



Taking Your Training to New Heights

The Straight Scoop about e-Learning

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In our four-part series about e-Learning we've discussed in Part I, what is e-Learning and Part II, benefits and misconceptions of e-Learning. This month, Part III we will talk about Learning Management Systems (LMS) and what you can do with them. Next month's newsletter will include Part IV, implementing an e-Learning program.

A learning management system (LMS) is software, typically web-based, that automates the administration of training events and learners. Just about all learning management systems manage the log-in of registered users, manage course catalogs, track learner activities and results, and provide reports to management. Let it be known though, there are hundreds of providers of LMS's. They are different in many ways, from the functionality, to how user friendly they are and to the cost.

There are basic LMS's that are considered e-Learning viewers. They allow for a learner to log-in, select a course to view, take a test, and then log out. The administrator will have the ability to view the user status, course completion status, test scores and then run a report on these results.

Then there are those LMS's that give administrators and instructors the ability to truly take advantage of the administrative tools that make administering training so much easier. These LMS's will allow for administering classroom/instructor led training, e-Learning, webinars and web-conferencing by providing schedules, links and access information to learners.

Additionally, automated email notifications and reminders are generated to notify learners when they are scheduled for training and impending due dates if the learner has not completed the training by specified date. Administrators are notified automatically when a learner has completed a lesson, test or survey.

Gone are the days of sending paper bulletins around for employees to "read and initial" or for learners to fax or mail in tests to the training center. LMS's can easily accomplish these tasks electronically. If you'd like to have your employees learn and collaborate with each other, LMS's may incorporate bulletin boards, chat rooms or discussion groups. To enhance the learning experience, instructors may have the ability to create course content right in the LMS, upload, or link to additional electronic course material (text, audio or video) that can be coupled with the courses. Lastly, tests and surveys can be created right in LMS's with corresponding question banks and testing options that allow instructors to "mix it up" a bit.

Learning Management Systems come in all shapes and sizes, but one thing is for sure, like any software, it's all in the eye of the beholder. What's good for one company may not be so good for another.