



COMPLETE BUYER GUIDE TO SELECT YOUR IDEAL E-LEARNING PARTNER

Driving employee performance in today's business environment starts by establishing a strong learning strategy and choosing the right partners to bolster your team because developing and delivering effective learning solutions is more challenging than ever.

Emerging technologies, business competition and learner expectations are increasing the pressure on learning organizations to reduce time-to-value. When given a choice to outsource or hire additional resources, 60 percent of CLOs nowadays think outsourcing is more cost-effective and flexible than hiring internal resources.

Learning organizations that can harness the rapid evolution of technology to improve learning outcomes and demonstrate business impact are more likely to receive investment in the future.

Establishing a culture of learning does not happen all at once, nor does it happen in a vacuum. A crucial element in developing an effective strategy is finding an experienced and expert E-learning partner to support and guide you through the process.

STEP 01 GO LEAN AND AGILE

Today, more than 55% of organizations are using agile approaches to manage the majority of their software development projects. Scrum and Scrum variants are the most popular agile methodologies in use with companies implementing the methodology to accelerate time-to-market, increase productivity and improve their adaptability.

Best-in-class partners combine core agile principles, Scrum, best practices for instructional design and lean principles championed by the authors of The Lean Mindset, Tom and Mary Poppendieck, to create a lightweight approach to continuous improvement that provides transparency, reduced time-to-value and greater alignment with client expectations over the course of a project.

The principles of lean software development are:

- Eliminate waste. Anything that does not add value in some way to the learning solutions delivered to clients is considered a waste.
- Build in quality. Procedures are in place to prevent defects and issues from entering the process.
- Amplify knowledge. The client and the team create critical knowledge by experiencing the solution themselves.
- Decide as late as possible. Deliver better results by taking an options-based approach. Make decisions based on facts learned through the development process rather than uncertain assumptions and predictions.
- Deliver as quickly as possible. The sooner a solution (or part of a solution) is delivered with quality, the sooner clients are able to provide feedback that the team can incorporate into the work for the next week.
- Empower the team. An empowered team attracts bright, creative people who collaborate to deliver wildly successful deliverables.
- Optimize the whole. Observe the end-to-end value stream that clients experience from initial contact through to delivery of the solution and subsequent follow up.

STEP 02 BE AWARE OF WHERE YOUR COMPANY IS AND WHERE YOU WANT TO GO

Before your company can select an ideal E-Learning partner, you need to figure out what each line of business needs to achieve and gauge each division's existing approach to learning.

In a recent Human Capital Institute survey, 74% of companies noted that developing a learning culture was an upcoming priority area, with a learning culture defined as one that had the following sets of values or beliefs:

- A growth mindset is to be encouraged (abilities are developed through hard work)
- Learning is a process not an event
- Employees enjoy challenges
- Learning agility is a valued competency in all employees
- Risk-taking should be supported
- Mistakes are something from which we learn



Question 1: Is your current work environment supportive of learning?

Question 2: Have you established clear, concrete learning processes and practices?

Question 3: Does your company's leadership actively support your learning culture and digital training ideas?

These questions get to the root of what it means to establish a learning strategy that aligns with your culture. In answering these, you open a window into your workforce's ability to embrace novel solutions to new and existing problems and determine which approaches need to come from inside or outside of the company hierarchy.

This self-assessment gives line of business and executive leadership an understanding of how new solutions will be embraced, solicits input from a broad population of employees and offers insights into how to encourage employees to be more invested in results.

STEP 03 SET CLEAR GOALS WITH TIMELINES

This step focuses partly on what your company hopes to accomplish through learning and development (for individual lines of business and company-wide).

This phase should also centre on maximizing the effectiveness of the learning and development organization by:

- Adhering to well-defined timeframes
- Establishing success metrics
- Creating efficient communication
- Defining clear processes

Your ideal partner should provide a timeline for accomplishing all project goals and assurances to stay on track as well as present a consistent history of adhering to established timeframes, success and engagement metrics and take special care to embed thinking outside of the box every step of the way.



STEP 04 GATHER REQUIREMENTS AND GET BUY-IN

You know where you stand and have created a preliminary set of learning goals with each line of business, now you need to ensure that the divisional goals align with and address the larger needs of the company.

Your ideal E-learning partner should be able to help you drive this process forward by objectively doing real discovery, without making assumptions about how things are done and who is doing the work based on job titles, and outline where and how things actually get done within your organization.

Your partner should also understand your current training methods, for example workshop or face to face approach, and suggest digital technologies to help you digitize your programs and to track the results effectively.

Other important aspects of the collaboration process may include:

- Taking a grass roots approach—having employees give back
- Making sure that the learning function feels locally owned (and truly empowers employees)
- Working backward from the business problem to develop useful learning
- Not underestimating the impact external/environmental factors have on your business
- Building a robust rewards system

Collaborating also identifies skills gaps in the organization with respect to peers inside and outside the company and helps your partner design an effective workforce performance program.

In addition, this joint approach gives rise to a blended curriculum that combines formal / face-to-face training and digital learning with on-the-job training and alternative approaches such as coaching.

This results in learning programs with a wider array of touchpoints that connect with more employees at one time and have an effect at the institutional level as well.



STEP 05 PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Now you'll delve deeper into the qualifications your ideal E-Learning Partner brings to the table.

The right selection should:

- Effectively and pragmatically measure the effectiveness of learning.
- Good and experienced team of Instructional Designers and E-Learning Developers
- Ensure content expertise.
- Provide training customized to your industry.
- Provide customized training on applications as they are used inside your firm and not just out-of-the-box training.
- Provide curriculum that reflects the pain points of your industry and its specific requirements.
- Develop flexibility and installed capacity to provide training at any time.
- Have a good grasp of current learning trends and learning technology and excel at driving new initiatives
- Bring new ideas, talent and methods of execution to the table
- Have completed substantial number of hours of custom e-learning development for various clients across industries
- Have expertise in multiple learning and development strategies such as branching approach, gamification and so on
- Be able to collaborate with your teams and business stakeholders through all phases of design and development
- Most importantly, provide an excellent and customer-oriented team.



STEP 06 MEET AND LEARN MORE

This next-to-last step is where you need to take all the information you've gathered during the research phase and investigate its veracity by:

- Meeting with potential partners for an assessment. Nowadays with virtual meeting platforms, you can meet easily with Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Google Meet
- Asking questions about their E-Learning Design and Development processes
- Consulting with them about their business culture and compatibility with your own organization
- Quality and knowledge matters - explore the provider's subject matter expertise

- As E-Training programs often have to cater to the various languages and cultures of learners, your ideal E-Learning Partner should also have solid expertise in developing courses in different languages of the world and preferably have a good network of professional translators to support you. Ask them what experience do they have in the areas of localizing E-Learning programs in different languages, and how were they involved in the development process?
- Referencing their credentials, client testimonials and track record to confirm relevance and fit
- Taking a look at some of the past work they have completed for various clients

You will want to observe these potential partners in action as they walk you through their recommendations for aligning learning strategy with business strategy. It's also a positive if the potential learning partner has been in business for a reasonably long time **(no less than 8 years)**.

Longevity and retention rates are good indicators of a company's success at establishing solid client relationships as well as meeting the needs of those clients.

It's also worthwhile to learn:

Question 1: Which clients are they working with repeatedly?

Question 2: What does the recommended team structure look like for your projects?

You should also gain insights into the partner's skill set by reviewing their portfolio of past and present work: Their success stories. This will provide a clearer picture of the services the partner provides.



It will also give you additional insight into the company's processes as you look more deeply into past clients' projects from the initial phases of design and development through the implementation, reporting and review stages.

You'll get a better understanding of the level of detail and quality the company provides for its clients as well. And a truly exceptional partner will go beyond the basics to deliver optimal value through:

Net Promoter Score - After each project completion, clients are asked to answer one simple question: "On a score of 0–10, with 10 being extremely likely and 0 being not likely at all, how likely is it that you would recommend your partner to a friend or colleague?"

Growth in the Number of E-learning Projects: Delighted clients are more likely to return for additional help with learning initiatives and projects in the future. Your ideal partner should measure success on being able to support clients on a long-term basis.

Number of New Clients: Delighted clients are more likely to recommend a partner to other departments within their organizations or to their peers in other enterprises

Client References: Trusted advisors view client references in the form of case studies, white papers, co-presentations and video testimonials as being a significant demonstration of their ability to delight clients. Additionally, client references can often be used to build awareness of their excellent learning programs.

Helping Clients Measure Success: A partner that helps clients to develop and implement learning solutions can drive a higher level of business value—increased revenue, reduced operating costs, improved quality, etc. Throughout a project, a trusted partner works with clients to determine what their business goals are and to identify ways that they can support clients in measuring the impact of their solutions.



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