

# Tips For Deploying a Learning Management System

By Wendy Kayser Kirkpatrick



Congratulations! Your company has purchased an online learning management system (LMS). Proper build-out and implementation are critical to the success of online learning in your organization.

Often there is pressure to rush implementation and launch a system that isn't ready. This is a good time to remember the old adage, "You only get one chance to make a good first impression". If learners have bad first experiences in the new LMS, it will be hard to entice them to come back.



Here are some tips to make your implementation a success:

## 1. Allow sufficient time to build out the system

It can take a year or more to build out an LMS to meet your specific training needs. Online content also generally takes longer to build than instructor-led formats. All projects of this magnitude can be expected to have some unforeseen challenges. Start with a reasonable timeline and allow extra time for rework and revisions.

## 2. Continue cross-functional team meetings

The cross-functional team that selected the LMS should continue to meet during the build-out and implementation process. This will ensure that each group gets the functionality they expect from the LMS once it is complete. Unexpected challenges can also be resolved in a group forum so there are no surprises during implementation.



## 3. Stick to the plan

During build-out you may see additional features in the LMS that were not originally discussed, or have new ideas surface. Carefully consider if going beyond the original plan is required for the LMS to deliver the results you need. Additional features add complexity and may extend your implementation timeline. New requests can be noted for a second phase that could take place six to twelve months after the initial implementation.

## 4. Keep it simple

Generally speaking, the simpler the LMS, the better. Further to #3, avoid the urge to use every possible feature in the LMS you purchase. The more features you use, the harder the system is to maintain. This can lead to more problems and downtime. More importantly, the more features you implement the more complicated it becomes for the learner to navigate and use. Start simple. You can always update and enhance the system later when users are comfortable and the investment is proven.

## 5. Beta test the LMS before going live

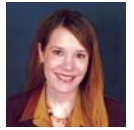
Build at least one month into your timeline to beta test the system before the LMS launches. Select a small group



of people from future system users with varying levels of computer literacy. This will likely reveal some issues you hadn't anticipated, including glitches, navigational challenges, and questions. From this data you may want to revise the LMS build-out plan or your training materials.

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## 6. Plan a soft launch

Often the launch of an LMS is tied to a larger event like a national sales meeting or a company-wide initiative. If this is the case, allow time for a soft launch a few weeks to a month prior to the big event. Plan to have all marketing and collateral materials in place for the soft launch. This gives a cushion to resolve any issues before the big event.

## 7. Conduct hands-on training

Any new technology may be intimidating to some people. Hands-on training will make learners



comfortable with the system. This will translate into a faster ramp up time for LMS usage. While it may be expensive or inconvenient to offer this type of training, it is generally less expensive than purchasing an LMS that is underutilized because learners don't know how to use it. Make sure training can take place in the actual LMS versus a simulation.

If you create an implementation plan including the tips above, you will have a good chance of a smooth and successful implementation. The result will be a faster move to online learning within your organization. This will validate the investment in your LMS, and help to build the case for additional funding to support future updates.

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*Wendy draws on sixteen years of experience in the business world to make her training relevant and impactful with measurable results.*

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