



I M P A C T

Your Performance Improvement Resource from BEI

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Performance Perspectives

LMS or LCMS: Which one is Right for Your Organization?

During the past year, e-learning systems have been on the rise with more companies than ever launching or enhancing their electronic-based programs. Some companies claim to be widely successful at saving costs and time on training efforts with the implementation of e-learning. Others complain of integration issues, interoperability issues, and that employees just are not using the e-learning products. However, the fact that businesses keep trying indicates that they believe that e-learning tools can help them reduce costs and enhance productivity.

One key component companies need to address when implementing e-learning is a tool that ties the learners, management, content, and the technology all together. This tool is found in two distinctly different products, which are getting a lot of hype these days, Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Learning Content Management Systems (LCMS). The acronyms are often confused and used interchangeably, as though the systems offered the same features. However, there is significant difference in the purpose and use of these two tools.

What is a LMS?

The main purpose of a LMS is to manage learners and learning events, and to collect and organize data on the learner and the course. The LMS is a versatile interface that launches Computer Based Training (CBT) and Web Based Training (WBT) courseware. It may also track and record participation information depending on the product you choose. What this means is that the learner can access the course offerings, register for the event, and participate in the event all online. However as more of these systems are developed, functionality is expanding to include competency management, test administration,

RECOMMENDED READING

Learning Management System 2002; How to Choose the Right System for Your Organization, published by Brandon Hall, Ph.D. and the staff at Brandon Hall

This book provides a comprehensive look at purchasing an LMS or LCMS.

resource management, support of third party content providers, and scheduling.

Depending on the sophistication of the system, it may also track test scores, time in the course, completion rate, and instructor led or independent learning material. Again, depending on the system your company purchases the LMS may offer course delivery or you may have to have a web server to deliver your courses. Remember, sophistication is related to dollars.

What is a LCMS

The other system that that is often confused with the LMS is the LCMS. Noted e-learning expert Brandon Hall defines the LCMS as “ a multi-user environment where learning developers create, store, reuse, manage, personalize, and deliver digital learning”. While the LMS focused more on what goes on outside of the class, the LCMS focuses on what goes on inside of the class.

Once again, the level of sophistication will vary from product to product, but generally speaking the LCMS provides the ability to develop courses based on learning objects, deliver the course, and track information on the course and the learner at a much more detailed level. The LCMS manages much more granular detail such as number of times the learner accesses a particular section of the course, amount of time the learner spent in course, and test questions that the learner is stumbling on. The confusion between LMS and LCMS generally lies in the fact that most LCMSs also have built-in LMS functionality.

The ability to develop courses with learning objects is one of the key assets of an LCMS. A learning object is a component of a learning program. It can take a number of forms such as:

- Information material
- Practical exercises, such as questions, games, simulations, and assessments
- Descriptions of, or instructions for, activities, which could include non-digital events and course components including interactive tutorials
- Collaborative activities, which could include non-digital events

Learning objects provide the ability to develop any learning activity you can think of, online or off, and to create all sorts of documents that could conceivably support learning and performance. What makes learning objects different from a basic web page, Word document, or other digital resource, is that it is provided within the context of a learning objective and a process or method. Learning objects are just components, and can be aggregated into personalized learning paths in a number of ways. You might view learning objects much like you would a library, where you can select and combine information from a variety of books to meet your course goal.

How does your Organization choose between a LMS and a LCMS?

To determine which tool or system will work best for your organization first examine your needs:

- Do you need a tool to manage the learners or the learning content? A LMS manages the learners and a LCMS focuses on managing the content.
- Do you need a system that keeps a learner's profile, shares learner data with an ERP system, or schedules a learning event? If so, then it's a LMS you need as the LCMS typically lacks this kind of functionality.

- Does your organization's training department have instructional designers, content developers, and project managers who can create courseware based on knowledge nuggets and objectives provided by learning objects? If so, then the LCMS is your answer. If your organization has a training department but typically purchases off the shelf or customized training courses, then you likely don't have the in-house capabilities to use the learning objects and effectively create your own courses, therefore the LMS is going to be your answer. Typically instructional designers use the LCMS, and training managers use a LMS.

Still confused? Your best bet is to work with a vendor or a consultant that can help your organization develop an e-learning strategy. Your e-learning strategy will help you select the right system for your organization.

BEI helps companies design and develop a formal e-learning strategy to ensure that training being converted or designed for online use is relevant and results-oriented and that the transition from traditional learning to an online training environment is successful.

Lessons Learned

Topic: Capturing Lessons Learned

Here are some lessons that we learned from capturing our lessons learned on projects:

- Capture and share lessons learned at the end of project phases rather than only at the completion of the project
- Capture lessons learned as close to the end of a project phase as possible or you might lose some key lessons
- Lessons learned can be used to mitigate risks on future projects
- Incorporate lessons learned into the closeout phase of your projects
- Call the project team together to brainstorm/identify lessons learned, they will build on each other's thoughts
- Capture lessons learned on administrative aspects of projects as well as on the project work itself (i.e., invoicing, record keeping)
- Establish a process for communicating lessons learned on your project to others in the organization who might benefit as well

Marketplace

Change Management Consulting

Aligning Your Culture with E-learning

Your e-learning infrastructure and content could be the best in the world, but if employees don't take advantage of this new learning environment then your organization will not experience the value of its investment in e-learning.

E-learning solutions represent a change in business processes and strategies. As with any new initiative, your success with e-learning will depend upon the extent to which your management supports it and your employees embrace it. **BEI** uses proven methods and tools to help organizations identify resistance to change and create a transition plan to move the organization from a current level of performance to a desired level of performance, in this case, from a traditional learning environment to an online learning environment. Our managed change approach takes into account structure, systems,

processes, and culture. **BEI** can help your organization successfully transition to e-learning in order to experience the full value of this investment. To learn more about our change management services visit <http://www.beinc-online.com/coreservices/changemanagement.asp>.

Worthy Web Sites

<http://www.ebizq.net/> This portal offers timely and reliable information concerning e-business integration. It draws upon collective experiences by means of weekly features, news, white pages, Q & As, and more.

<http://www.generalthinking.com/> *Interested in what innovators are thinking?* This web site captures a global network of the world's best and most creative thinkers. Fifty-eight innovators including entrepreneurs, designers, musicians and CEO's share their thoughts on various subjects.

<http://www.globexplorer.com/> *Interactive aerial maps.* Enter an address, intersection or pre-designated landmark and see an aerial view of the location. Views start at the national level and zoom down to the street level.

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