BACK TO BASICS:
LMS 101
The complete guide to learning management systems

It may sound simple or obvious, but it is worth asking: What is a learning management system?

A learning management system (LMS) is a software-based platform that facilitates the management, delivery, and measurement of an organization's corporate eLearning programs.

Most learning management systems are cloud-based software solutions that companies use as their fundamental tool for managing their corporate training programs. Just as sales teams depend on CRM software, or HR teams rely on HRIS software, LMS software is usually the core technology used by an organization's Learning and Development (L&D) department.

Learning management systems can be used to deploy all kinds of training (from compliance training to company policy training, for instance). Over the past few years, eLearning has also evolved into a revenue generator for the extended enterprise. New advancements in learning technology have helped to support evolving learner needs and revolutionize the eLearning space by allowing for more learning data to be collected, enabling mobile learning capabilities and gamification, revenue generation, and more.

Perhaps the most important functionality of learning management systems is to support learning as it happens – i.e., through a combination of formal, social, and experiential learning. Traditionally, learning management systems have been used as a primary means to deliver formal learning. For instance, an LMS makes it easy to automatically assign eLearning onboarding courses to new employees, track their progress, and evaluate their level of knowledge retention. However, online learning systems like Docebo go beyond basic LMS functionality by incorporating social learning features that allow users to consult peer mentors, ask questions, collaborate, and encourage and reward content contribution.

WHO USES AN LMS?

Learning management systems are used globally, across multiple different industries and for a variety of different corporate learning use cases. LMS adoption has been on the rise for the past several years all around the world. In fact, the **global LMS market** is expected to grow at a CAGR of 24% from 2017 to 2020.

On a more specific level, there are two key types of LMS users:

Learners – Learners are on the receiving end of corporate training (after all, they are to whom training programs are intended). Learners who have access to the corporate LMS will be able to see their course catalog, complete their assigned courses and any evaluations, and measure their own progress. Learners can be assigned training on an individual basis, or according to their job function, and/or role in a company's organizational structure.

Administrators – Administrators are on the opposite side of learning technology as learners – that is, they are responsible for managing the LMS, which involves the combination of a number of tasks: creating courses and learning plans, assigning learners to courses, and tracking learner progress.

WHAT IS AN LMS USED FOR?

At a basic level, learning management software is used to centralize, deploy, and measure corporate training.

A state-of-the-art learning management system has the capabilities to support a variety of internal and external corporate use cases, including:

Employee Training – Perhaps the most common LMS use case is to support the training and development of internal employees. Within the LMS, courses can be assigned to ensure employees acquire the right job skills, are informed about product changes, are up-to-date on compliance training, etc.

Customer Training – Another common LMS use case is for organizations to provide training to customers. This is especially common for software and technology companies who need to effectively onboard users so they can use their product effectively. Ongoing customer training will also provide more value to customers and prevent customer churn.

Partner Training – An LMS can also be leveraged to train an organization's partners and channels (e.g., resellers). This is a great way to enhance your partnership programs and provide more value to partners.

KEY FEATURES OF AN LMS

There are over **700 solutions** in the LMS landscape, each offering something different than the next. Finding the best LMS for your organization's unique learning needs isn't an easy task.

Here are some of the key features that an LMS should include:

Automated Admin Tasks – Features that allow administrators to automate recurring/tedious tasks, such as user grouping, group enrollment, deactivation, and new user population.

Certifications and Retraining – The LMS should allow for the tracking and management of all certification and retraining activity (e.g., by managing recurring training/continuing education/compliance programs).

Social Learning – As mentioned, your LMS should also be able to support informal training activities. Your LMS should include features that encourage collaboration, peer mentorship, and knowledge curation.

Mobility – Learning content should be able to be accessed anytime, anywhere, regardless of device. Learning management systems should allow content to be accessed on mobile devices to better enable learning at the point of need.

Course and Catalog Management – At its core, an LMS is the central system that holds all eLearning courses and course content. Administrators should be able to easily create and manage courses and course catalogs to deliver more targeted learning to your users.

Content Integration and Interoperability – Learning management systems should support learning content packaged according to interoperable standards such as SCORM, AICC, and xAPI (formerly Tin Can).

Content Marketplace – Not all learning content is internally produced, and it is optimal to allow learners to access off-the-shelf courses from global eLearning content providers like OpenSesame and Lynda.com.

Notifications – Notifications help learners stay on top of their required training. LMS training systems should support automatic, real-time notifications indicating learner progress, course completions, certifications, achievements, comments, and more.

White-labeling and Branding Customization – Learners should be immersed in a completely unique eLearning platform that provides brand consistency within the eLearning experience.

Gamification – Increase learner engagement by allowing learners to achieve points, badges, awards, etc. on all learning activities.

Integrations – Your organization's data should be kept in sync with an eLearning LMS that allows for third-party integrations with other platforms, such as your CRM, video conferencing tools, and so on.

Ecommerce – If your business model would benefit from selling courses, your LMS should integrate with ecommerce platforms like Shopify, and/or payment gateways like Paypal and Stripe.

ILT Classroom – The purpose of a training management system is not to replace in-person learning with online learning – rather, it's to better support learning as it actually happens (i.e., via a mixture of formal and informal methods) and provide a way to deliver, track, and measure learning activities. As such, your LMS should also support in-person and classroom-based learning initiatives (e.g., managing classroom schedules, monitoring performance and attendance, etc.).

Reporting – One of the most important features an LMS should include is the ability to track and measure the impact that your training programs are having on your business. Your LMS should allow you to derive learning insights through customizable reports and dashboards that provide metrics on learner activity.

LMS TRACKING

Data-driven companies understand that one of the key advantages of any kind of software is that it can provide metrics, allowing for the measurement of productivity and progress, as well as draw performance insights. Web-based training software is no exception.

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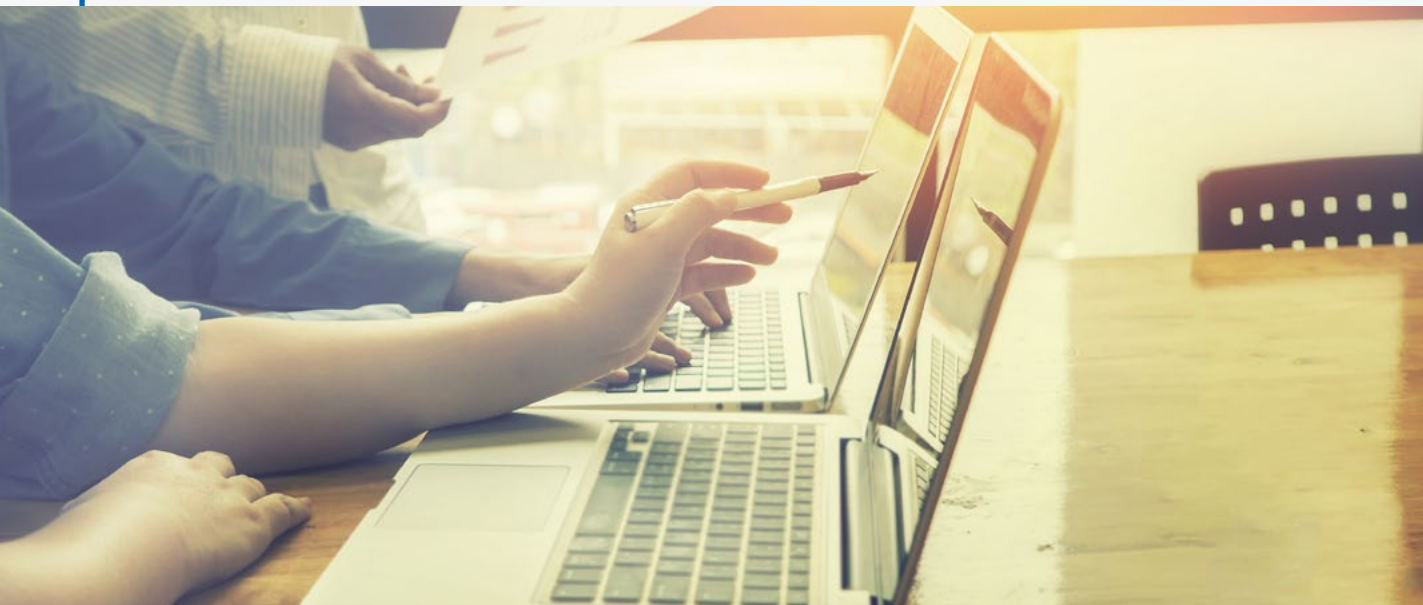
An LMS can help track a number of learner activities. Formal learning metrics and reports include:

- ☐ Course completions
- ☐ Course subscription dates
- ☐ Last access by user
- ☐ Total time spent on courses and learning plans
- ☐ Active courses
- ☐ Most viewed courses
- ☐ Test/assessment scores
- ☐ ILT classroom course sessions
- ☐ Ecommerce transaction data
- ☐ Learning Plan reports
- ☐ User activity reports
- ☐ Audit Trail reports
- ☐ Gamification reports (e.g., badges and contests)
- ☐ Certification reports
- ☐ External training activity reports
- ☐ Custom reports based on your unique learning needs

Your LMS should also be able to provide metrics on informal learning activities. In Docebo, for example, social learning activity can be tracked based on activities in the Coach and Share app. Some examples include:

- ☐ Reports on peer review activity
- ☐ Reports on activity per channel
- ☐ Answer likes and dislikes
- ☐ Top 5 experts by answer quality
- ☐ Fastest answers by experts

- ☐ Answers marked as "best answer"
- ☐ Rating on content contributions (user-generated content)
- ☐ Sharing activity
- ☐ Content views

LEVERAGING DATA & MEASURING LEARNING

Your LMS could track all the metrics in the world, but it won't make a difference if insights can't be drawn from the available metrics and actions can't be taken to improve your learning programs.

One of the most practical applications of LMS metrics is understanding skills and competencies. A learner can complete a gap analysis evaluation that will determine where they lack the skills and competencies necessary to perform in their role. Once an employee's skill gaps have been determined, this data can be leveraged to help compose a personalized learning plan that will fill those knowledge gaps and increase the employee's skills (and ultimately, their performance).

Metrics from learning technology can also help to make the connection between how learning impacts organizational performance.

Regularly reporting on learning metrics can help understand the effectiveness of your eLearning courses and the level of engagement among your learners. Future advancements in learning technology will allow for these metrics to provide even more valuable insights and fuel organizational performance.

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KEY BENEFITS AND ADVANTAGES OF AN LMS

There are a multitude of benefits and advantages of implementing an LMS, and they apply to both businesses and their learning audiences.

Benefits for Businesses

An LMS can help businesses:

- Reduce learning and development costs
- Cut down training/onboarding time for employees, customers, and partners
- Accommodate multiple learning audiences
- Centralize eLearning resources
- Maintain compliance
- Track learner progress
- Onboard partners and resellers to improve their ability to sell
- Retain customers by ensuring they use their products and services effectively
- Measure how learning impacts organizational performance

Benefits for Learners:

An LMS can help learners:

- Increase knowledge retention
- Stay on top of required training
- Engage with formal and informal learning best practices
- Acquire skills and knowledge required for career advancement
- Improve performance

An LMS Drives Results

The benefits and advantages that an LMS can bring to an organization aren't just theoretical – multiple studies have proven that an LMS can actually drive results. Research by Brandon Hall Group shows that 54% of organizations who have invested in learning technology have seen improvements in productivity and engagement. 91% of these organizations also reported a stronger link between learning and organizational performance.

THE FUTURE OF LEARNING TECHNOLOGY

One of the most daunting realities that all organizations are facing is a growing knowledge gap as baby boomers retire and millennials enter the workforce. Learner needs are constantly evolving as learning audiences change.

Similarly, eLearning trends are headed in exciting directions as new technology is introduced. It's important to have

learning technology in place to support your future learning needs. Some of these exciting trends include:

Microlearning – Microlearning means providing easily accessible, bite-sized learning content. This content will help to better accommodate shortening learner attention spans and encourage learning at the point of need.

Virtual Reality – It might sound like something out of a sci-fi novel, but the reality is that technology is turning virtual reality (VR) into a feasible training method. VR simulations and branching scenarios will likely become the most effective methods for gaining experiential training.

Artificial Intelligence – Artificial intelligence (AI) will play an extremely important role in shaping the eLearning industry since it will allow companies to make more data-driven decisions and provide more targeted learning programs.

Even if you're just starting your eLearning strategy, it's important to think ahead and ensure your learning technology will be able to meet the learning needs of tomorrow. A next-generation LMS can drive performance and help you reach your future business goals.

DOCEBO LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Docebo is a learning management system used in more than 80 countries and offered in over 30 languages. Established in 2005, Docebo offers a learning ecosystem for companies and their employees, partners, and customers that is designed to increase performance and learning engagement.

Docebo is a learner-centric technology, embraced for its ease of use, elegance and ability to blend coaching with social and formal learning. It's no wonder that Docebo has been heralded by PCMag.com as "the best online learning platform for business on the market."

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