Integrations

Connecting Learning Technology to the Business

2022

Table of Contents

Current State

The array of technology L&D teams are leveraging for their programs is growing increasingly complex, with new tools and modalities being adopted regularly.

To be truly effective, today's learning technology must work relatively seamlessly with a wide variety of other solutions, platforms, and applications. Not only within the learning ecosystem, but in other areas of the business such as HR, finance, operations, and more. Learners need to be able to access learning when they are working in other systems. Also, to derive insights on learning's impact, L&D teams will need to leverage data from these systems as well.

It is critical to understand all of the technological touch points that exist for learning platforms and build a strategy for insuring integrations are properly prioritized, executed, and managed. As companies continue to rely more heavily on data to make decisions, integrations become a key part of being able to leverage data across systems to achieve real, actionable insights. But poor integrations are one of the major contributing factors to high levels of dissatisfaction with learning technology today.

WHAT IS THE STATE OF YOUR LEARNING TECHNOLOGY ECOSYSTEM?

45%
Inadequate

40%
Meets our needs

15%
Advanced

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Building the Next Generation Learning Technology Ecosystem
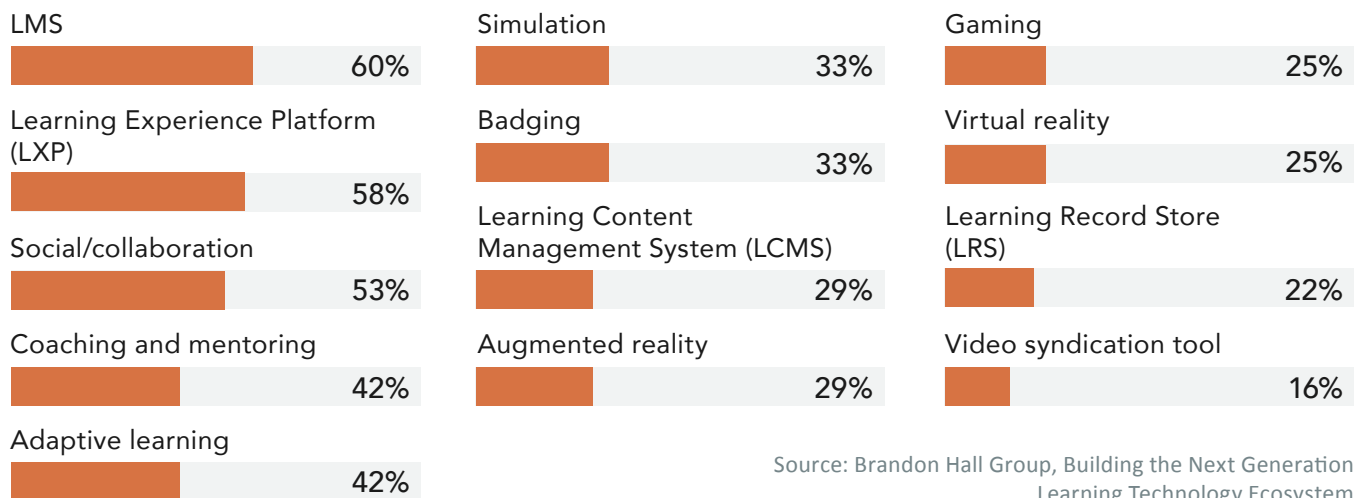
Just a few years ago, the line item for technology in the learning budget would most likely have been one item – the LMS. As technology has advanced and companies continue to experiment with different tools, the learning budget has to make room for many more technologies.

How Much of Your Technology Spend Is Allocated to the Following?

54%
LMS

12% Authoring tool/learning content management system (LCMS)

11% Coaching and mentoring and collaboration tools

10% Learning experience platform (LXP)

5% Gaming/simulation/virtual reality/augmented reality/adaptive learning

5% Video syndication tool

2% Learning record store (LRS)

1% Badging

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Building the Next Generation Learning Technology Ecosystem
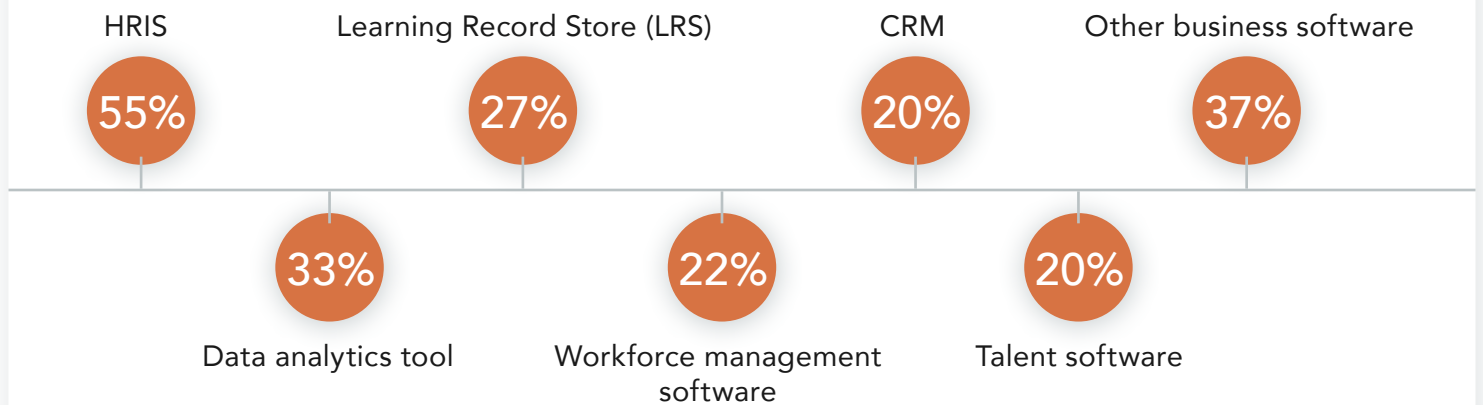
This complexity will continue to grow as companies invest more in emerging technologies and expand the scope of their digital solutions to meet the needs of the future workforce.

Which of the Following Technologies will You Invest in Over the Next 1-2 Years?

LMS — 60%

Learning Experience Platform (LXP) — 58%

Social/collaboration — 53%

Coaching and mentoring — 42%

Adaptive learning — 42%

Simulation — 33%

Badging — 33%

Learning Content Management System (LCMS) — 29%

Augmented reality — 29%

Gaming — 25%

Virtual reality — 25%

Learning Record Store (LRS) — 22%

Video syndication tool — 16%

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Building the Next Generation Learning Technology Ecosystem

When taken into context with all of the other SaaS solutions in place in a typical organization, the integration issue becomes exponentially more complex.

Which of the Following Systems Integrate with Your Learning Technology Ecosystem?

HRIS	Learning Record Store (LRS)	CRM	Other business software
55%	**27%**	**20%**	**37%**

Data analytics tool	Workforce management software	Talent software
33%	**22%**	**20%**

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Building the Next Generation Learning Technology Ecosystem
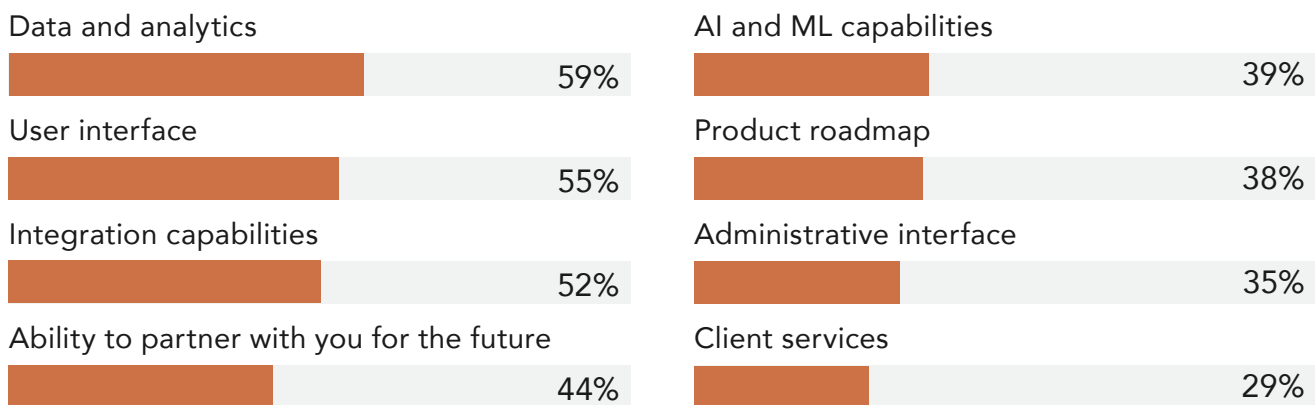
LMS INTEGRATIONS ECOSYSTEM

Source: Docebo

Complexities

We've seen that nearly half of the organizations believe their current technology ecosystem is inadequate. As a result, many companies are looking to make a change. There are two different approaches they can take. First, they can replace technology elements within the ecosystem with the same kind of solutions from other providers. For example, trading out one LMS for another. Or a company could change technologies completely. As in replacing an LMS with an LXP. In either case, companies are driven by essentially the same things.

To what degree are the following driving your organization's need to change providers?

Data and analytics
59%

AI and ML capabilities
39%

User interface
55%

Product roadmap
38%

Integration capabilities
52%

Administrative interface
35%

Ability to partner with you for the future
44%

Client services
29%

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Building the Next Generation Learning Technology Ecosystem

And while integrations fall somewhere near the middle of both lists, many of the other elements are also driven by integrations. Robust data and analytics require a certain level of integration that allows data to flow freely between systems. Without that, analysis becomes much narrower and for many companies, consists of data from one single tool like an LMS. It becomes very difficult to gain meaningful insights and drive sound business decisions when systems do not work well with each other.

Organizations continue to demand tools that are more user-friendly and offer a better learner experience. This can be accomplished within a single technology, however, the user experience is diminished when learners have to log in and out of disparate tools and systems to get what they need. Strong integrations mean a much more seamless experience for users as they move from one platform to the next in search of answers and information.

If tools require a lot of custom integration, that can be too much for an already overburdened IT team. This can cause them to push back on technology selections, preventing the L&D team from putting the tools they need into place.

Strategies for Success

CASE IN POINT *#1*

SMARTLY.IO

Smartly.io is an organization that provides automation software and services to help companies with social media advertising.

Their learning technology challenges mirrored much of what has been discussed in this report. The company was struggling to manually keep up with employee records, content management and syncing global calendars with employee data on an ongoing basis. They wanted to integrate their LMS platform with these key tools in their tech stack. But it was difficult to make this a high enough priority for their already busy internal IT developer resources. The L&D team was stuck spending hours weekly completing manual tasks inside the LMS.

▶ **ACTION/STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS**

The L&D team decided to look for learning technology that had integration capabilities that allowed them to remove their dependence on internal IT resources. They selected the Docebo Learn platform and were able to integrate it with their HRIS, Google Calendar and collaborative platform builder Airtable. By removing the reliance on IT, L&D was able to take stronger ownership of the technology and its implementation. They drove and controlled the project with input and collaboration from across the business areas that needed to be involved.

▶ **RESULT**

The Smartly.io L&D team has saved hours weekly, cut down the need for manual data inputs, and given the L&D team time and energy back to focus on important learning initiatives, which helped boost the morale of those in the L&D team.

DO YOU USE YOUR LEARNING TECHNOLOGY ECOSYSTEM TO SUPPORT TRAINING AND EDUCATION FOR NON-EMPLOYEES?

59% YES

41% NO
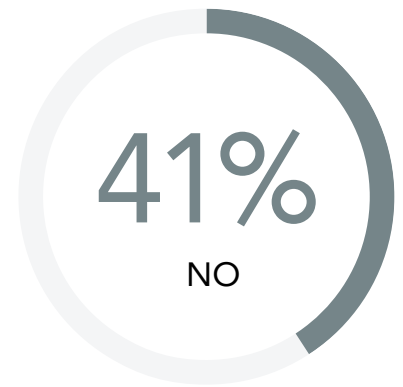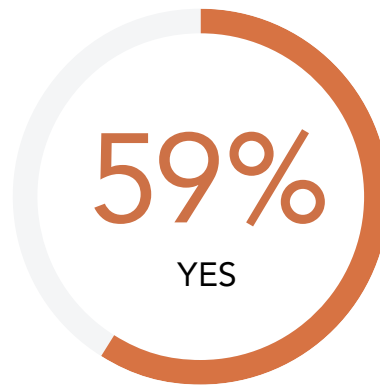
In addition to the complexities inherent in integrating several internal-facing learning technologies, many organizations rely on their learning tech to deliver learning to external audiences. These can be customers, resellers, franchisees and others that are part of the extended enterprise. This means even more connections to more systems. The most common integrations in an extended enterprise environment are:

CRM *or* AMS/PRM	Marketing and Email/Sales Process Automation	Customer Experience and Service
Virtual Training	Headless LMS - *taking your data out of LMS into BI tools*	SSO
Rewards and Incentives	Commerce Gateway	Embedded Experiences

CASE IN POINT *#2*

One organization with such an environment is a provider of hair salon products. This organization needs to educate its network of hair care professionals across 66 countries. The training focuses on the various products within their 13 brands, the latest trends and techniques, and knowledge from other professionals in the industry around the world.

▶ ## ACTION/STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

Prior to partnering with Docebo, this global cosmetics brand leveraged over 90 in-person training events to train salon professionals, stylists, and others who use their products. Partnering with Docebo, they have been able to convert to online learning for thousands of learners, with over one million sessions taken online.

With this shift to online learning, the learner creates a profile upon signing into the LMS. This profile information, as well as information that is pulled in from other systems, like a CRM, allows for a more personalized learning experience to be achieved. This information is also combined with learning analytics around what courses people are searching for, enrolling in, and completing, and then integrated with their business intelligence tools to provide robust analytics for the organization's brand owners.

▶ ## RESULT

Armed with this data, brand owners are better able to see what trends are emerging and stay ahead. By looking at spikes from certain regions, about certain trends, or for certain brands and products, the business is able to stay on top of its customers' needs. They have a team of data engineers and strategists who use this information to determine where they should invest their resources for products, marketing, promotions, and media campaigns.

The ability to offer customers what they're looking for and what there is demand for is critical to their success. Not only does it help attract customers, but it also improves the overall customer experience. It helps to retain them, keep them satisfied, and keep them coming back for more, driving additional sales and revenue. They are deriving much of this business intelligence via their training efforts and connecting those tools to other technologies within the business.

Takeaways

Integrations can be overwhelming if we try to look at them in their entirety. To get started, choose one existing process where the L&D team may be spending too much manual effort. Or choose one tool where data needs to be extracted from or pushed to. But even in these initial small steps, keep in mind longer-term goals. A short-sighted integration approach can quickly box you in. Your integration strategy should future-proof the ecosystem, not lock it down.

It's also important to get out of the L&D silo. Identify the other business areas the technology may need to touch. A successful approach requires stakeholders to help build the business case.

Another important first step is to analyze existing processes and the quality of existing data. A new integration will not fix things if the data quality is not there, and in fact, can make it worse with speed and scale. Take the time to understand the end goals, the existing gaps and barriers, and draft out a visual workflow. Choosing the right technology partners is critical to making it all happen.

OTHER KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

> Integrations cannot be an afterthought. They have to be a key, up-front part of the technology selection process.

> If learning technology is not connected to other essential systems like the HRIS, data analytics tools, or CRM, learning becomes a silo and loses its strategic place within the business.

> The more L&D technology is connected to the business, the more learning becomes embedded throughout the organization's culture.

> Connect learning data to other business data in order to tie learning to business outcomes and show the impact and value of learning across the business.

> Don't compromise learning strategy for learning software — choose the best tools for the learning strategy.

> Seek out providers that simplify integrations. You want a partner that has experience integrating with environments similar to your organization's and can scale as you scale.

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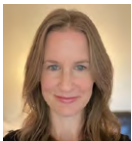
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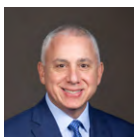
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