Selecting a Learning Management System

After determining what eLearning will mean for your RTO – hopefully you’ll have a list of criteria to help begin selecting an LMS. To add to this, consider our shortlist of LMS features that every RTO needs for successful eLearning.

1. Data is king - SMS integration

If any organisation knows how important data is - it’s an RTO. The need for accurate and timely reports is a “must have” for RTOs in order to meet their compliance obligations.

Most RTOs manage this data via their Student Management System (SMS); the system that contains student and enrolment information. Learning Management Systems (LMS) however contain the information related to a student’s learning and provides them access to learning content and assessment tasks.

While each system has a separate function – there is overlap with student data. This is where integration across systems is important. Integration means student enrolment data and training results can be captured in one system and then imported seamlessly to the next.

Selecting an LMS that supports SMS integration is crucial for data accuracy. Accurate data means accurate reports for compliance. It also has the added bonus of saving time by removing the double handling of data from manually transferring it from one system to the next.

2. Live in the clouds

Often cloud hosting is a feature that is overlooked when selecting an LMS. But as boring as it might seem – where your LMS lives could be your RTO’s most important LMS decision.

A hosted LMS means that it lives in the cloud – on a server somewhere and is managed for you by your LMS vendor. You’ll access your system by typing in the unique URL provided – such as http://elearnlogin.YOURRTO.com and enter by typing in your login details.

Why is this important? Well it means all the tech is managed for you. You don’t have to worry about finding your own servers and dealing with software upgrades. You also don’t need to recruit or manage people with the technical know-how to manage any of this. Best of all it saves you money. Managing your own system is costly – so having this taken care of not only saves time and expertise, but money too.
3. An LMS full of possibility (...We mean content + assessments)

Selecting an LMS is only one part of an eLearning strategy. A key component for RTOs getting started with eLearning is content – and most importantly for RTOs – assessment tools.

If you choose an empty LMS – which means an LMS without any content and assessment library - you’ll need to develop a plan to design and develop your online resources. A critical part of writing and developing these online resources will be the mapping of assessments tools back to the Performance Criteria, Elements, Performance Evidence and Knowledge Evidence.

Alternatively your RTO can select an LMS that comes with managed content – a library of learning materials and assessment tools. Here you’ll need to review whether the content comes with assessment tools, whether it has the units of competency you require, and whether the assessment tools can be edited and adapted to meet your RTO’s contextualisation requirements.

4. Slice, dice and serve – bite-sized learning with LTI integration

Bite-sized learning is a great way of creating a guided learning experience for your learners. This is where learning content and assessments can be “sliced and diced” to meet the needs of your learning cohort.

For example, you could deliver sections of the learning content based on completion of related activities or provide parts of the resources on a week-by-week basis.

Having an LMS that can do this means you have flexibility to slice and serve content and assessments as bite-sized portions.

5. Contextualised learning and assessments

There are two reasons contextualisation is important; one is it achieves better training outcomes and two it’s an Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) requirement (and you can’t get around that).

Contextualisation is a way of making learning and the assessment of what has been learnt, relevant to a person’s current or future workplace. It might include:

- Packaging units of competency together to make the qualification tailored to a particular job role
- Adapting the assessments to meet the needs of a particular learning cohort
- Making changes to assessments based on recommendations from assessment validation activities

The ability to edit and adapt assessment tools is crucial to meet both compliance and learner requirements. When selecting an LMS make sure you have the ability to edit, adapt and contextualise assessment tools to meet your compliance obligations.