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

Question	What it decides	Your answer
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

- ☐ **BUY (SaaS)** — pick when: Cost centre, bounded audience, standard video
- ☐ **EXTEND (open-source)** — pick when: Content differentiates; standards needed; some control
- ☐ **HYBRID** — pick when: Video differentiates; keep backbone, build the player
- ☐ **BUILD (custom)** — pick when: The LMS is the product; large, growing, owned IP

C. Three-year crossover (build vs buy)

```
BUILD (3 yr)       = up-front build + (run cost / year x 3)
BUY (3 yr)         = learners x $/user/month x 12 x 3
Crossover learners = (build + run x 3) / ($/user/mo x 12 x 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.

Companion to: 'Build vs Buy vs Extend an Existing LMS'
www.forasoft.com/learn/elearning-video/articles-elearning/build-vs-buy-vs-extend-an-lms



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This worksheet weighs SaaS, open-source and custom LMS paths and gives the three-year crossover math. Our seven-volume handbook covers the video layer you would build; start with Volume 3 for players, ABR and CDN cost, then Volume 1 for encoding and Volume 4 for audio and captions.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND INSIDE

- Players, ABR and CDN cost (Vol. 3)
- Captions and accessibility (Vol. 4)
- Encoding course video (Vol. 1)
- Delivery economics at scale (Vol. 3)

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Extending Moodle or Canvas, or building your own LMS video layer?

We will run your learner numbers through the crossover math and outline the extend, hybrid or build plan. 250+ video products shipped since 2005.

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