6 Steps for a Painless and Productive LMS Demo

You wouldn't buy a car without test driving it first, would you? The same rule applies when selecting a Learning Management System (LMS) or other talent management software.

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.

While LMS vendors may be more than happy to show you everything the software is capable of, they usually don't have enough time in their schedule to do so – nor would you want to hear about features you have no use for or won't benefit from. As such, you'll want to prepare in advance for the demo so that you get all the information you need to make a sound decision.

Follow These 6 Steps

For a happy experience, here are six steps to ensure your next LMS demo is painless and productive:

1 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 your objective – most likely a live session, in-person or online, with a representative who is very familiar with the LMS.

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

2 Prepare a List of Required LMS Functions

Before a demo, take the time to compile a list of your organizations basic LMS requirements and objectives. This should include the needs of different roles of all those involved with the LMS. 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

representative to walk you through a process improves the odds of any key functions being overlooked.

Finally, it may also be helpful to prepare a course and various assessments to ensure compatibility and experience how it will look in the system.

3 Share Your Common Challenges

Why aren't you satisfied with your existing system or process? What are you hoping to gain or trying to improve?

The answers to these questions are important to the vendor. The more the representative 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.

4 Include Representatives of Different User Roles

Since different user roles have different needs, it might be worth including them 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.

5 Stay on Track

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, can hear others, and can see the presenter's full screen.

In addition, preferably prior to the demo, all attendees should have an understanding of:

- *Who will direct the demonstration*
- *The features and functionality that will be covered*
- *When should questions be asked – as they come up or save them for the end?*
- *Amount of time allotted for the meeting*

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, take advantage of the time you have blocked off 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 or reveal a new opportunity.

6 Decide Next LMS 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. Nobody wants to waste time on unnecessary follow up. 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 test drive several systems.

While test driving an LMS is not nearly as exciting and fun as test driving a car, it doesn't have to be painfully boring and a waste of your time. If done correctly, following these 6 guidelines can help you make the best choice for your online training program and help you move forward in the selection process.

There is still plenty more due diligence that will need to be done before making your final selection - you'll need references, quotes, project plans and maybe another demo, or two or three – but now you are equipped to make it as enjoyable and productive as possible.

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 functionalities, 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!