What is an LCMS?

A Knowledge-centric Approach to Learning Content Management

Berlin (DE), June 2008 - In today’s knowledge driven world economy, the distribution of relevant, current learning content to widely dispersed employees has become a competitive necessity. Organizations must manage the complex process of creating learning content. Content must be localized and personalized to meet the specific, on-demand requirements of individual personnel in a cost-efficient way. Learning content management systems (LCMSs) contain the tools to achieve all of these critical objectives.

What is an LCMS?

An LCMS is a collection of technologies to support the creation, capture, management and transfer of knowledge. Centralized and object-oriented, it includes records-management features and translation tools, permits flexible authoring, and allows content to be reused repeatedly in a modular fashion.

A crucial differentiator of a best-of-breed LCMS is that it employs dynamic content strategies rather than the static strategies of traditional publishing models. With dynamic delivery, new or revised content is available as soon as it is created and approved, electronically, via the web.

Updates are instantaneous—and can be made incrementally or continuously rather than requiring whole new versions of complete courses to be prepared and manually distributed each time. This is achieved either by using the LCMS as the deployment platform or by integrating the LCMS with an LMS.

Because an LCMS permits flexible reuse of learning objects (assessment elements, individual tutorials, testing segments, individual assets such as text objects or graphics), it is capable of more effective localization and greater personalization. It also allows learning material to be directed to specific users by individual or group profile.

Fundamentally, a best-of-breed LCMS is knowledge-centric rather than course-centric, in step with the latest thinking around knowledge management and capitalizing on the best tools and approaches of that discipline. Bersin & Associates, a consultancy and advisory firm for enterprise learning and talent management, advanced a useful learning content maturity model in a January 2007 research report.

When an organization reaches the highest stages of learning content maturity, its content creation and management processes have both instructional and strategic purpose. In aerospace, it could entail up-to-date accordance with safety and security regulations; in manufacturing, adoption of competitively critical best practices to boost productivity; in finance or health, conformity with stringent privacy legislation.

Dynamic content delivery is a key element in achieving strategies consistent with the upper levels of learning content maturity models. Modularization of content structure—achievable through the object and aggregation models that are the foundation of LCMS—and mature metadata capabilities are the other components that enable on-demand and just-in-time content delivery. Collaboration features are essential to enable the production of high quality content that meets the needs of a wide variety of audiences, and addresses different kinds of learning outcomes.

To reap the full advantage of LCMS tools, an enterprise must take steps to integrate learning and development into its core processes. With the proper architecture in place, returns are bound to be seen on learning investments.

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