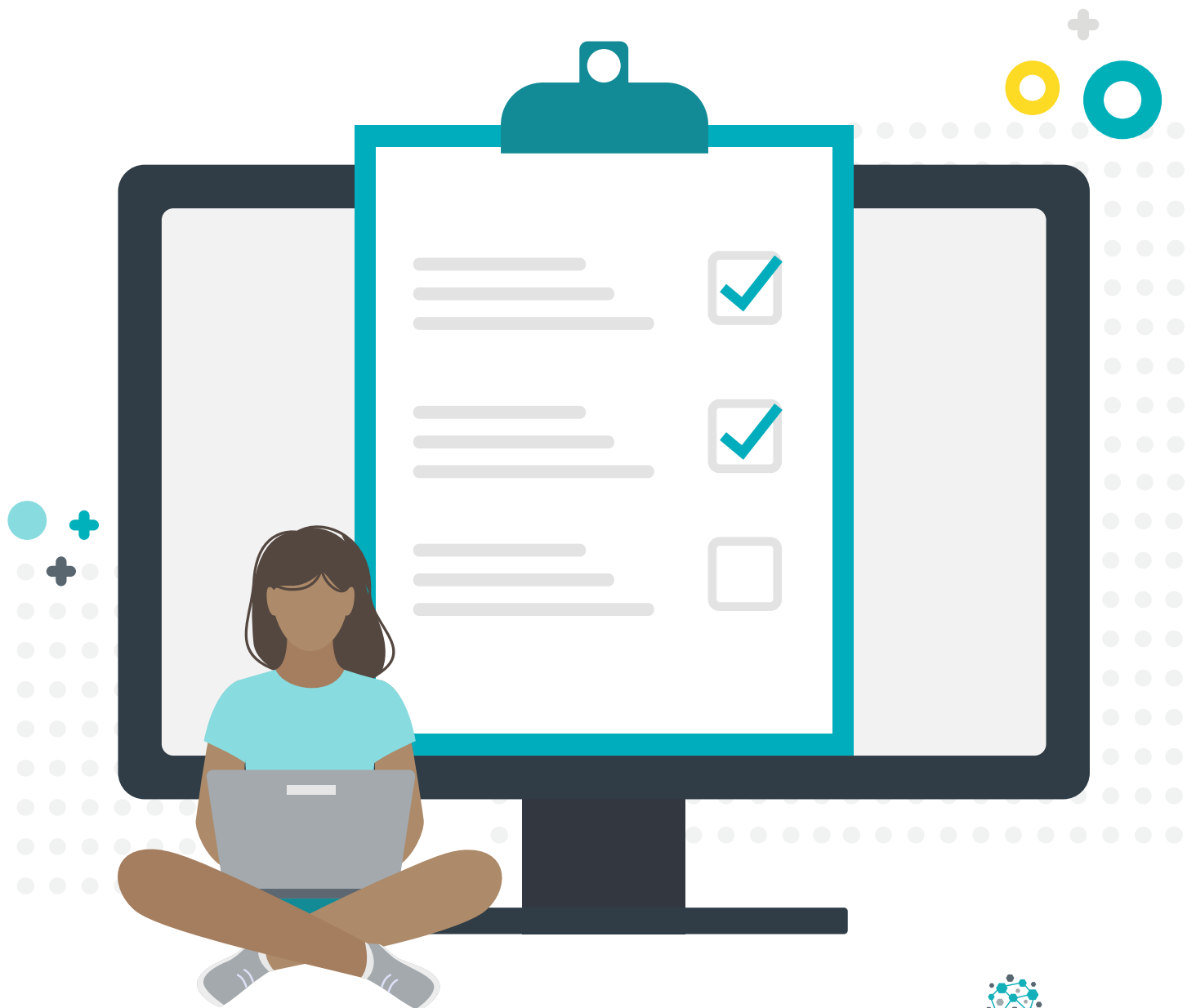


LMS Matchmaker: Deal Breaker Edition

The essential guide for finding your perfect learning technology partner.





According to the Community Brands Member Education and Career Development Report, 85 percent of members want organizations to provide continuing education opportunities. However, implementing a learning program with a corresponding learning management system (LMS) can pose quite the challenge for associations.

Your association likely has a diverse group of members, comprised of varying needs, generational preferences and technology comfort levels. Add in the more than 700 learning management solutions in the marketplace, and you can see how difficult it can be to find “the one.”

From bad first impressions to poor communication, we’re here to shine a bright light on what to avoid and what to look for in your ideal learning technology partner.

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1

Bad first impression

First impressions are everything. They leave a lasting impact that can spawn a relationship or prompt the proverbial “cold shoulder” treatment forever. This same sentiment can be said for a member’s first interaction with your association. Whether they shop your learning portal, attend a webinar, or watch an on-demand course, you have to ensure your delivery game is on point, or you may just lose that member forever.

The experience a member has when engaging with your association must be seamless. This includes everything from the act of registering for a course, to launching an online learning class, to downloading a certificate of completion. The LMS is the backdrop that impacts every single one of these touch points.

You also need to know if the LMS can embrace your brand. When conducting your research, consider an LMS that includes customized, branded marketplaces that mirror your association’s look and feel. You also want to find a system that includes a smooth user flow for the process of searching for a course, registering for it, watching it live online or on-demand, and obtaining a completion certificate. From start to finish, you want your members to fall in love at first “site.” They should feel as though you offered them an easy end-user experience that was personal and demonstrated your understanding of who they are and what they need from your association.

Member experience checklist

Check to make sure the LMS vendor offers:

- Search functionality for course library
- E-commerce and course registration functionality
- Customizable learning portals that mirror association branding
- Categorization and grouping tools for course organization
- Personalized member classrooms that house all learning courses and records
- Single sign-on from your association management system (AMS)



2

Poor communication

The association market is filled with an infinite number of software tools that do everything from online community hosting, to conference administration, to data and member management. And, of course, you want to take advantage of every available tool to enhance your member experience. This means it's more important than ever to consider an LMS with an open application programming interface (API) that communicates well with other systems. Integrations via an API enable associations to connect systems, so they talk to one another, share member login information, and pass meaningful data back and forth. As you can imagine, connected systems increase staff efficiency, streamline the member experience, and ultimately make your association future-proof.

Integration checklist

Ask the LMS vendor if its software provides:

- An Open Application Programming Interface (API)
- Single Sign-On (SSO) Capability: Share member login between systems to avoid the need to remember multiple passwords
- Credit and Course Completion Integration: Credit, course completion, and quiz data shared from the LMS to the AMS
- Registration and E-commerce Data: Send all course registration and e-commerce to the AMS for data management purposes
- Tried and True Integrations: Focus on vendors who have experience integrating with other software of all shapes and sizes
- Career Center Connection: Integrate your career center with your LMS for an additional opportunity to capture new learners, while increasing course enrollments and non-dues revenue



3

Unavailable

According to the 2018 Community Brands Careers and Education study, members are multimodal learners – they crave variety and accessibility. You should offer a variety of learning modes to your members, including in-person sessions, self-paced online courses, online course live webinars, and much more. Each of these options should also be accessible. If you're not mobile- and tablet-optimized, you're losing business. By giving members the convenience and variety they crave, you can ensure they'll rely on your association for their continuing education needs.

Remember, your learning management system is the knowledge center for your association. While it's great to store that information, what's even better is to share it in a style that's so seamless your members will never stray.

To offer an experience like this, seek comprehensive LMS platforms that can host and deliver all facets of learning. For example, some tools on the market only allow for the hosting of on-demand content, but not the delivery of a live webinar or webcast, which requires the use of an outside tool (often lacking in the features you need), and puts a strain on staff time and your budget.

Find a tool that has a live webinar and webcast delivery center, as well as the ability to record your programs and host them on-demand for members who want to view the courses on their own time. This makes it easy for not only your staff but also your members to pick and choose the method by which they consume your content.

Finally, the credentialing or certification process should be easily tied into the overarching learning experience. You want your members to watch a course, take a quiz, and pass and complete the learning process in one, centralized location. Again, this delivers a seamless, robust learning experience and ensures your data is not siloed in disparate systems.

Learner experience checklist

The LMS vendor you choose should offer:

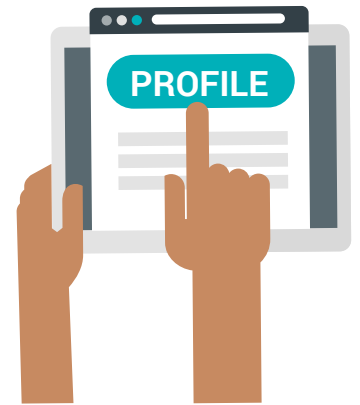
- Live webinars, webcasts, self-paced online courses, micro learning, and on-demand delivery all within the LMS
- Comprehensive continuing education features, such as quizzing, simulated self-assessment capabilities, evaluations, badging, and certification
- Mobile- and tablet-friendly access
- Ability to stream a live, in-person program virtually to a remote audience via webcast functionality
- Creation of a personalized learning path for each member, based on his or her career goals



4

High-maintenance

When all is said and done, your LMS should really be the backdrop to your learning efforts, running so seamlessly your members don't even know it's there. This starts with an easy-to-use learning management and administration center for your staff. Yes, just as your member experience should be a primary focus, so should your staff's experience.



Your team needs its own end-user interface that's robust, yet simple. Your busy schedules and varying responsibilities just don't leave time for "complicated" these days.

Queue the need for a comprehensive administrative center in your LMS research. Before signing on the dotted line with any LMS provider, ensure there's a center for your association to create, edit, categorize, and build your library of courses, along with a center for managing customer data, orders, reports, and requests.

Staff experience checklist

Your team's user interface should allow you to:

- Upload files and their association with courses
- Create and edit course storefront registration pages
- Tag courses for the purposes of categorizing content
- Manage pricing and promotional offerings
- Manage customer profiles
- Handle orders and refunds
- Create custom report wizards
- Build an out-of-box report library



5

Boring

Your association's learning programs should be described as engaging and memorable. Conversely, you want to avoid being called boring or irrelevant. Just as it's important to offer the right content presented by the right speakers, your technology should elevate speakers, not hinder them. Even the greatest presenters can improve with the right tools at their fingertips.

Engagement tool checklist

As you continue your trek down the LMS discovery journey, look out for these online learning program features:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Live webinar polls | <input type="checkbox"/> Auto-rotating slide features |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Live webinar quizzes | <input type="checkbox"/> Screen share functionality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Question and answer functionality via text or phone line | <input type="checkbox"/> 1:1 chats between presenters and audience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Incorporation of social media and YouTube videos | <input type="checkbox"/> Gamification capabilities to demonstrate member growth within your organization |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attendee chat functionality | <input type="checkbox"/> Video playback engine and assessment |

6

Unsupportive

Do you want a vendor or a partner? At the end of the day, no matter how much power the right LMS can provide to your association, you still may need extra support to help you along. So, as your research wraps up, inquire about services for both your staff and your members.

From a staff perspective, focus on an LMS that includes a day-to-day point-of-contact, who's included as part of your purchase, to assist your staff with product training, course management, live program technical assistance and moderation, and best practices consultation.

You should also think about the implementation process post-purchase. Does the LMS you're purchasing have developers ready to collaborate with your team? Is there a project manager who will keep the project moving forward? Will the LMS offer consultation services to your team when questions arise? Keep these questions in mind when you chat with vendors.

Members will want access to your courses at all times of the day. What would happen if every time they watched a course offered by your association they had to call your staff for technical assistance? Look for an LMS vendor who provides technical and end-user support around the clock to take the burden off your team.

Staff and member support checklist

Your LMS partner should offer:

- Day-to-day point-of-contact for staff support
- Technical phone, ticket, and email support for members and end-users
- Conference/in-person program production services
- Course editing and production services
- Course content creation services
- Implementation services
- Applications development services
- Product training
- Live webinar moderation

If you need a friend for insight and valuable feedback as you progress through your journey, we're here for you. **We've helped thousands of associations find the right solutions to enhance their member and learning experiences.** Community Brands has an unrivaled ecosystem of products designed to help your organization go farther, faster to meet your mission-critical initiatives.

Ready to take the next steps towards finding the right LMS partner?

Learn about Community Brands award-winning learning management systems, Freestone® and Crowd Wisdom®.

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