

Enterprise-Class vs. Basic LMSs: Do You Really Know What You're Buying?

By Tim Armstrong



Learn the six critical questions you should ask to ensure you get the best spend, and return, for your investment

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Introduction

Have you heard about the trend to go small and cheap? People downsizing from 3,000 sq. ft. houses to 200 sq. ft. tiny homes?

Honestly, when you first consider it, it sounds a little crazy. But then you think of all of the money you'll save. You can travel the world. Eat at the best restaurants. Retire early!

Seems too good to be true, right? Well, for many people it is.

Can You Afford to Go Tiny?

What people don't often consider are all of the extras that really add up. The \$25,000 tiny home base model has endless upgrades:

- A flushing vs. composting toilet
- A full-size shower vs. a "wet" bathroom
- A full-size oven vs. a hotplate
- A closet, heater, etc.

All the essentials to live and function as we're accustomed to come at a big cost—upwards of \$50,000. Plus, there's the cost of the land and all of the connections for your "budget" home.

And then there's the future. What happens if you get married or have a kid? Would it make sense to add onto your tiny home? Or just sell it? Tiny homes don't appreciate like regular homes (in fact, they depreciate like cars); you may lose a lot of money in the process.

Tiny homes are a great analogy when considering whether to buy a basic or enterprise-class LMS. You need to know what you're actually buying, and what the true costs and end value will be, before making your investment.

The Enterprise-Class & Basic LMS: A Simple Definition

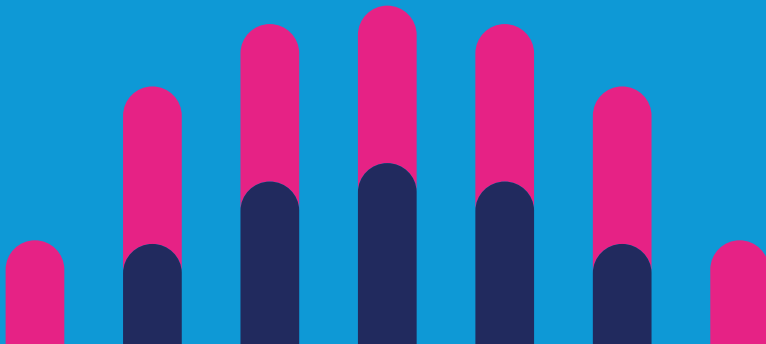
An “enterprise-class” LMS embodies a suite of tools that can conduct learning for your entire enterprise—employees, customers, partners, sales teams, etc. It has the flexibility to address the specific needs of each learning audience or organization within your enterprise, and scale globally on-demand.

A non-enterprise-grade or “basic” LMS generally provides just one solution for a single department or one solution for a single learning problem or challenge. It has limited flexibility to add new learning features or functionalities, and limited scalability to accommodate new learning groups or users. So it’s fine if your learning needs are small, specific and static. Think of it as an LMS tiny home.

Be Future-Focused or Get Left Behind

Have you ever heard the expression, “You don’t know how much you know until you know how much you don’t know”?

When you start your LMS search, you have to focus on the future, not the past. Instead of looking for a familiar system that can meet your current needs, look for a platform that meets the future needs of learning—i.e. what you might not know yet that you’ll need to support.



Learning has changed dramatically. So even if a basic learning system has worked until now, you'll need to start thinking ahead, or your learning strategy and success will quickly fall behind.

For example...

- > Did you know that by 2019, video learning will replace text as the #1 delivery modality in corporations?

The size of one video file can be up to 50 times larger than a typical e-Learning file! A basic LMS simply cannot handle this load, and many don't even include video players. You'll have to completely reconfigure your platform, or, more likely, ditch it altogether. Either option is costly, both in downtime and expense.

About ExpertusONE

ExpertusONE is the most powerful and intuitive LMS for training any learning audience. The enterprise-class system engages and empowers learners and admins, enhances learning effectiveness and enables distributed learning at scale.

ExpertusONE is built on a modern, cloud architecture for continued innovation:

- Train multiple audiences with the benefits of advanced gamification, mobile, social collaboration and reporting data
- Extend learning to Salesforce and other systems with ExpertusONE's open API library

> [Learn more](#)

Know What You're Buying: Six Critical Questions to Consider

An enterprise-class LMS will cost more upfront because it already includes the features and capabilities that you'll need in the very near future. But the reality is, it will save you money, time and hassles in the long run.

Here are six critical questions to consider when weighing the value of a basic solution versus an enterprise-class LMS:

1 Can the system scale?

An enterprise-class LMS can natively scale to accommodate expanding and larger user groups (not just capping at 500 users). Enterprise-class LMS providers also have a history of supporting deployments of thousands, tens of thousands and even hundreds of thousands of users.

So if you decide to add a partner network or rollout a new sales program, you can begin immediately without having to worry whether your LMS supports that level of scale. With a basic LMS, you're stuck.

2 Can you afford a poor user experience?

Have you thought about how a poor LMS user experience affects learning success?

With a basic LMS, if you find a way to add 1,000 new users, your system will undoubtedly lag unless it was built to support a specific user volume. Everything then slows down, and the number of disgruntled users, customers and partners rises until people:

- Stop taking your training,
- Stop using your LMS entirely, and
- Potentially stop buying and selling your product altogether.

Companies spend hundreds of thousands of dollars creating better training. And without a modern, easy-to-use delivery method, this training investment, and a large chunk of time, are likely wasted.

3 What about integration?

Enterprise-class LMSs can handle any type of content you want to offer and seamlessly integrate with other enterprise-grade software—Salesforce, CRMs, HRISs and others.

ExpertusONE, for example, has 150+ pre-built APIs that provide immediate, seamless connections. In fact, the [ExpertusONE API library](#) is so easy to work with, that your internal teams can set up the integrations themselves.

In basic systems, you'll more likely need to create custom integration bridges, which are costly and time-consuming. They're also not always reliable or guaranteed to work.

4 How important is system security?

With an enterprise-class LMS you can monitor the data feed of your integrations, have built-in auditable compliance and risk mitigation.

With a basic LMS, your data may be at risk. Or, you may not be able to access it properly to make it securely available to other systems for more nuanced data analysis and reporting.

5 Do you want to deal with a risky implementation?

With a basic LMS solution, you may be more responsible for your own implementation—which, again, may incur additional cost and be error prone.

Whereas, with an enterprise-class LMS (one that's built by a seasoned team with expertise in learning platform implementations), you can leave the implementation to the provider's expert team. Thus, gaining confidence that your LMS will be properly configured based on best practices, along with a smoother transition and a shorter time to launch.

6 How long do you plan to keep your new system?

A basic LMS may only be a short-term solution when you count on growing steadily. If you don't want to have to update or replace your LMS in the near future, you should, instead, consider starting with an enterprise-class LMS that can scale as your organization grows and offers the appeal of a modern user experience.

This "future-forward" LMS should include features that support where learning is heading, not where it's been, such as:

- APIs
- Mobile learning
- Reporting
- Single sign-on (SSO)
- WebEx integration
- Learning record stores (LRSs)
- Built-in logistics workflow
- Embeddable widgets
- The ability to embed and share content (worker to worker)
- Gamification and more

Yes, you may be able to add on some of these features to a basic system—but it will cost you. In fact, just a few add-ons may cost the same as an entire suite of modern tools pre-built into an enterprise-class platform.

Weighing the Real Cost of Your LMS “Home”

When you think of a basic LMS as a base model, you’ll now be more aware of how the support and management costs can really add up. You’ll need:

- Integrations for supporting new audiences
- Configurations for launching new training programs
- Upgrades for broken or outdated software (if you’re using a non-SaaS system)
- Downtime fixes and effects (slower system, slower training, slower onboarding, etc.)

You should also consider the value of gaining a learning partner that's invested in your organization's long-term success. Many enterprise-class LMS providers, like Expertus, offer LMS strategy and support well beyond the sale.

They'll show you how to leverage their best practices to your organization's benefit. This is because instead of focusing on the quantity of LMS sales (which lower priced vendors have to do), enterprise-class LMS providers focus on the quality. Happy, successful customers are good business.

Do Your Homework

Now you should see that buying a basic versus enterprise-class LMS is not as cut and dry as it seems.

You need to do your homework on exactly what you want your system to accomplish, now and in the future, and how much that will truly cost. This may prove to be an eye-opening exercise, and will ensure you get the best spend, and return, for your investment.

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With 20 years of software sales and human capital management experience, Tim helps customers significantly improve and streamline all things learning—both internally and externally.

If you'd like to further discuss how an enterprise-class LMS can generate ongoing value for your organization, please contact Tim directly at tima@expertus.com or request an ExpertusONE demo at www.expertus.com/demo.

About ExpertusONE

As a trusted learning technology partner, Expertus has built ExpertusONE—the most powerful and intuitive LMS for training any learning audience. The enterprise-class system engages and empowers learners and admins, enhances learning effectiveness and enables distributed learning at scale.