



Commonality and Benefits of Knowing

KNOW THE QUESTIONS. UNDERSTAND THE SIMILARITIES
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Top Benefits for L&D and Training Professionals (The Takeaways to Remember)

****Stop Asking the Wrong Questions**** – If you're still inquiring whether a system can upload videos or has a modern user interface, you're wasting your time. That's like asking if a car has wheels. Focus on the aspects that truly differentiate vendors.

****Skills Management Reality Check**** – Many systems claim to offer skills management, but the reality is that most perform poorly in this area. Skill ratings often lack meaning without clear definitions. For example, what does "level 2" really signify? Can the person perform the job or just spell the term?

****Administrative Control is Key**** – Look for systems that allow you to create workflows, manage multiple approval levels, and control visibility based on profiles and skills. These features are crucial when running a successful Learning and Development (L&D) program.

****Manager and Instructor Buy-In**** – The system should be beneficial for managers (to effectively oversee their team's development) and instructors (so they find it user-friendly). If these users struggle to do their jobs efficiently, your program will likely fail.

****AI Hype vs. Reality**** – While many are jumping on the AI bandwagon, most are only providing basic content creation. Inquire about token fees, the large language model (LLM) they're using, and whether AI features come with an extra cost. Be cautious of unexpected charges.

****Mobile Responsive Does Not Mean Mobile App**** – Just because a system is accessible on your phone doesn't guarantee that it performs well on mobile. It's important to understand the difference.

Stop asking generic questions and start probing into what truly sets these systems apart.

Right now, you may be asking the same questions as everyone else, and that won't help you choose the right system.

What are the commonalities I see in systems (Excluding Knowledge Management, since their focus is around an answer engine and its output)

The Commonality of an LMS, Learning Platform, Talent Development, LXP with LMS (think Combo)

- Modern UI/UX that is easy to use - Every vendor will claim they have this, even though I see many that do not, unless you believe that Microsoft should have never discontinued Windows 2000.
- Has a catalog
- Assign users to _____
- Can you take quizzes or assessments, or can you do so
- Self-registration, forget password, custom domain (this gets a bit tricky, I'll explain shortly), and the ability to schedule webinars/seminars. For webinars, you can connect to X web conferencing, or the vendor says that you can do webinars or talk to folks via a webcam.
- Some level of skills management - skill capabilities; ditto for the calendar - widespread here, scheduling sessions - common,
- Customer Training - Can skin and add your logo - and can skin (i.e., change the colors) and add a logo to any additional tenant that the system has - think child or sub-portal
- Can skin and add logo - any system that exists out there
- Provides outstanding support - They all claim to do so. Take it for what it's worth.
- Offers integrations - the most common are HCMs
- Mobile Responsive - This doesn't mean they have a mobile app.
- It can be seen on a mobile device - think access via the browser.

- Micro-Learning - They can all do it - micro- only means short. Oh, and vendors were able to do this in 2000; it's not a new concept.
- Certificates - Most have templates, the ability to edit the certificate, a certificate can be e-mailed to the learner, a certificate can be provided upon completion of content/course/path, and so forth
- The system offers assigned learning, with a lot of things you can do, from assigning learners to a specific course or courses they have to complete, to locking down a course, so they have to go step by step before moving on to a learning path
- Support for the hierarchy at the enterprise, business unit, or other desired levels
- Repeatable creation of events based on a standard course template (e.g., number of days, min/max seats, title, description)
- Has LXP capabilities
- Create workflows
- Compliance - Audit trail is quite common

Administration Common items - I very rarely see a vendor saying they do not have this - but there is one that isn't common (you won't see it below, but will shortly)

- Administrators can set multiple levels of approval (e.g., no approval needed, supervisor approval, instructor approval, etc.)
- Administrators can create a learning path, journey, or curriculum path.
- Administrators can add content/courses to the system and add or remove them from a curriculum/learning path
- Assign and enforce access based on user profile
- Assign content/path based on skills, ditto for a job role
- Administrators can limit access to catalog items based on skill profile or skill proficiency
- Administrators can create skills needed, requested, and assigned to learners, or in general, in the system
- Administrators can compare learners to learners based on skill(s) tied to a role
- Capture multiple user attributes (e.g., Organization, Department, Manager, Job role, etc.)

- Create user groups based on defined attributes (e.g., organization, department, country, etc.).
- Control profile settings by field (e.g., allow learners to change e-mail addresses but not change user name)
- The administrator can limit access to catalog items based on user profiles (e.g., job role, location, customer, partner, etc.).
- Allow administrators to create and assign system roles
- Administrators can create job roles and job titles, edit, and delete them
- Administrators can view reports and schedule to go to X, Y, and Z
- Administrator home page
- Allow administrators to track attendance status (e.g., no show, canceled, attended) of all types of training (e.g., instructor-led, online, virtual)

If the system offers or has a manager's section

- Manager see their team in a manager dashboard or view
- Managers can assign training to teams and/or individuals
- Managers can update on the job training, mark training complete
- Managers can approve learner requests or deny them
- Manager can add/reject/update/approve learners/users
- Managers can compare learners to learners (within their team) on a variety of items, including skills
- If skills are involved, Managers can review skill ratings and offer what they see as the appropriate rating
- If skills are involved, the manager can assign skills or recommend skills the learner needs, or ideally, needs
- Managers can receive reports (if the administrator approves them)

If the system offers an Instructor area

- Instructors have access to course enrollment information
- Instructors can push surveys/assessments during an active class or post-class

- Instructors can update rosters
- Allow instructors the ability to print rosters, send e-mails to participants, and update course attendance post-class

Reporting

- Offers reports - and provides data, including what content X took, what they completed, and other learner data
- Reports provide overall information by group, department, etc., and individual
- Ad-hoc

Learner Environment

Think the learner side - Now, whether it is excellent or not, is another story - think of a chapter in the life of learning.

- Search functionality allows learners to find specific courses, materials, and delivery formats based on keywords, titles, delivery formats, and other tagged identifiers (Some systems limit what can be generated, so think of this more as a search capability)
- Courses have standard attributes regardless of delivery mechanism, including title and description.
- If the system offers "opportunities" - it is viewable on the learner side with additional information and specifics - the learner can apply. Opportunity will list requirements - this won't stop someone from applying anyway.
- Learners can enroll in or request enrollment for a course, content, group, etc.
- Learners can view the entire catalog and select their courses
- Learners can be assigned courses/content, learning paths
- Learners can view documents and download them (Common is PDF)
- The learner can see their status, i.e., a progress bar, percentage of completion, or whatever format the vendor has presented it in - some do use colors and expect the learner to know what they mean.
- Learners can be assigned materials, videos, etc.

Skills

I will note that if you are buying a system specifically focused on customer training, as in 95% or higher of their clients are using the system for customer/client/partner/distributor training, etc. - they will not match the skill capabilities of a system that is only dedicated to skills OR a system that is combo - i.e., customer and employee, or employee only - think a talent development system.

Equally, how good it is, or robust for these items is debatable - a lot stink at it, or uh, not good - but hey, someone loves them - and that is all that matters - I bet they love candy corn too.

The List of Skills

- Create catalogs of content only for job roles tied to skills
- Curriculum can be set by skills, interests, or job roles matched to skills
- Catalog Search by content related to a specific set of skills/interests (Example: Leadership)
- Recommends courses/content based on job role, skills
- Skill gap analysis
- Skills tied to opportunities (openings or, for example, specific, limited opportunities such as a project manager for an upcoming project) in the company/organization - This applies only if the system offers opportunities within its platform
- Analytics are directly tied to career development and the acquisition of skills for specific job roles.
- Identify by each learner the skills assigned to them AND the skill(s) they selected
- Skill Ratings - I can tell you the majority lack one key capability, okay two (specifically what each rating means, and what are the base requirements for that skill - i.e., skill three means you have achieved a level of blah, can do blah blah, blah; and have done blah blah) - I mean what does a two mean without such information? Think this way - I am training you at an ice cream store. What does one mean? At two, you should know how to scoop ice cream and talk to a human across the other side of the counter.

I won't dive into security, but there are common questions folks ask, and the vendor can do or does; nor will I cover mentoring or cohorts, which will be noted on my newest template. Additionally, mentoring, including coaching, is new to many systems. Some claim that they do, but they do not.

I left out AI - because it is new, and so assumptions that all systems have X or even 10% have X are erroneous.

The most common one I hear is the ability to create content or courses using AI.

The reality here is that if a vendor has jumped into AI, they will likely focus on the low-hanging fruit areas of content and course builder in the system, creating quizzes and assessments.

For whatever reason, nobody seems to ask about token fees - or whether the AI authoring tool or capability, if offered by the system, is included or not, i.e., whether an additional fee applies.

Nor what LLM they are using. An important question to ask. Most use OpenAI.

Sure, here are the key takeaways from your document "Commonality in Learning Systems":

- **Common Questions:** Every system offers similar features. Most use OpenAI for their LLM.
- **Token Fees:** Rarely discussed, but important to know if additional fees apply for AI authoring tools.
- **AI Focus:** Vendors often target content creation, course building, quizzes, and assessments.
- **Skill Ratings:** Many systems lack clear definitions and requirements for skill levels.
- **Learner Capabilities:** Learners can be assigned materials, view their progress, and access documents.
- **Skill Management:** Systems provide skill gap analysis, course recommendations tailored to job roles, and a skill-based curriculum.
- **Manager and Admin Functions:** Managers and administrators can assign skills, track progress, and manage user access.

These points give you a concise overview of the document's main ideas. Let me know if you need more details on any specific section!