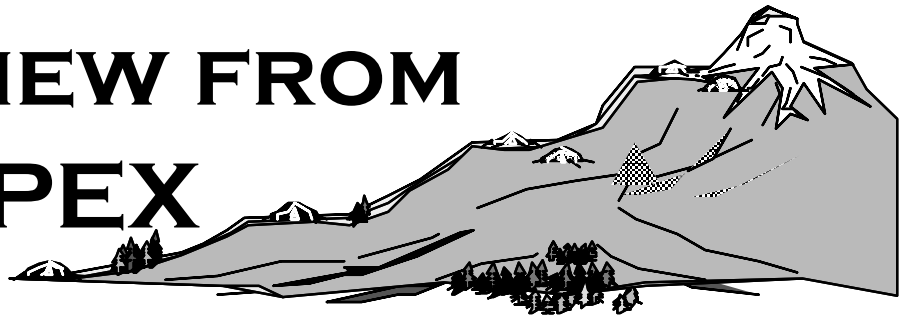


THE VIEW FROM THE APEX



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CONSIDERING AN LMS?

There's a lot of buzz in training and development circles these days about Learning Management Systems (LMS). As with all hype, however, the excitement about LMS has generated a lot more noise than understanding. It's time to cut through the confusion and consider some of the essential facts about LMS, and the basic questions that need to be asked when assessing any particular system for an organization's use.

WHAT IS A LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM?

A learning management system is the use of technology to plan, organize, deliver, and/or control aspects of the learning process. Core features and functionality typically provided by an LMS include:

- On-line registration
- Curriculum repositories
- Competency assessment tools
- Tracking systems
- Resource and knowledge management tools
- Performance measurement dashboard information
- On-line interactivity associated with coursework

The LMS market is highly fragmented, with dozens of vendors offering systems of widely varying capabilities. Matching the needs of your organization to the right LMS can be challenging.

TECHNICAL SELECTION CRITERIA

The LMS your organization

uses should fit its employment size, culture, deployment, budget, and technological sophistication. To help you assess the systems, here are some technical questions to ask:

- Is the system designed for on-line catalogs and registration, or for managing multiple delivery platforms?
- Does the system require a particular back-end platform, (e.g. Unix)?
- Will the system work virtually the same on all the latest browsers?
- Will the system manage standards-compliant e-learning programs and delivery platforms of all the major vendors?
- Will the system consistently manage e-learning programs developed with any of the major authoring tools?
- Is any client-side software required other than browsers and standard plug-ins?
- Is the system's Graphical User Interface easy and intuitive for both administrators and end-users?
- Will the system effectively capture and process all registration

information & notifications?

- Will the system allow comprehensive tracking of user activity and performance?
- Can the system easily scale to meet growing demand and complexity?
- What level of support does the vendor provide?
- What does the system cost per user? Analyze component charges, e.g. for installation, usage, licensing, maintenance, support, etc.
- Will the vendor be able to deliver on commitments? (This is a critical question: several firms have recently scrapped their LMS because of dissatisfaction and vendor over-commitment.)

THE BOTTOM LINE

Selecting the right LMS requires careful analysis of what an organization will need going into the future. Don't rush your choice!

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