



The Swiss Army Knife Syndrome: Is Your LMS at Risk in a Supersized HCM?

By Kathleen Waid

Have you ever heard the expression, “Jack of all trades, master of none”? It’s what I like to call ‘The Swiss Army Knife Syndrome’ – and it can put your LMS, and your entire learning organization, in serious jeopardy!

The Swiss Army Knife Syndrome is when a myriad of tools are bundled as one... most of which you'll never use because the original standalone device simply does a better job:

- If something needs to be fastened, you use an electric screwdriver – much faster!
- If something needs to be cut, you use a sharp, full-size pair of scissors – much easier!
- If something needs to be sawed... well, you get the picture.

So how does this apply to learning?

Unfortunately, The Swiss Army Knife Syndrome has spread to the talent management and learning technology space with the arrival of the supersized Human Capital Management (HCM) platform.

True...

The allure of switching from a dedicated LMS platform to an all-in-one HCM 'solution' is quite tempting at first glance because you broaden your functionality spectrum.

But...

The HCM doesn't perform exceptionally well in any capacity. So it's really not as handy as you'd think, and can actually put your LMS – and your entire learning organization – in serious jeopardy.

What you need to do is closely examine your learning requirements. Then consider the value that a highly adaptive, dynamic LMS can add to your HCM infrastructure. Will a kitchen-sink HCM system demand too much compromise? Here are three key syndrome symptoms to deliberate.

Symptom #1: Learning's Not Easy

On the surface, organizational learning may seem like a relatively simple and intuitive process, particularly in a networked environment. However, supporting enterprise learning and performance is complex and often brings unexpected challenges from other operational areas, such as HR or IT...

- 1 It's these areas that like to buy integrated suites.
- 2 But since they're not deeply familiar with your learning needs, they're likely to overlook critical criteria.
- 3 Which typically results in a costly mistake – reworking or replacing the entire system!

Symptom #2: Learning Shouldn't Be Standardized

While learning and development does align well with career progression and talent management, standardizing these components into one HCM suite is not a good idea. Here's why...

It's naive, at best, to assume that your exact learning needs can be fully addressed by basic LMS technology added to a HCM 'mother' suite. When it comes to learning, one size does not fit all! Would a surgeon select a Swiss Army blade over a scalpel?

Your learning organization's success depends on matching the proper, fully functional, optimized tool (a standalone next-gen LMS) to the context at hand.

Symptom #3: Learning Can't Be Contained

Many enterprise organizations are grappling with how to uniquely and effectively serve external learning communities – customers, channel partners, etc. In particular... how to seamlessly integrate their learning experiences with the company's internal information systems and business processes.

You should know that:

- This poses a huge challenge for supersized HCM systems because they're built to focus on and operate from internal resources only.
- So, extended enterprise learning can't be properly served by an HCM suite.

Your Two-step Diagnosis

I've only covered a few of the many reasons why you should proceed with caution when considering an integrated HCM. But the three symptoms presented here are the most dire and will, hopefully, direct you to:

- 1 Discuss and identify your full learning requirements.
- 2 Examine the level of service they'll receive (if any) from a Swiss Army suite.

If you find your LMS to be indispensable, then you should stick with a platform that's perfectly optimized for your organization's unique learning needs – versus settling for a generic tool in a catchall suite that won't quite fit the bill.

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Would you like to discuss what platform's best suited your learning obligations? Feel free to contact Kathleen directly at kathleenw@expertus.com.