TRACKING EMPLOYEE LEARNING PERFORMANCE

Using LMS Analytics and Reporting

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Introduction: Employee performance and company success

The business world is evolving at such a rapid pace that organizations need individuals who are adaptable, can think on their feet and learn whatever they need to efficiently. As a result, talent management has become a very important component of HR and L&D activity and there is a constant challenge to design and deploy the best programs.

The term "talent" covers a very wide range so it's difficult to give an exact definition. Each business organization is doing its best to find, hire and form the right employees but it often seems a lot like gambling – get somebody who looks promising and see if it pays off in the end. Because no matter their size, the industry they are active in, nor the scope of their existence, every business faces the same challenges:

- attract the best talent
- retain top talent
- develop it continuously
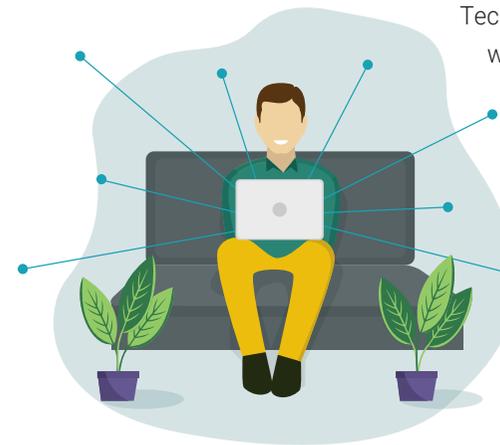
Technology can be of great assistance when surmounting these challenges. Personal laptops and widespread internet connections mean that people can work from basically anywhere in the world, thus offering companies access to a wider pool of candidates whenever they need to fill a new position.

Then, the various communication and collaboration tools, as well as many more industry-specific software and online tools, support employees in their performance at work.

Finally, learning technologies allow companies to create continuously more personalized learning experiences for each employee, no matter how seasoned they are, how long their job tenure is or on which hierarchical step they are in the company. Continuous professional development is paramount for company success.

The number one thing that all businesses care about is performance, because well-trained and enthusiastic employees are more productive, which always leads to bigger profits. And who doesn't want to have a blooming company with happy employees?

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Boosting employee performance with e-learning

E-learning can be a great tool for boosting employee performance, both in terms of training results and overall professional results. Here are a number of ways companies can use e-learning and its broad applications to support employees every step of the way in their journey to success.
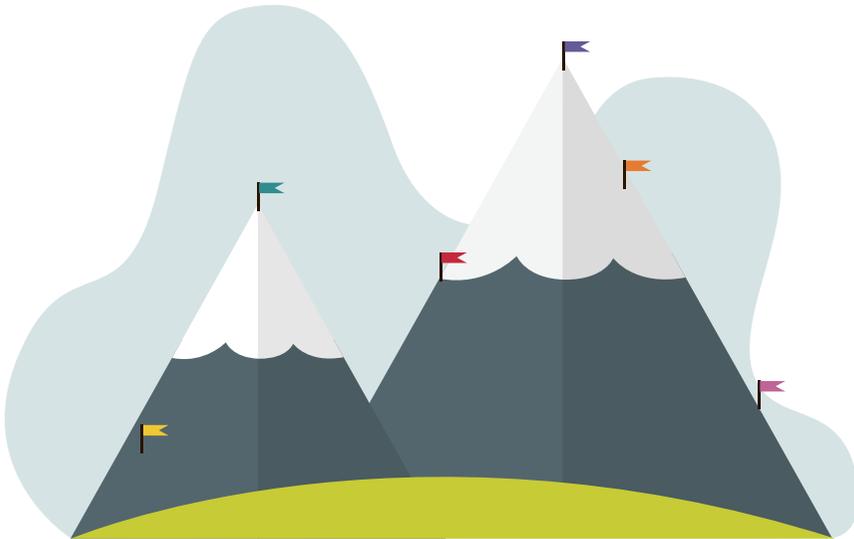
Onboarding

A new job usually causes some level of stress for employees, as they have to learn as fast as possible everything about the company culture and how to do their tasks, in order to be productive. When designing a company orientation program, instructors need to take notice of the ways new employees learn, how fast they acquire information, how they interact with colleagues in team-based projects, how fast are they learning to use the company LMS, and so on. New employees should be able to access all important information regarding training, the company and their tasks somewhere they can reach easily, like the company LMS.

Controlled learning environment

Interactive real-life scenarios in training allow trainees to make an unlimited number of mistakes without any bad consequences for their team or company. Present the learners with a variety of choices and let them decide upon the course of action, but make sure to guide them to the right option. Allowing and even encouraging employees to make mistakes during online training will turn to a win-win situation later in the real business world: they will remember what they did wrong and will not make the same mistake in real situations, and the company profit will be positively impacted.
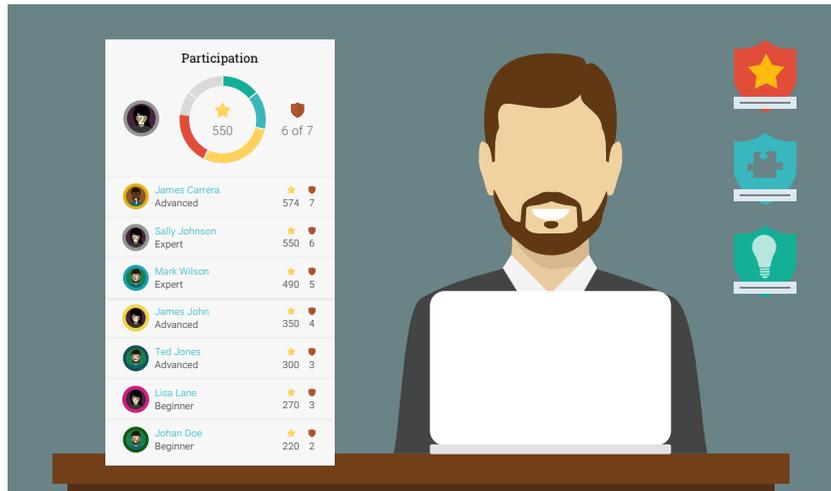
Recognition

Employees want to be acknowledged for their efforts and accomplishments. When employees feel that they're appreciated, they're more motivated to work and improve themselves. There are a lot of ways companies can reward employees for their efforts and in today's world you can rely on technology to do most of the work. For example, with the use of an LMS, instructors can use gamification with tools like badges and leaderboards to increase engagement and create a fun competitive spirit between employees. People are usually motivated by a need to accomplish and to work towards goals and an LMS can offer the ability to design learning paths as a way of making them achieve a clear set of goals.

Customization

Personalizing training materials can make a difference between sharing information and actually imprinting that information into employees' brains. A clear structure of any training course, along with a variety of customized learning materials will help keep employees connected with their company and motivated to learn faster. Personalization makes employees feel important and that someone is paying attention to their needs.

Employee evaluation

Employee evaluation should be seen as an opportunity for improvement for both employees and instructors and/or managers. It's important to evaluate employees' skills on a regular basis and provide constructive feedback. Most LMSs today include rich analytics and reporting tools that can show exactly where employees get stuck in their training — whether they have trouble getting past a module, if they don't reach their goals, or if they're skipping parts of the training. Knowing this information can help instructors adapt their training delivery, help employees overcome difficulties and become more productive.

Tracking employee learning performance

The business world is in continuous transformation ever since the digital revolution started and companies need now more than ever to have effective L&D programs and streamlines in place so that they can meet all challenges with well-trained employees. Yet it is precisely because everything is happening so fast that it's increasingly difficult to measure the impact of learning within the organization.

When asked about what makes a learning program successful, most practitioners talk about applicability of the newly acquired information and impact on business results. These important points on the checklist are not only about the relevance of the material but also about how well it can be transferred in the workplace and change behaviors so that it leads to superior results.

Managers take this one step forward and also want to see some tangible indicators that a learning intervention has been truly profitable to the organization. L&D specialists are well aware of how important it is to demonstrate the profitability of their programs and as a result they incorporate the golden standards of 'on the job applicability' and 'business impact' in any pitch or course description made for boards, middle management or team leaders.

If, as a result of training there is an increase in production, better quality, growth in sales, decrease in costs, less work-related accidents and a big return on investment, the management is happy. From a business point of view, this is the main reason for a training program, yet everyone is fully aware that determining learning results in financial terms is very difficult to measure.

Measuring the results of organizational learning is far from being an exact science. There are a number of factors that influence information retention rates and knowledge transfer. It's important, however, that each learning program is designed with a specific measurable outcome in mind and that proper evaluation is conducted before declaring the success or failure of a teaching intervention.

Learning technologies play a huge role in the challenging task of keeping track of employee learning performance. Business learning management systems lead the way in terms of gathering learning data and presenting it in a comprehensible manner — through their analytics and reporting tools — allowing both training professionals and business managers to make the best decisions based on it.
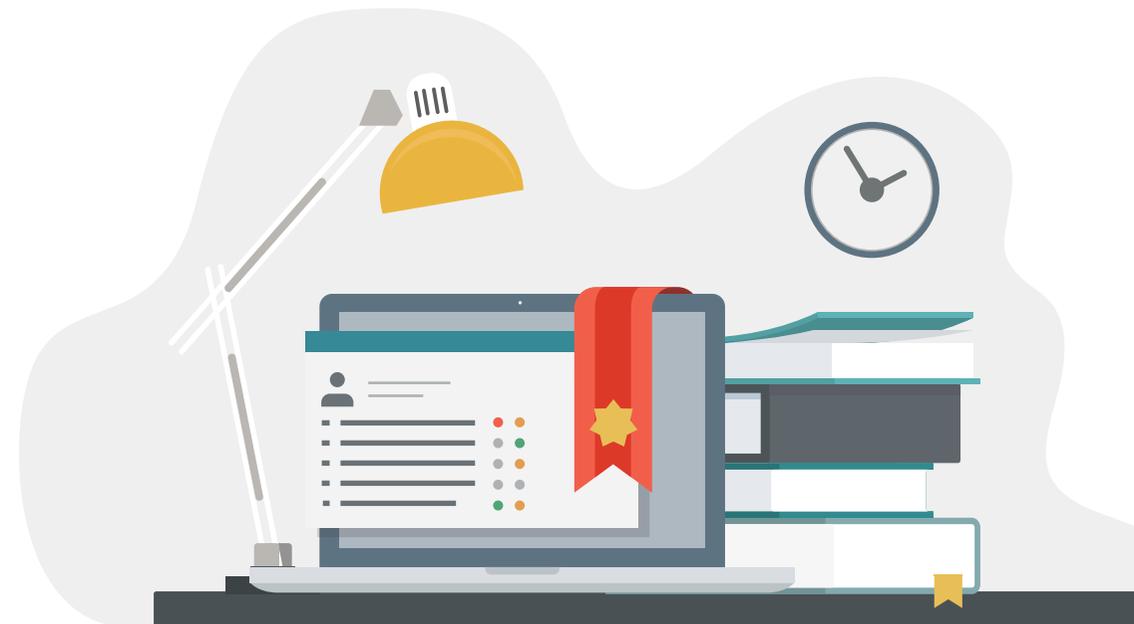
LMS Analytics: identifying pain points

A business LMS makes it easy to gain insights of different employee training and performance areas. Its analytics capabilities allow administrators to generate instant and up-to-date information on learners' progress and identify the learners that are doing well and the ones that might need some extra help.

What's more, making sense of LMS analytics can give a good view of what the pain points of learning programs are. Here are a few things to look out for:
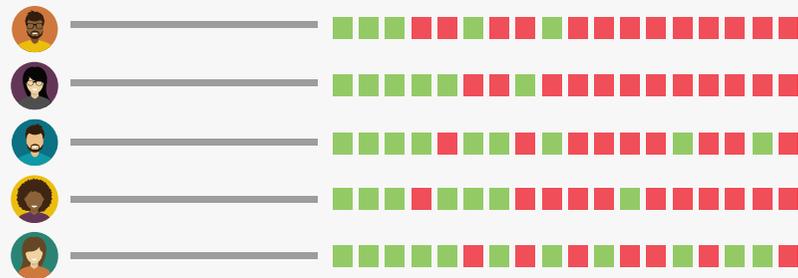
Attendance numbers

The number of employees that are enrolled in certain modules has something to say about how relevant those modules are. If certain modules have really low attendance, the call may be made to discontinue them as they would only take up space and appear redundantly in searches. However, if modules that used to attract big crowds suddenly seem to be dropping in attendance, it's a clear indication that something has gone awry recently. It may be that the information is no longer up to date or that there is another module online that is more suited to learner needs. Finding out exactly what the pain point is and fixing it in a timely manner may save some effort and money that would go into designing another one.

Assessment scores

Whether we're talking about an assessment which takes place at some point during the module, or a final assessment which will give a learner their final score, assessments are a very clear indicator of how well people understand the material presented, and of how able they are to put it into practice. It's normal to see some learners struggle a little bit but if the majority displays difficulty, it's not them, it's the material that needs tweaking: either it is too difficult, the presentation manner is not the best or there are some prerequisites necessary. If, on the other hand, everybody seems to be flying through the course and getting the highest scores all the time, it's a clear sign that the learning module is not challenging enough and that issue ought to be addressed.

Struggling points

Sometimes learners reach a place in the learning material where they just seem to be stuck. It could either be that participants feel it is unimportant or redundant or that it is too difficult. Presentation of topic may also constitute an issue as it often happens that some items are not rendered as instructional designers meant. Whatever the pain point turns out to be, paying attention to the data and identifying these patterns allows for an issue to be solved before it turns into a bigger problem. After fixing it, it's all right to invite those who struggled in the first place to take a look and offer feedback on the updated material. This will also help with refreshing the information for them.
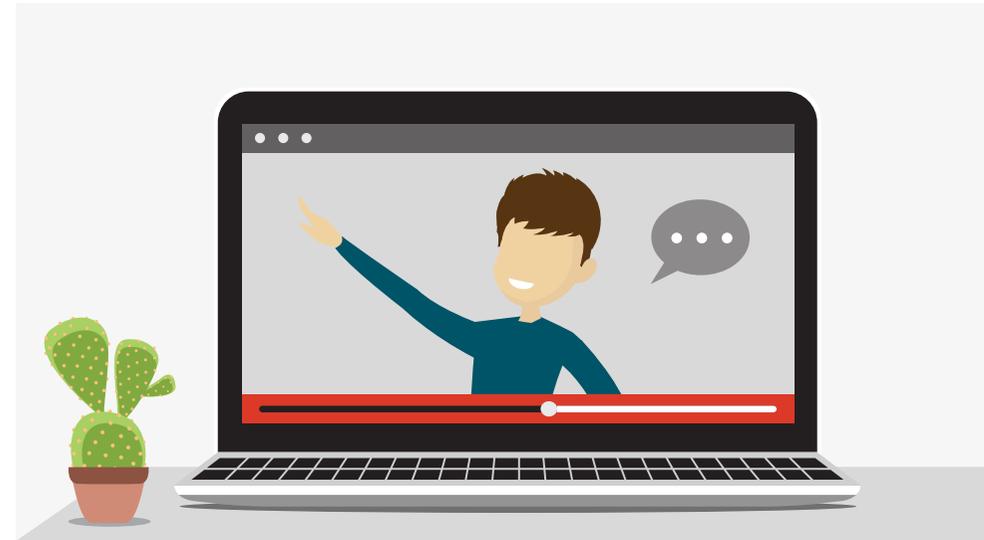
Stopping points

Any training module can be abandoned at any time. There are times when individuals decide to end the session and pick it up later due to personal reasons. But if there is a greater number of enrollees quitting in the same spot and not returning, then there is a general issue having to do with the course. Apart from taking a look at the content and working at making it more accessible, a good idea is to add some sort of incentive for moving forward and completing the module. Another strategy is to have additional explanatory material in the form of video, animations or interactive presentations. Regardless of the manner chosen to address these stopping points, making sure they become easier to navigate is paramount.

LMS Analytics: specific features

Gathering relevant data from the LMS to identify and address the pain points that arise in e-learning programs gives L&D specialists the power to design and deploy better courses with a greater positive impact in the organization. Here are some specific analytics features any LMS should offer:

Site-wide analytics

To start, administrators should have access to a great variety of site-wide analytics for areas such as training courses, users, compliance, e-commerce and so on.

They should be able to see all the courses in the platform, whether they are stand-alone or belong to a learning path, and information about active, deleted and archived courses, including data regarding the number of active learners, completed learners.

Also, the LMS should provide all data about the users, such as their account type, the corresponding number of active, completed and deactivated courses, the number of groups or organizations each user belongs to, the time since the learner last visited the portal, and so on.

If the company uses the same LMS to sell training courses online, administrators should be able to see all data regarding e-commerce: the purchases made by users, the completed and incomplete orders, prices and purchase details for each item.

Last but not least, administrators should be able to see the courses required for compliance, the number of users who are compliant, in progress or non-compliant.

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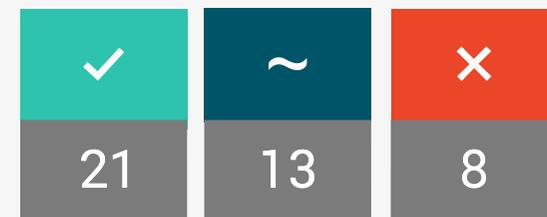
Analytics regarding training courses

Instructors need to access to a wide range of analytics that offer an instant overview on different areas of the course such as its modules, assessments, and information about learners' progress and mastery: how much time learners spent in each learning module, the scores of all learners in a course for all the course assessments, all the grades for a learner and so on.

If a course has associated competencies, instructors should be able to see a coverage analysis of how well the course covers the concepts that it should be teaching and assessing, as well as the enrolled learners and their mastery level for each competency.

If a training course is gamified, instructors need to see the leaderboard listing all the learners and their rankings, a game overview with the levels, the badges and points that are awarded and the full leaderboard.

If more courses are put together in a personalized learning path, instructors then need to see all the learners enrolled in the path, both active and the ones that completed the path, the date when each learner enrolled and of course the progress of learners as they complete goals in the path.

Analytics regarding users and groups

Most importantly, instructors need to get a detailed overview of the performance of learners within the system. They should see, besides the basic information about the learners (account details, contact information, the number of logins), the list of courses the learner is enrolled in, the grade for each learner on assessments, the progress through modules and sections of the course of the trainee, their activity in the course, the time spent in each module, their mastery progress, the awards they received so far and finally the courses each learner completed.

Groups are a great way for users to collaborate and share ideas. The analytics for groups need to offer information about their members, admins, leaders: when members joined the group and when they last visited it, who are administrators of the group, the leaders, as well as when they have joined the group or team and when they last visited it.

LMS reporting: Taking the best decisions

An LMS has become an integral part of organizational learning. It has long moved from being a platform for uploading and deploying learning to becoming the main gathering of tools used in all having to do with L&D programs. Perhaps the reason behind its success is its constantly evolving reporting capabilities.

Reporting is essential because it shows stakeholders what has been done and with what results and is an excellent indicator of how well (or not) things are going. Here are a few verticals related to learning performance that managers need to keep an eye on and use LMS reports as the basis of their decisions.

Course completion

If a significant number of employees take longer than expected to complete online training courses, they might lack the skills required to complete the coursework and tasks. As an example, corporate learners spend a significant amount of time completing the sales online training. A reason for this could be that they don't have sufficient communication skills or product knowledge, or they have limited tech skills and are unable to use the required software. Online training completion times require some follow up to identify the root cause. For instance, online surveys and assessments can help disclose why corporate learners took longer to finish the online training module.

76% MASTERY

Mastery

Mastery reports shine a light on the work competencies that are developed by employees. They help track employee progress within one or more competency they plan to develop, as well as offer a wide picture of how individuals stack up against their peers. The reports are usually comprised of several data points, including on-the-job observations and manager evaluations. This data is compiled in the LMS to provide a complete picture of the employee's current skill levels vs. the desired skill proficiency level. As a result, managers are able to determine which skills employees need to improve based on their job duties and tasks.

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Simulations

A training simulation allows adult learners to practice complex and risky real world activities in a secure online environment. It's a specialized software program with highly realistic and interactive features, and can be integrated in a learning platform. Simulations are the ideal progress tracking tool that allows L&D professionals to monitor individual skill growth. They can evaluate every aspect of employee task performance to see where they need to improve, as well as which skills they must develop in order to boost efficiency. It's also best to provide immediate e-learning feedback so that corporate learners know how to move forward.
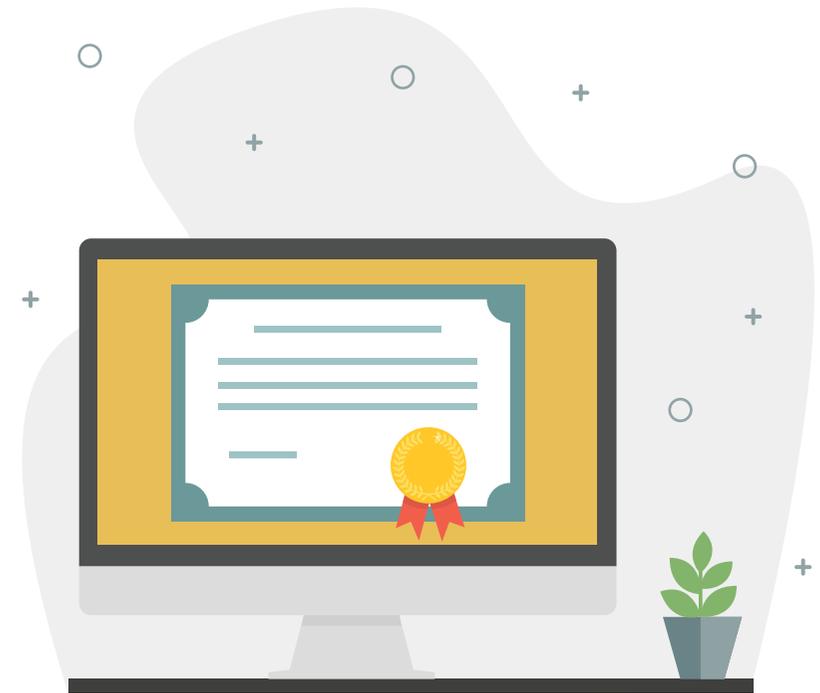
Certificates

Some LMSs have the ability to track certification online training programs, either for individual courses or for learning paths. As such, instructors can develop certificates that consist of finished online training activities, modules and assessments. Learners must complete the requirements to earn the online training certificate and prove their skill mastery. It's better to offer a separate certification online training course for each skill set. This allows the tracking of employee performance on a case-by-case basis.

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LMS reporting: Specific reports

Administrators and instructors can stay informed about various aspects of the company learning platform by running various reports, either built-in or customized. At the same time, all users should be able to save reports, see a history of generated reports and schedule reports to be delivered at a certain time and date. Here are some specific reports any business LMS should offer:

Built-in reports

LMS administrators and instructors should be able to create charts and reports of important learning data gathered by the system and base any professional decision on it.

For example, they should be able to see the various assessment types in the platform and how they are used, the assessments learners have not yet submitted, the attendance records of learners in a course, the learners that have completed a course, those that have enrolled in a course, the completion status for any selected course.

Also, as long as compliance is a part of corporate life, L&D professionals and managers should automatically see all the courses that are required for compliance, as well as the compliance status of each enrolled user.

Lastly, is the company is motezing its online training courses, the LMS should have a built-in report regarding the monthly revenue from selling the courses, the policy documents of the platform and the users that accepted them.

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Custom reports

Built-in reports are very useful and help instructors and managers save time, but sometimes, sometimes they need specific information about various aspects of a training program or another. That's when custom reports come into play. All LMS users should be able to create custom reports with parameters defined by them and share them at a business or network level.

Administrators and instructors need to be able to generate custom reports on courses by combining data from groups, organizations, users, and more. For example, they can generate a report that displays a breakdown of how many courses in the entire platform are instructor-led, self-paced, blended, or micro courses.

Furthermore, if a number of courses are organized within a learning path, specific reports regarding that path should be generated. Instructors and managers should be able to customize the output of the report by selecting only the information that they need. For example, they can generate a custom report that shows information about the learning paths and the organization the learning paths belong to.

Then they should be able to generate reports at a business level on all the users and they can customize the output of the report by selecting only the needed information about courses, groups, the groups or organizations they belong to, and so on. For example, they can create a custom report that lists all the learners from the business and their department.

Finally, if the LMS is used for e-commerce purposes besides training, administrators should be able to generate custom reports that display data about the sold items, the revenue of each organization within the platform, the users who made purchases, and so on. For example, they can generate a report that lists all the orders from the platform and the items of each order.

Conclusion

As a business organization evolves, so should its employees' performance. The best employees will take the initiative to go and fix issues before they turn into problems. That's why it's better to continuously reevaluate online training programs periodically and keep a close eye on individual growth, as that is the base for company performance.

Tracking employee learning performance may not be as straightforward an activity as it seems. Learning technologies play a huge role in the challenging task of keeping track of employee learning performance. Business learning management systems lead the way in terms of gathering learning data and presenting it in a comprehensible manner — through their analytics and reporting tools — allowing both training professionals and business managers to identify any pain points related to employee performance and then make the best decisions.

If you're looking for a tool to help you get started with competency-based training and skills development, try out CYPHER Learning, a learning management system for business organizations with a comprehensive set of features. To the best of our knowledge, CYPHER Learning now has the best support for competency-based training of any mainstream LMS, with all of the above mentioned specific features and reports either already implemented within the system or on the roadmap for the very near future.

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