

## **TRANSCRIPT: Podcast episode 21: Learning Management System implementation**

This is the transcript for E-Learning Academy podcast episode 21, which is available on

iTunes at: <http://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=388852745>

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### **Transcript**

#### **This is episode 21 – Learning Management System implementation**

Hi and welcome to the show. Last episode we talked about choosing a Learning Management System, or LMS.

Today is the second of a series of 3 podcasts on the topic of LMS. We'll be exploring processes and tips on implementing a Learning Management System.

There are many different kinds of corporate Learning Management Systems and, in order to talk about implementation, I will be generalising LMS roles and functions. Let's begin.

Begin by assembling a LMS project team. The team should ideally include:

1. A specialist in your organisation's IT security. This is especially important if you are going to externally host your LMS.
2. A data warehouse specialist from your organisation. The data you put into your LMS often needs to be cleaned first. As much as possible, you are looking to maintain 'one source of truth', meaning one set of data.
3. Someone from IT that will project manage the LMS implementation if it is going to be internally hosted, or who will support the implementation of single sign-on if it is going to be externally hosted. Single sign-on means the LMS can be accessed without requiring a different set of login details. The IT project manager should also be across the different operating environments and bandwidths of your organisation.
4. Someone from corporate comms, who can help you to develop a change management strategy.
5. Learning and development representatives from both strategic and operational perspectives.
6. And a representation of end-users, both managers and staff. These people can inform you of potential implementation issues, and can be advocates during

The first thing the successful LMS proponent will do upon engagement is delve deeper you're your requirements. The LMS provider should be experienced with other implementations and should know their system inside out. This will help you to examine your current and desired learning administration processes, define the specific LMS features you need and map the email notifications and administration workflows. They will develop an implementation plan that details the specific configuration required of your organisation – from workflow to reporting.

The consultation process between client and vendor is often done over a couple of days. The process should be quite structured so as to not miss anything that later becomes an issue. Sometimes clients ask me to attend this process, to help them ask the right questions of the LMS provider.

The usual next step is the LMS provider will go away and configure your LMS to match the agreed implementation plan. They will ask you to systems test – this is a disciplined process in itself, and is

really your one shot at ensuring the configuration is right for your organisation's technical environment and learning strategy. Workflow between administrator, end user and manager has to be right, different scenarios need to be considered to help ensure the LMS is future-proof. The data and tracking needs to be dependable.

The relationship between you and the LMS provider should not stop at implementation. You will no doubt have issues to log and fix, and changes to request. The LMS provider should provide you with a maintenance plan and opportunity for ongoing feedback loops.

The implementation process varies with organisation size, implementation resource allocation, the experience of the LMS provider, whether the LMS is going to be internally or externally hosted, the extent of learning events and staff data being inputted into the system, and the sophistication of the LMS feature set. It can take anywhere from 4 weeks to 3 months or even up to 12 months.

Upon implementation comes a period of systems maturation. What I mean by this is that your learning and development team will uncover LMS issues that weren't earlier identified. LMS administration will take longer than the glossy LMS brochure. You will make mistakes that you will have to undo. Staff will be calling your Helpdesk for advice on how to do things, and the communication and staff education plan will need to be ongoing. This is all natural. It's important to acknowledge that LMS implementation and maturation combined may take you up to 2 years and during this time your learning and development team may have no capacity to take on any other major project. Your other learning initiatives may need to be put on hold as the LMS becomes all-consuming.

One final comment. During LMS implementation you may look at your learning and development team and recognise you have a skills gap, such as systems admin skills, e-learning instructional design skills and a deeper skill-set in learning technologies in general. In addition to the LMS, ensure to budget for team training and a possible additional head count.

In the next episode of the Connect Thinking E-Learning Academy podcast, we'll explore future trends in learning management systems.

This has been Alison Bickford. Thanks for listening and I look forward to seeing you online.