Much has been written on Learning Management Systems (LMS), their history, design, shorcomings, benefits, selection, implementation, well, you get the idea.

I'm not going to go over ground that is covered well by others. I will post a partial list of the resources I like later. However, I would like to share my thoughts on four important aspects of LMS selection and implementation. These are things that are frequently ignored, taken for granted, or poorly done. Any of them can cause an implementation to fail.

What's in it for me?

An LMS is a complex piece of software and touches many groups within an organization. A competent implimentation plan identifies key stakeholders: those who have an interest in the outcome of the selection, implementation, and use of the LMS. Their support (or lack of it) is a key factor in a successful implementation.

Find out what these people want.   What are their goals and objectives within the organization? How can the LMS help them achieve their goals, solve their problems, or meet their needs? Determine the answer to these questions and make certain you share those answers with the appropriate stakeholders. Be specific about what the LMS under consideration can and cannot do for each stakeholder.

I'm a Union Member!

I have seen LMS implementations fail, or at least not succeed fully, because union concerns were not identified and addressed. In part this was a failure to identify the union as a key stakeholder. LMSs are intimately tied to employee training (obviously) and the tracking thereof. Union members can worry about tracking information and who has access to it. Determine any

union concerns regarding the LMS and mitigate them.

Easy? Of course!

I have yet to see an LMS Requirements List that did not include the "Ease of Use" requirement. Regrettably, 'easy to use' is usually undefined. When its undefined, it's a simple matter for any vendor to claim their system is 'easy to use'.

So again, be specific. What tasks should be 'easy'? Content upload and maintenance? Curriculum construction? Report generation? Learner activities such as search for and enrolling in courses? After that is nailed down, 'easy' itself must be defined as much as possible. so, How is 'easy' defined? Number of clicks to do something? Number of screens? Number of discrete steps? Access requirements (seperate log ins, location of user -- ie can they do thing from home?)? Screen language presented to users?

Because 'easy to use' means so many different things to people AND has a direct impact on organization uptake, it is critical to determine what you mean by 'easy'. Only then can you have meaningful discussions with vendors about how 'easy to use' their product is.

We're done here.

Too many LMS implementations are treated as an event, not a process. Hence the feeling of 'We're done here' when the system finally goes live.

No. You are not done. You won't ever be done.

An LMS implementation represents a fundamentally different way of deploying, tracking and administering training. A well thought out change management is needed. A communication plan, user (both learner and management) training, and administrator training must be developed and implemented. Support procedures need to be put into place, and a resources dedicated to on-going maintenance must be identified. Hands will need to be held for some time after the go-live date. Plan for this.

There you go. These are some of the things I have run into.