

THE 14 QUESTIONS TO ASK TO IDENTIFY AN ADAPTABLE LMS

If you're struggling to tell whether or not an LMS is adaptable enough for your needs, it's time to sit down with your vendor for a discussion.

These are the 14 questions any organization should ask to ensure they're choosing an adaptable LMS that will grow with them over time, integrate seamlessly into their wider technology ecosystem and meet their unique requirements.

1 Do you understand our organization's unique needs?

Before you go any further, establish whether or not your potential vendor really understands your unique needs. If they're trying to push you into adopting an LMS out of the box, it's likely they don't fully understand the ins and outs of your organization, and may try to cut corners to fit your needs into the existing software.



2 Are you as invested in the success of this implementation as we are?

Many vendors will do anything for you until you sign the contract. After that, support times lengthen, roadmaps recede and what you thought met your needs, sort of doesn't. Find yourself a vendor that really cares about your success. Ask them to demonstrate how they will meet those specific needs, rather than accept their word or roadmap promise. Perhaps they will contact you with suggested improvements, or let you know about new features that you may find useful. At the very least, they should champion your success, and regularly check in with you to ensure that the LMS is meeting your needs.

3 How easy is it to change or add new features, functionality and setup options within the system?

As your business needs and circumstances change, so too will your learning needs. Knowing upfront if you can easily add or change features and functionality within your LMS could save you a whole lot of time and money further down the line.



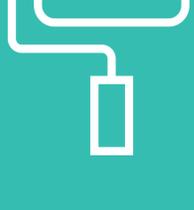
4 To what extent can branding or design be applied to the LMS?

There are varying degrees of visual customization available on learning platforms. At the most basic level, this might just mean adding your logo in the top corner and incorporating your brand colors into the design. At the more sophisticated end, you could make your LMS look like an extension of your brand website or intranet for the most cohesive, consistent look and feel. Find out where your LMS sits on this spectrum to work out what is possible in terms of making it look uniquely yours.



5 What layout and look-and-feel changes can we apply after launch?

Organizations are often making tweaks to their visual branding. This could be anything from swapping a color palette for accessibility reasons to updating photography for a new campaign through to a full rebranding exercise. Ideally, the visual appearance of your LMS won't be "locked in" when you launch - you will most likely need the freedom to make updates and freshen up the visuals as time progresses.



6 What sort of APIs and import/export options are available within the LMS?

It's important to dig into the technicalities of your LMS. If necessary, it may be worth inviting your IT team into these discussions to ensure that the technical setup will work within your IT infrastructure. Your vendor should know exactly which APIs you should use to connect your LMS to your other systems, so you can ensure that everyone is on the same page with regard to any technical considerations.

7 Can we create a custom integration between the LMS and our other systems?

Some learning management systems may come with inbuilt integrations with other systems straight out of the box. However, ideally your LMS will integrate with all relevant systems in your organization's technology ecosystem. It's important to find out if it's possible to create a custom integration to link your LMS to your other systems, such as HR, payroll and sales platforms.



8 Does the LMS support single sign-on or shared authentication?

Your LMS will likely be one of many systems in your organization. Instead of adding yet another set of login credentials to your employees' lists, it usually makes sense to find an LMS that supports single sign-on or shared authentication. Find out if they can login with their existing credentials, their work email address or even their Google account to reduce the barriers to learning and increase LMS usage.



9 What is the process for developing custom functionality?

When you need custom functionality, how will this process work? Find out the process for how the revision process will work. Ideally, this should be a collaborative process, where your LMS partner understands what you need, why you need it and how it will fit into the wider system.



10 How does your work impact our ability to upgrade to the new version of the LMS?

It's vital to find out how your LMS partner performs customization work. For instance, do they tend to make changes directly to the core code, or do they use plugins? If they edit the core code, it may be more challenging to upgrade to the latest version of the LMS, whereas using modular plugins and extensions means you can upgrade to the new version without issues, and the plugins will continue to function correctly once the upgrade is complete.



11 How easily can we upscale our LMS?

It could be a recruitment drive, a new project requiring hundreds of new employees, a company merger or an extended rollout of your LMS. You may even be looking to launch an extended enterprise learning program for your third-party vendors, suppliers or even the general public. It's impossible to predict what will happen in the future, so find out how easy it is to upscale your LMS, whether or not there is any disruption to the running of the system and the associated costs.



12 Can we turn features on and off easily, to help the site evolve alongside our learning and business requirements?

Similar to the last question, it's useful to know how configurable the existing functionality within your LMS will be. For instance, you may start your project not requiring support for live learning events, but the need could arise six months later. Is it easy to "switch on" this functionality in your LMS, or will it require a time-consuming, costly update?

13 Can we make configuration and workflow changes to the LMS to make incremental changes to our site?

To adapt to the challenges facing your organization, you may need to make changes to the configuration and workflows within your LMS. This could mean anything from changing approval processes to reduce barriers to learning to changing the way programs are set up for better results. How will your LMS partner support you in making these changes, and what will changes like this cost?



14 How can we learn about new features and functionality ahead of new versions to help us make informed decisions ahead of time?

You need an LMS partner who is proactive and stays on top of the latest versions of your system to ensure you can plan accordingly. Ask your partner how they will keep you in the loop about what's coming next, and check if they can keep you informed about the features and functionality that will specifically benefit you and your organization.

Want to find out more about how a lack of adaptability will kill your LMS project?

Download our guide to discover why an adaptable LMS is a key part of any successful organization's learning strategy.

DOWNLOAD GUIDE