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LMS Demo Survival Guide

Sitting through multiple Learning Management System (LMS) demos is not at the top of anyone’s list of exciting things to do. But it’s a necessary step in the process. It’s a large purchase that has to be treated as such, much like buying a new car. Consider the consequences if you were to buy something in haste, spend all that effort integrating it, then discover all those fancy features don’t do what you need them to.



Having vendors demo their products offers you the chance to discover the benefits it will bring to your organization and gives you the ability to see if the features and functions are worth the investment. You have to focus and really be thinking about what the product is and what you need from it, not just make a half-hearted effort. To assist, we’ve put together this guide with steps to take and questions to ask.

Here’s how to approach your LMS demos to get the most out of them and make a sound buying decision.

Prepare a List of Required LMS Functions

Before a demo, you’ll have some pre-work to do. Take the time to compile a list of your organization’s basic LMS requirements and objectives. This should include the needs of all users of the LMS: learners, instructors, administrators, etc. Ask yourself these questions:



“Will the LMS scale to meet our growth goals and technology advancements?”

Consider that your organization may grow in the coming years. If you’re going to put in the time and effort to implement an LMS or replace an existing LMS, not to mention the cost investment, make sure it is able to scale with you. Verify that the LMS can expand and evolve as your organization’s goals change, as well as keep up with emerging technology advancements and trends.



“Are the reporting features robust enough for what I need?”

A top benefit of using an LMS is that you can monitor the overall effectiveness of your online training content as well as learner performance and progress so that you can identify areas for improvement in both learners and content. Therefore, the reporting features must meet your requirements or offer customizable reports so training can be effectively tracked.

Another feature to look for during the LMS demo is report automation and delivery. Ask questions specific to your needs, such as: “can we automatically generate reports that are delivered to a designated email address on a designated time schedule?”



“Can I seamlessly deploy content on multiple devices?”

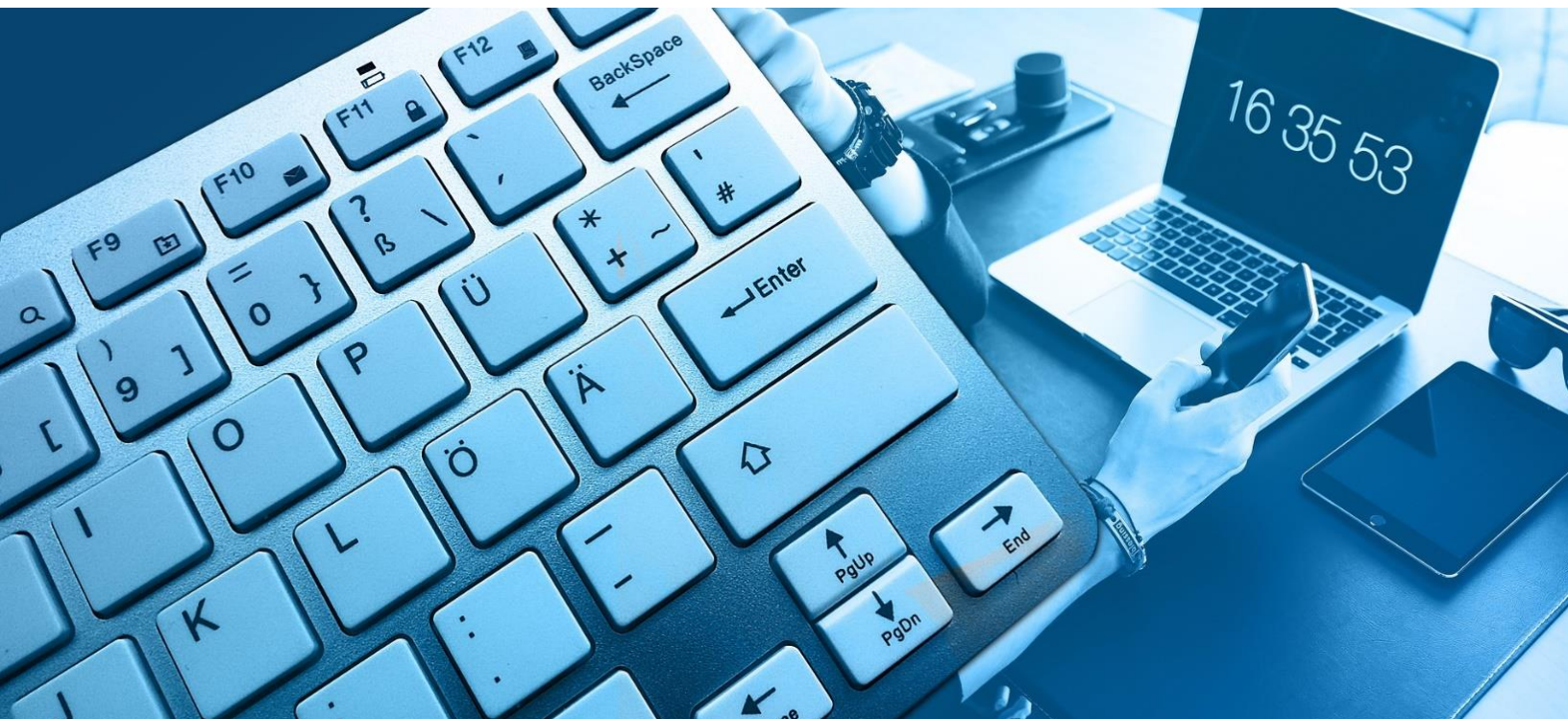
Learners of more recent generations expect their eLearning resources to be accessible on virtually any device. This requires an LMS to be fully responsive so you don’t have to create new content for each platform. In other words, the LMS should be capable of automatically detecting the user’s device and respond accordingly.



“Which support services are included in the package?”

Different LMS platforms come with different support packages. While some have active online user communities and email contact forms, others feature 24/7 phone support so that you can reach a qualified LMS expert round the clock.

Ask the LMS vendor which support services come standard upon signing up, as well as which updates and upgrades are included in the price.



Include Representatives of Different User Roles

Since different user roles have different needs, it might be worth including representatives of each type of user in the demo. Administrators, content developers and facilitators could be valuable in identifying a problem, or a potential opportunity, that could easily be overlooked by a single user with a different role.

Ask yourself, **“Is the tool intuitive for my learning and development team?”**

If possible, invite those who will use the system on a regular basis to participate in the demo. Their involvement allows them to test out user friendliness and make sure it has the capabilities that align with the key functions of their specific job role. If they can't attend the demo, you can request the LMS demo be recorded.



Scenarios can also be particularly useful, so be sure to carefully consider current use situations as well as challenges with your existing system. Asking the vendor to walk you through a process improves the odds of any key functions being overlooked.

It may also be helpful to prepare a course and various assessments to ensure compatibility and to see how it will look and behave in the system.

Establish the Vendor's Definition of Demo

A demo is many things to many people. It can be anything from a generic pre-recorded video, to a PowerPoint presentation that is really a sales pitch, to a personalized online meeting to address your specific needs. To get the most out of a demo, it should meet the objectives you established in your pre-work, which is most likely a live session, in-person or online, with a representative who is very familiar with the LMS.



“What do I want to get out of this demo? What do I want to gain?”

Before scheduling a meeting, talk to the vendor to make sure they can meet your most basic requirements and are willing to demonstrate the key features needed by you and your team.

Share Your Common Challenges

If you're shopping for a new LMS, you most likely aren't satisfied with your existing system or process. Ask yourself these questions:



“Why am I unsatisfied?”
“What am I hoping to gain or trying to improve?”

Does this LMS provide the solution to your learning and development problem or LMS dissatisfaction, and does it have everything you need to provide the most effective experience for your learners?

The answers to these questions are not only important to you but are also important for the vendor to understand. The more the vendor knows, the better they can explain how their product will resolve your issues. The right LMS could meet your needs in a way you didn't expect.

To take it a step further, be sure to inquire about the compatibility with your existing software. This will help to save time and avoid the hassle and expense of software replacement.

Stay on Track During the Demo

For most meetings, it's important to establish expectations. This is particularly true for demos. It can't be stressed enough the importance of all parties checking their technology before starting an online demo to ensure everyone can be heard, hear others, and see the presenter's full screen.

In addition, preferably prior to the demo, these questions should be asked so all attendees have an understanding of:

- Who will direct the demo?
- Which features and functionality will be covered?
- When should questions be asked – as they come up or save them for the end?
- How much time should be reserved for the demo?

If you've spent time carefully planning a demo and given guidelines to the LMS vendor, take steps to ensure the representative follows them and be prepared to step in to keep the presenter on task.

Then, once you've seen the features and capabilities you asked for, use any remaining time to learn about new features that could benefit your organization. You may find out the system is capable of providing a solution to a seemingly unrelated challenge.

Cost Analysis

An LMS can be a large investment. Carefully consider your options and ask yourself:



“Are the features and capabilities worth the expense?”

This is the ultimate question. You're invested a lot of time and effort in identifying a better solution and think you've found it. Now you have to ask yourself, “Is there a similar product with a lower price tag available and we wouldn't have to sacrifice any of the essentials?”

Keep in mind, however, that there are some features and benefits that are more difficult

to quantify, as well as some unknown benefits that aren't discovered until later. For example, superior customer support just might move to the top of your list of requirements, drastically improving your experience.

Decide Next Buying Steps

Hopefully you've started your LMS buying project based on a foundation of mutual respect between you and the vendors by communicating clearly and honestly and respecting one another's time. This should continue after your demo has ended.

As with any meeting, wrap things up by deciding what happens next. If the LMS doesn't meet your needs, say so.

If you want a more advanced demo with additional parties, would like to experience the system on a free trial basis, or have a specific RFP process, let the vendor know – they will be happy to help.

In Conclusion

When it comes to selecting an LMS, your goal is to make sure it will be righting all the wrongs that you were experiencing up until

now. In order to do so, you must take the appropriate steps and ask the right questions. If done correctly, you'll find yourself on the right path to making the best choice for your online training program and help you move forward in the final selection process.

WebMentor LMS™

[Avilar's WebMentor LMS™](#) offers the essential features companies need to implement a successful learning management program.

With custom roles, tailored visuals and functionality, integrations, live events and more, we're always working to enhance our LMS features.

We strive to provide a product that is cost-effective, but also customizable and distinctly powerful. Our LMS is flexible and user friendly yet includes features that are powerful enough to meet all of our clients' needs. If you're looking for an LMS to support your organization or want to know more about what to look for, [contact Avilar](#). We're always happy to help!

