convenience of the user and the company.



2.1.5 Manufacturing sector

Training plays an important role in the manufacturing industry. Choosing a learning management system to manage their staff training is of utmost importance in this sector. So, while choosing a learning management system for the manufacturing industry make sure it offers training for employees for easy, convenient access, onboard hires and educates the staff members. The training includes learning paths as well as mobile learning functionality to provide easy-to-use tools that fit training employees both on the field and in the office.



2.1.6 Travel and transportation sector

To make sure that tourism industry employees are abreast of knowledge and skills, training is an ongoing process for the industry. Learning management system makes sure that the training is imparted in a uniform fashion and is available to the employees as required. Keeping the audience profile and its unique needs in mind, it is possible to create training for the industry and reap the many benefits of the LMS in the travel and transportation sector.

2.2 The key is to understand how LMSs differ from each other

Understanding how LMSs differ from each other plays a vital role in evaluating and selecting a learning management system for your business. An organization while choosing a learning management system often considers the amount of money to raise the competency levels of its staff that can ultimately make the company more productive and in turn more profitable. It should also be scalable enough to sustain advancements in the company. Further you need to consider the LMS selection criteria, and the third pointer during LMS selection is to ensure that the LMS is user-friendly, flexible, and able to integrate with other systems that help learners with managing their learning.

2.3 How much flexibility do you want for your LMS?

The next question to ask yourselves during LMS selection is how much control you want or what kind of customization do you approve with LMS? For some organizations, a pre-configured and simplified setup is sufficient, whereas others might urge for a far greater degree of control over everything from branding, the user interface design, and the form of ongoing support required in their LMS selection criteria.

There are several other factors to consider in terms of control while choosing a learning management system: User experience - Do you need to customize by role, remember preferences, or personalize learning intelligently based on previous interactions with your LMS? Device independence - Which devices will your learners be using, and how many of these must your LMS support? Cost - How will you ensure you are only paying for features you will actually use while choosing a learning management system? Supporting the whole learning experience - Do you also need to consider an informal, social learning approach? If so, should this be tightly integrated with your LMS or operate alongside existing established systems?

STEP 3

3.1 What integration are you looking for with LMS?

It goes without saying that not all systems your company holds will have every feature available. While your current system may perform well for 70 percent of your requirements, there will be times when your business could benefit from that last 10 percent of functionality. This is where integrating your system with an LMS can help fill the void— whether your needs require compliance capabilities, additional tracking, and reporting, or just complete control of all sales training, integration with an LMS with your systems can help you achieve your goal.

LMSes usually have 100+ integrations that can save you time. For instance, if you have SSO integrated into your system, your employees that are registered on employee portal or HRIS or ERP system, can just click on the training button and get signed into LMS. They can use Google or Office 365 login and be available on the training page. With single-sign on feature, users can completely skip the option of forgot password and can access any training page. Setting up the best Learning Management System (LMS) of your choice is easy but keeping it afloat can be quite demanding. Listed below are LMS integrations that can give your eLearning a boost and your LMS selection process a go-ahead.

3.1.1. CRM

Customer relationship management systems are probably the most common integration and almost all companies make use of them. An LMS integrated with Microsoft Dynamics, Salesforce, and SugarCRM, along with many others proves to be one of the best.

1. **Salesforce LMS**
2. **LMS SugarCRM**
3. **LMS Microsoft Dynamics CRM**



3.1.2. ERP

Enterprise Resource Planning systems like Oracle and SAP are for many organizations the spine of productivity, particularly larger businesses. LMS integration with ERP keeps important data standardized across the platforms. Listed below are a few ERP integration that an LMS supports:

1. **SAP ERP**
2. **Oracle ERP**
3. **Workday ERP**
4. **SAGE ERP**

3.1.3. CMS

Content Management Systems (CMS) allows showcasing all your courses with a seamless flow of updated content from the LMS. LMS platforms can integrate with well-known CMSs such as:

1. LMS SharePoint
2. Drupal LMS
3. WordPress LMS
4. Joomla LMS
5. LMS Dropbox
6. LMS OneDrive



3.1.4. ECommerce

An eCommerce integrated LMS permits users to complete all their transactions beginning from registration to making the payment through a Single Sign-On (SSO). You don't have to switch between multiple platforms, they get a seamless browsing experience which in turn helps boost your sales. Purchasing eLearning products directly from the LMS is not only time-saving, but also more secure than visiting a third-party payment portal.

1. Shopify LMS
2. WooCommerce LMS

3.1.5. Virtual Classroom

Virtual classrooms LMS integration allows educators to make the learning experience more convenient for their learners. Within the virtual classroom educators can post video and audio content as well as images, text files and slides. This means that their learners can opt for frequent access and revisit desired content whenever they feel is required.

1. Go ToWebinar
2. Go ToTraining
3. Go ToMeeting
4. LMS Adobe Connect
5. WebEx LMS



3.1.6. LMS SAP

With features such as structured programs, automated assignment profiles along with multipart e-signature support, SAP LMS provides a flexible cloud LMS system.

1. SAP Customer Partner

2. SAP LMS



3.1.7. LMS HRIS

Integrating HRIS and LMS very easily simplifies every step of succession planning as well as the promotion of employees in respective companies. With this integration of HRIS and LMS, businesses can maintain a team of employees that can get proficient and qualified for promotions by continually progressing people through training phases. LMS HRIS connectors allow training to be assigned, completed, and tracked through the single smart system. This employee information can be set up to automatically update as new training levels are reached. If progress planning is initiated this way, managers can easily identify skills gaps, come up with a list of employees that are eligible for promotion, and view all employee development information in a jiffy.

Although you may know what you need from an LMS right now, you can't predict the future. This means there are a few other things to consider in the LMS selection checklist. Step 4 Will this LMS platform grow with our needs? Your needs aren't going to a standstill. Be thoroughly informed about your LMS

STEP 4

4.1 Will this LMS platform grow with our needs?

Your needs aren't going to a standstill. Be thoroughly informed about your LMS provider and whether they are updating their LMS with respect to the learning and technology innovations.

4.1.1. Can you easily scale users as you need to?

Let's take into consideration future developments of your company. You may like to go on a recruitment drive, or acquire a new company, open a new office, or decide to open your learning to a new group. Ensuring your LMS selection is economically and technically scalable will ultimately save you from a major headache down the line. Everything in the world tends to expand and grow and now more than ever is the time when you have to think globally. So, selecting an LMS capable of scaling which is good at usability, quality, flexibility, and granularity is not an option anymore: it's absolutely vital.

4.2 Need for an RFP

When there are many vendors specializing in the learning solution, RFP is one possible solution so that you can compare vendors apples-to-apples and come to a conclusion of how well they fit your business needs, functional and technical requirements along with budget. RFP is a document that your company will have to create and send to potential LMS vendors when you need to launch an eLearning project. This document outlines details on the company, its project, and the expectations regarding the solution you need in the process of LMS selection. You need to take out time to craft a Request for Proposal for the LMS that features your LMS selection checklist as well as sheds light on your eLearning or training specifications. Listed below are few steps:

- **Give the vendors a clear sense of the key features of LMS to have or to improve.**
- **Provide them with a description of your company and the work your company targets.**
- **Let them know exactly what you are aiming to achieve by implementing a new eLearning strategy with the LMS, and notify them of your expectations.**
- **Be specific about the accessibility, interactivity that you are searching for in the LMS.**
- **Give them a few scenarios that are relatable to your needs and request that the vendor provide a response for how they would address the challenge.**
- **Set a milestone for the completion of the project that will attract vendors who can actually get the job done.**
- **A clear indication of the budget constraints or how much you can pay.**

These above-mentioned steps will help you create successful proposals with clarity and will help you in choosing a learning management system for your business. If vendors consider themselves that they're capable of meeting your demands, they send proposals to the company; you can then relatively differentiate the offered solutions and can opt for the most desirable ones. Download the RFP and get in touch with the LMS vendor of your choice.

4.3 Evaluate your vendors

While choosing a learning management system, businesses usually skip the most important part which is evaluating your LMS vendors. But where do you even begin? And how much time should you allocate for the vendors in the LMS selection process? Once you submit your RFP, LMS consultants will reach out with an LMS checklist that can offer your organization the best ROI.



4.3.1. Look for a customized LMS recommendation list

Take a review of all the recommendations from LMS consultants and depending upon the budget and the features offered select your desired LMS vendor. You can filter out the LMS vendors that are not offering you the desired features or are offering you more than required for your business in this process of choosing a learning management system.



4.3.2. Invite your L&D team to review

Consult your research and development team after jotting down your top options of LMS vendors. Take opinions of your team, might be your admin may have a bad experience with one of your selected LMS vendors or someone can give you a follow-up on the LMS vendor. This can serve your purpose in the LMS selection process and can ease out some.



4.3.3. Delve into user reviews and ratings

After carving out a list of LMS vendors, observe what others have to say about the usability of the LMS. Pay attention to the ratings from the customers and the recommendations of the users will help you in selecting the best LMS for your business requirement.



4.3.4. Compare your vendors

It's high time to eliminate a few of your LMS recommendations. This can be easily brought into reality by comparing your top vendors and whittling what each of them have got for you. Compare all the key areas right from features, pricing to users' ratings.

4.4 A Costly Affair?

While dwelling on the aforementioned factors, companies will also have to pay attention to e-learning pricing models while choosing a learning management. Here are the LMS pricing models that you may want to keep in mind.



4.4.1. Pay-Per-User

With this model, fees are calculated on the basis of the number of users using the LMS. Here, users can be referred to as 'registered users' or 'active users'. A registered user is anyone with an account in the LMS. An active user is any account that is enabled during the 30-day billing period.



4.4.2. Pay-Per-Use

Organizations are charged each time they 'use' their LMS in this pricing model. However, the organization is charged depending on how much the LMS is used. A fee can be charged for each course a user has access to. They can also be charged depending on each module a user has access to.



4.4.3. License Fee

According to the license fee pricing model, a one-time fee to access the software by cloud-based LMS providers can be charged, or else the users are charged with a periodic fee to access the software for a certain time period. This model is the best option for long-time usage.

Choosing a learning management system pricing model after having the apt LMS Pricing Comparison might be a tedious task. Users need to assemble all the information about different service providers during LMS selection, assess their performance, and gauge which LMS benefits them the most for their business.



STEP 5

5.1 Case studies and Demo acts as catalyst while choosing a learning management system

It's important to discover what current customers have to say about the vendor. Vendors often publish case studies or comments from customers and testimonials on their websites that will help you make better software purchasing decisions. Most LMS vendors also offer free trials, usually for 14-days. In this time span, you have a chance to speculate and check all the capabilities of the desired LMS. Don't settle for just browsing through the features; prepare an outline of a few scenarios that you and users will most likely experience in the system, so you can see exactly what they look like.

Pay attention to the LMS interface and take into consideration an LMS with intuitive user interfaces right from the beginning. Similarly, make sure the LMS has all the features you need and check how they work. To begin, invite your users, upload training courses, assign content to learners, and create your own courses and tests.

5.2 Negotiating the best deal

The most important point for many organizations when it comes to negotiating a contract is price. You should venture for the best price, and the pricing plan to suit your requirements, but also look beyond this factor to some of the more nuanced points such as user control, renewal requirements and user limits in the process of choosing a learning management system

5.3 Final verdict

At the end of the day, the decision comes down to your workforce composition and business priority. If technical expertise is present in-house then choosing open-source LMS makes a lot of sense, containing costs, pushing adaptability, and unlocking new ways to innovate for your e-learning initiatives. On the other hand, without the requisite technical talent, partnering with an open-source LMS expert is just an additional option in your LMS selection process. Furthermore, having every feature under the sun will not help you in the long run if you don't have a way of maintaining those features. Understand your requirements and bring the apt LMS to your business that can reap the best results.