

For global organizations starting with a US-based Learning Management System (LMS), a common next step is to expand to other, non-US regions. In our experience, the following are a few best practices that enable an organization to deftly handle the challenges of LMS globalization.

- **Strategy and Vision:** On-boarding other regions will immediately bring additional, competing customer demands. Avoid the mire of juggling requirements with a clear strategic plan that communicates the purpose of the LMS and what capabilities it will and will not provide. Expectation management is the key: it is unlikely that you will over-communicate these firm objectives. Your primary responsibility is to help regionally based learning leaders understand how they can conduct their business of learning on the LMS in the context of establishing a global standard for learning processes. Your LMS strategy will provide a vital compass as you build a compelling case for onboarding and drive the global implementation process forward.
- **Endorsement and Governance:** This is obvious: your success depends on building a constituency of knowledgeable and enthusiastic regionally-based proponents for the LMS. However, sometimes the fact that these champions must be at each level of the organization structure is under-emphasized. At the outset, though the most critical champions are the senior executives who can allocate the resources and establish the priority, it will be easier to win their hearts and minds if you have established support at middle / local management. These audiences may be inspired by different LMS enablers: strategic advantages such as cost efficiency or employee transformation will appeal to senior management whereas more tactical concerns such as resource-saving process improvements often motivate middle managers. Once support is established, create a LMS Governance Board to maintain the interest and enthusiasm of your dispersed group of LMS champions. Having gained support and prioritization at all management levels, you'll find the most difficult task is converting the front-line, administrative level into LMS "believers." Spend time with this population: ultimately their endorsement and usage will determine your success.
- **Requirements Gathering:** Having developed a well-established strategy does not mean you can ignore your customer needs: though it is presumed (and essential) that LMS objectives are aligned with globally-based training goals, you may find that some simple modifications to existing processes will make a world of difference for the dispersed user population. Having a brief, well-bounded requirements gathering phase will identify both unique and common processes between regions and the existing US LMS implementation. If expectations are properly framed and communicated early, both you and your regional representation can arrive prepared to address their well-documented list of system requirements. Your challenge is to have an understanding of what is needed to meet their needs (configuration, customization, or overhaul) and based on that guide the ratification of these requirements with the flexibility that proves this is a collaborative process but the resolve to keep the LMS and/or project on plan.
- **System Design:** Now you should know what you need to do and so you can begin to plan. From a system standpoint, you'll determine the data that needs to be on-boarded and/or

synchronized, the configurations that are necessary to properly segment the learning catalog or administrative rights, etc. Document your plans, model it in a system, and demo it across your LMS constituency to make sure the solution you've designed is feasible from all perspectives.

- **Data Privacy:** You may already be aware that some nations have more stringent regulations than others around the data that can be captured and stored for employees. In fact, many countries consider any information that you can link to an individual (from test score to phone number) to be data that should be kept closely guarded. Therefore, expect that if you're working in these countries, onboarding will require convincing a national or industry work councils that training and employee data are adequately protected in your LMS. It is unlikely that a global LMS implementation is the first time your organization has had to deal with these councils so seek out regionally-based HR support for this effort and leverage their experience. Also note that the approval process can be lengthy (6-12+ months); begin your work on this process soon as you've made the decision to take the LMS global.
- **Cultural Challenges:** A US team may own the on-boarding project, but the LMS can no longer be US-centric lest others will feel a US LMS is being thrust upon them. Build goodwill: this may be the first time this audience has had to work across the organization, especially with the goal of agreeing on common set of processes, and it is common that cultural and regional differences will reveal themselves. Be sensitive to the fact that there are ways of communicating and decision-making that may be ordinary for some but seem aggressive and rude to others. Ensure that working meetings are characterized by genuine discussion, compromise and agreement and that you plan for periodic face-to-face work if using a virtual-team approach. Even seemingly minor things like the timing of meetings can contribute to feelings of resentment if scheduled inequitably across the time zones.
- **Change Management:** Without exception, implementing a new LMS will bring change for its users. Do not assume that because the solution is mandated and logical that the implementation will be successful. Take the time to build a sense of togetherness and team-spirit. Expect to spend time with your regional administrators helping the gain confidence with the system. Plan adequate time for the absorption of the new processes, not just the time needed to explain them. Think about content management: how will you lead course owners through the process of finding and agreeing on the best learning content across the organization.
- **Support:** Considerations for global LMS community must address the challenge providing support. Each organization must find a spot on the continuum between a completely distributed support model (local administrators have full access) versus a centralized approach (learning is administered from a central, shared-service). Even if the LMS is in one language, offer training and support in the multiple languages of your audience and available in the various times that users are at work.

Should you have additional questions about this topic, Educe Group services, or any other learning technology related issue, please contact info@educigroup.com.