

Build vs Buy vs Extend: Decision Worksheet

Answer the five questions, mark the path that fits, then run the three-year crossover math. The companion article walks through every line.

A. The five decision questions

1. Product or cost centre?	Is the learning platform the product, or internal infrastructure?	_____
2. Who do you compete with?	Institutions on a checklist, or consumers comparing polished apps?	_____
3. How custom is your video?	Standard player, or branching / live / per-second tracking?	_____
4. Audience in three years?	Below a few thousand and stable, or large and growing?	_____
5. What is your exit story?	Sell / raise (IP matters), or infrastructure forever?	_____

B. Mark the path that fits

<input type="checkbox"/> BUY (SaaS)	Pick when Cost centre, bounded audience, standard video
<input type="checkbox"/> EXTEND (open-source)	Content differentiates; standards needed; some control
<input type="checkbox"/> HYBRID	Video differentiates; keep backbone, build the player
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILD (custom)	The LMS is the product; large, growing, owned IP

C. Three-year crossover (build vs buy)

$$\text{BUILD (3 yr)} = \text{up-front build} + (\text{run cost} / \text{year} \times 3)$$

$$\text{BUY (3 yr)} = \text{learners} \times \$/\text{user}/\text{month} \times 12 \times 3$$

$$\text{Crossover learners} = (\text{build} + \text{run} \times 3) / (\$/\text{user}/\text{mo} \times 12 \times 3)$$

Below the crossover, buy. Above it, a build pays for itself. Most video-first teams land on a hybrid: buy/keep the backbone, build the video layer, wire it with LTI 1.3 and xAPI.