Survey Results:
The Current and Future State of Learning Management Systems
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Survey Overview

In November 2010, Expertus and Training Industry, Inc. partnered to conduct a survey about the state of learning management systems (LMSs). The survey was designed to better understand how learning professionals would grade their LMS, what their top challenges are and what features and functionalities are most critical to include in future LMSs. Learning professionals can use these results to inform decisions on how to customize, upgrade or select their LMS.

The survey was completed by 144 corporate and government training professionals in organizations with varying sizes throughout 22 industries. Technology companies were the largest industry represented with 19% of all survey-takers, followed by Education, Banking/Finance, Healthcare and Business Services/Consulting.

Key Findings

#1: LMS satisfaction is mixed, with a “B-” average. A majority of learning professionals gave their LMS an A or B, with nearly half (45%) grading their LMS with a C, D or F.

#2: The top challenge for learning professionals and learners alike is poor usability. In fact, fully 25% of learning professionals felt that learners have an issue with usability. Beyond this, learning professionals also felt learners' top challenges are in their search for training, as well as general IT issues.

#3: Reporting and integration are still top LMS challenges. Beyond usability issues, learning professionals continue to report difficulties with their LMS' reporting and integration, just as they did in our 2007 and 2008 studies.

#4: Personalized learning plans are both the most frequently used advanced LMS feature and are also the most often selected “essential” feature of future LMSs. This underscores its importance and indicates that the LMS market is becoming more learner-friendly.

#5: The greatest differences between what learning professionals want and have in their LMS are in universal integration and integration with formal, informal and social learning. Combined with the finding that the lack of integration remains a top challenge, this represents an area where there is significant opportunity for the market to improve.
Analysis and Charts

How would you grade your level of satisfaction with your LMS?

Since learning professionals often express displeasure with their LMS, it is not surprising to see that as many as 45% would give their LMS a C, D or F grade, as Figure 1 shows. However, the fact that fully 55% gave their LMS an A or B shows that many LMS providers are meeting user needs fairly well by either anticipating user requirements or by making positive adjustments to their systems based on user feedback.

Figure 1

How Learning Professionals Grade Their LMSs
What is the biggest challenge you and your learners have faced when using your LMS?

Learning professionals say that the number one LMS-related challenge for both them and their learners is usability, with a much higher percentage of learners struggling with it – as shown in Figures 2 and 3. The greater difficulty that learners experience is to be expected since LMSs started as relatively complex tools to be used by trained administrators, and many are just beginning to offer learner-friendly interfaces.

The other two biggest challenges for learning professionals are reporting and integration, which have been nagging issues for years. In our 2008 study on learning technologies, we found that learning professionals most often complained about their LMS’ inflexible reporting capabilities and a lack of integration and standards between their LMS and other enterprise systems (e.g., human resources of accounting). Both problems were also reported among the top LMS limitations in our 2007 study.

Figure 2

Top 10 LMS Challenges for Learning Professionals

- Usability: 15%
- Reporting: 12%
- Integration: 8%
- Bugs: 6%
- Content Issues: 5%
- Performance: 5%
- Customizations: 4%
- Support: 3%
- Upgrades: 3%
- Flexibility: 3%

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Beyond general usability issues, learning professionals stated that learners also find it challenging to search for training and/or information within their LMS and face IT issues such as low bandwidth or password problems, as shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usability</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT Issues</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Issues</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access Issues</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bugs</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which of the following features are you currently using in your LMS?

Of all the advanced features listed in the survey, the highest percentages of learning professionals who took the survey (62% and 57%, respectively) currently have personalized learning plans and certification features in their LMS, as Figure 4 illustrates. About one in three (or less) have an LMS that allows for integration or have any social, user-generated or informal learning content capabilities.

Figure 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currently Used Advanced LMS Features</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personalized learning plans</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification features</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content authoring capabilities</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration with LMSs/enterprise applications</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to include user-generated content</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration with informal and social learning</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eCommerce</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Web 2.0” usability for learners</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content and expert ratings</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloud-based delivery</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chat</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Federated” search in multiple systems</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert directory</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are the three most essential features for future LMSs?

As both Figures 4 and 5 show, the same feature is both the most frequently used feature in current LMSs and is viewed by the greatest percentage of learning professionals as one of the top three most essential features of future LMSs: personalized learning plans. This reflects not only its importance, but the LMS market’s movement from creating solely event-based administrative tools to being learner-focused, as well.

As Figure 5 illustrates, the other most popular features of future LMSs are integration with other LMSs/enterprise applications and with formal, informal and social learning. Since a relatively low percentage of learning professionals report that their LMS has integration capabilities (see Figure 4) and the lack of integration remains a top LMS challenge, improving integration capabilities represents a significant opportunity for the LMS market.

After integration, other significant areas for LMS growth are in the ability to incorporate user-generated content and Web 2.0 usability.

Figure 5
The survey was completed by 144 corporate and government training professionals in organizations with varying sizes throughout 22 industries, as shown in Figure 6. Technology companies were the largest industry represented with 19% of all survey-takers, followed by Education, Banking/Finance, Healthcare and Business Services/Consulting.

Figure 6
The majority of participants (67%) came from companies with sizes of 1,000 or more, as shown in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7
Among the 140 respondents who answered this question, there were over 60 brand name LMSs, which reflects the diversity of LMS providers. Figure 8 lists all the LMSs named by survey participants.

**Figure 8**

![Chart showing LMSs of Respondents](image)

**Note:** Omitted from this chart are 33% of respondents who selected an LMS which no other participant selected.
About Expertus
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For more information, go to www.expertus.com or contact Mike Murrell at 1-877-827-8160 or via michaelm@expertus.com.

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Training Industry, Inc. and our portal, TrainingIndustry.com, spotlight the latest news, articles, case studies and best practices within the training industry. Our focus is on helping dedicated business and training professionals get the information, insights and tools needed to more effectively manage the business of learning.

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