



## Rely on Your LMS When Business Is Disrupted

A learning management system should be part of every company's business continuity plan.

BY BRIAN CARLSON

**T**he approaches companies use to support their teams during and following unprecedented times of change can have a major impact on employees' success and well-being and can determine a company's ability to continue operations despite sudden organizational shifts or changes. Companies can use learning management systems, and other e-learning platforms, to help ease transitional

periods or interruptions in operations with valuable training and resources to keep teams productive, connected, and engaged from anywhere. That's why in the hands of a savvy L&D professional, an ordinary LMS can show up as a valuable tool in business continuity planning.

Businesses can't foresee or prepare for every event, but having a business continuity plan (BCP) in place that accounts for numerous possible dis-

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ruptions, such as the global COVID-19 pandemic, can help organizations feel prepared to respond in the event of an emergency. A BCP will address how an organization can maintain productivity, prevent financial loss, and recover from any possible hiccups in operations. With preplanned actionable items and appropriate tools and solutions implemented in advance, a company can handle strenuous and hectic transitional periods in a calm, organized, and efficient fashion, placing it far ahead of the businesses scrambling to adjust in a crunch.

### **Linking digital L&D and business continuity**

Remote work is, or arguably should be, a key component of any BCP. While not all job functions are conducive to remote work, e-learning is proven to be valuable for practically any role, department, or type of organization, regardless of the company's size or complexity.

## **An LMS can grow with an organization and meet changing needs, including needs related to emergency situations.**

Recent events have led more companies to discover the flexibility of online learning. Using e-learning to support a virtual workforce creates the opportunity for employees to learn information and acquire new skill sets digitally while also providing opportunities to keep employees educated and connected. Remote L&D provides an engaging, cost-effective, and viable solution to keep employees learning and positioned to have a positive impact on the business' bottom line, even when distance is a factor. If there were ever a case for why a company should invest in a platform to support online learning, a seemingly instantaneous shift to widespread remote work driven by a global pandemic qualifies.

Should sudden disruption cause a need for an organization to streamline how it delivers onboarding, compliance, or other

routine training to a dispersed workforce, the L&D function can effectively manage training remotely via several different digital tools and technologies. Businesses can use an LMS to handle simple activities such as sending and storing company updates or providing forums for employees to connect company-wide on various topics—which also can be especially useful for a dispersed workforce.

Because the L&D team can scale as needed the use of an LMS, the degree to which organizations will employ the system in times of interruption will vary. Certain companies may opt to use their LMS as a staple of ongoing operations or solely as a function of a business continuity strategy. For some organizations, the system may serve as a primary point of communication; in others, it can back up another communication method or can even be an integral component of a much larger

business continuity strategy. Additional ways L&D professionals and other LMS administrators can leverage the system's functionality as part of their organizations' BCP include maintaining connection, improving employee skills and performance, and gaining learner insights.

### **Maintain connection**

During times of transition or emergency situations, an entire organization may feel a bit out of sorts. An LMS can provide a centralized location for employees to communicate and find important announcements or information. Employees can easily access a hub of resources and training programs related to current events, action plans for the business moving forward, or L&D resources to support strong re-

mote work habits for newly virtual teams. In addition, L&D professionals can use web conferencing or virtual classrooms to connect learners synchronously, host forums to support open feedback and dialogue, and share announcements regarding company updates or safety resources.

Consider, too, a scenario where employee mobility sees an uptick due to disruption—electrical workers repairing lines following a widespread storm, for example. Some LMSs feature a mobile application for learners to access resources anytime, anywhere through their smartphone or tablet.

A mobile learning platform enables team members to pick up, learn, and engage at their convenience, so they can catch up on courses or access resources around their busy schedules and regardless of location. The mobile application feature also comes in handy for employees who may want to reference learning resources during a project while working remotely and makes the LMS a convenient option for nonstationary staff. When organizations seek to maintain connection with a large number of team members without a desk, email, or laptop, an LMS can prove to be a valuable tool.

### **Improve employee skills and performance**

With a flexible and interoperable LMS at the epicenter of the learning ecosystem, remote training can provide incredible value to team members during transitional times. The L&D team can incorporate multiple types of learning, managers and mentors can dictate learning paths for their teams, and employees can continue to feel supported and engaged. Moreover, companies can give LMS administrator rights to HR managers, department leaders, and other professionals to access digital learning content, record and measure learner data, and create opportunities for collaboration and professional development remotely.

Here's another consideration for L&D professionals: Sudden change in

business operations can create the immediate need to quickly upskill and reskill employees, and deployment of learning products cannot all look alike. Keeping content diversified is key to any dynamic corporate learning program, and it is especially critical when aiming to engage remote learners. Diversify L&D content by including multiple e-learning tools and types in training programs.

Creating a blended learning experience is proven to help learners better retain information and can encourage engagement through interactivity. Consider delivering gamified training content, offering competency-based education, or using virtual or augmented reality simulations that place learners in realistic situations. Regardless of the chosen method, most LMSs can host various types of media. Simply continuing training through disruption in some form is a way to engage employees; incorporating some of the newer technologies to vary delivery can help sustain that engagement.

Furthermore, various types of content can help provide learners with more digestible, targeted learning experiences. Using a learning experience platform provides a Netflix-like experience that suggests relevant content based on employee role, activities, or other fac-

tors. Microlearning content condenses long-term curriculum into self-driven, hyperfocused lessons that learners can apply quickly after completion.

Giving employees access to a corporate digital library enables them to sift through relevant resources or readings, and explore topics that are of interest to them. Curate additional content from multiple sources to allow for a broader range of learning experiences that encourage employee engagement and collaboration.

### Gain learner insights

In the event an organization activates its BCP, the L&D administrator can, for example, assess user trends, identify training opportunities, and develop a data-driven plan to address employees' future development needs. Many tools on the market, such as learning record stores, collect both formal and informal learning data to provide a complete evaluation of the learning experience. That enables employers to make data-driven decisions regarding top-performing individuals as well as how the L&D function can adjust training programs to provide better learning outcomes across the company.

With an LMS, collecting valuable analytics is easy regardless of employee location, and L&D professionals can gar-

ner valuable insights. Make sure to take the time to figure out what data is useful for teams or the company and to put that information to good use.

### A preventive measure

The L&D function should evaluate remote learning as part of a BCP differently than day-to-day organizational L&D. If a natural disaster or global crisis affects business operations, it will likely also affect employees' personal lives. Providing convenient and relevant professional development is vital to keeping learners engaged and ensuring they have a valuable experience.

Open-source technology enables L&D professionals to create a future-proof learning solution that they can scale, upgrade, and enhance based on organizational or industry changes. Beyond providing the flexibility to tailor a solution to meet specific needs brought on by a sudden interruption in operations, open-source learning platforms enable users to use a configurable, interoperable, and—most importantly—adaptable learning solution for years to come. In that way, an LMS can grow with an organization and meet changing needs, including those related to emergency situations.

Whether a company faces a minor halt in operations or a natural disaster with long-term ramifications, identifying a reaction and recovery plan helps protect the business, prevent financial loss, and support employees during transitional times. Including an LMS in an organization's BCP can provide employees with necessary training and resources to keep teams productive, connected, and engaged while maintaining business. As the L&D function plans preventive and responsive measures for potential threats to daily operations, consider how an LMS can support employees as well as the company's long-term success during difficult times.

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## Business Continuity Plan Development Factors

To lay out an effective and realistic business continuity plan, consider:

- Possible threats and potential risks to the company in the wake of disaster
- A complete examination of the organization's structure, inventory, and resources
- Which business functions are most critical to the organization and how staff can continue to conduct them safely
- How to engage and support all employees, including those who are unable to complete job responsibilities off-site
- The resources, technologies, and solutions needed to streamline business changes and better connect team members

With those considerations in mind, develop a business continuity plan that details the time-sensitive actions the company may need to take in the event of an emergency, the continuity tasks and duties for each department within the organization, and the proposed strategies for recovery to keep the business on the path to sustained success.



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