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# Learning Management Systems 2009

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In March and April of 2009, Learning Circuits and E-Learning News ran a quick survey on how readers were using their learning management systems (LMSs). We asked such questions as: Do you build or buy? What system do you use? What are the must-have features? Here are the results. (Results are based 184 responses compiled March 2009 through April 2009.)

## Current systems

First, nearly 91 per cent of respondents are using LMSs in their organisations, with more than half (55 per cent) purchasing rather than building (11.7 per cent) their systems, and one-fifth of respondents (21.3 per cent) opting to go with a hosted platform. And whether built or bought, the majority of respondents are satisfied with their current LMS, with 22.2 per cent very satisfied, 31.1 per cent satisfied, and 25.6 per cent somewhat satisfied. Still, some 13.3 said they were unsatisfied, and 8.8 said they were very unsatisfied.

## Usage and features

Currently, more than half of respondents (53.8 per cent) are choosing to go with a strict LMS rather than a strict learning content management system (LCMS), with only 2.2 percent responding positively. Nearly a third (31.2 per cent), however, is using an LMS/LCMS combo. Interestingly, as a result of larger ERP systems becoming more talent-management minded a growing number of organisations seem to be deploying an LMS that is part of its larger ERP system.

Given this data, it's no surprise that the number 1 reason respondents are implementing an LMS is centralise the management of learning activities (66.7 per cent). All other reasons for implementing fall a far second, with measuring training usage only reporting in at 29.9 per cent and tracking regulatory compliance at 28.7 per cent. Other reasons included:

Reason	Percentage
Manage logistics of instructor led training	23
Measure training satisfaction levels	18.4
Measure employee performance	13.8
Measure costs	10.3
Deployed within larger ERP/CRM system	5.7

When asked to rank the most valuable features, assessment and testing topped the chart at 59.3 per cent, followed by content management at 48.4 per cent and reporting at 37.4 per cent. Surprisingly, analytics was one of the lowest ranked features, coming in at only 14.3. Other features cited include:

Reason	Percentage
Learner centered	35.2
Compliance tracking	28.6
Catalogue	26.4
Collaboration tool integration	22
Security	19.8
Authoring	19.8

## Challenges

Most large system implementations face problems around customising features and tools for a particular installation. LMSs are no different in this respect, with respondents ranking customisation requirements their biggest challenge (46.6 per cent). Interestingly, a variety of factors fall to second place: content integration (37.5 per cent), employee buy-in (35.2 per cent), and system administration (33 per cent). Perhaps because large IT installations are becoming more common place, IT buy-in ranked fairly low, with only 9.1 per cent of respondents finding it a major issue. Other challenges included:

Reason	Percentage
Integration with legacy systems	26.1
System performance	25
Vendor management	23.9
Management buy-in	21.6
LMS selection	14.8

## The future

Whether a reaction to the economic downturn, a result of high satisfaction rankings, or a combination of factors, it appears that most organisations are planning to keep their current system (44 per cent), and less than one-quarter are planning to upgrade their current system (24.2 per cent). A rather low percentage of respondents have plans to purchase (13.2 per cent) or build (8.8 per cent) a new LMS in 2009. More importantly, a mere 3.3 per cent have plans to outsource the learning management function in the coming year.