

Abstract

Successful LMS Implementation at Nuremberg Airport



The introduction of a Learning Management System (LMS) is regarded in many organisations as a technical project. In practice, however, it is less the technology than the handling of change, complexity and organisational learning that determines success. This best practice article analyses the introduction and sustainable operation of a company-wide LMS from the perspective of a long standing LMS lead. The focus is on four success dimensions that are particularly relevant for customers: **simplicity, cost, independence and speed**.

Using a real-world project as an example, it is shown how a pragmatic implementation approach, a close and flexible partnership, and the combination of a platform with standardised as well as customised learning content enable a high level of acceptance among heterogeneous target groups. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of the principle of lifelong learning, which is understood not as a theoretical guiding concept, but as a practical adaptation process.

The article places the experiences gained in the context of current academic research from adult education, learning psychology and e-learning research. Studies on usability, self-directed learning and organisational change support the central thesis: sustainable learning systems do not emerge through rigid concepts, but through continuous adaptation to real working and learning conditions.

This article is aimed at decision-makers, HR managers and project managers who are facing the introduction or further development of an LMS, and shows in a practical manner how complexity can be reduced, costs lowered and, at the same time, a sustainable learning culture can be established.

*"At this point, only lifelong learning comes to mind:
concepts had to be adapted and modified to certain circumstances.
In short – that is life."*

Best Practice: LMS Implementation Between Concept and Reality

1. Initial Situation: When Learning Becomes a Strategic Factor

In many companies, training and further education have developed historically: classroom-based training, external providers, individual e-learning modules without a clear structure. With increasing regulatory requirements, a growing workforce and rising cost pressure, these models reach their limits.

In the present project, the trigger was clear: **to reduce costs, build internal know-how and become independent in the long term**. At the same time, there was the ambition to provide more learning opportunities – without further increasing organisational effort.

A Learning Management System was intended to bring these objectives together. However, it became clear at an early stage: an LMS is not an end in itself. It is a socio-technical system that only functions when technology, content, processes and people are aligned (cf. Kerres, 2018).

2. Lifelong Learning as a Practical Reality – Not as a Buzzword

The introductory quotation captures a central point: concepts only survive if they are allowed to adapt. This is precisely where many LMS projects fail. They begin with an idealised target state that cannot withstand organisational reality.

Academic research confirms this: lifelong learning is not a linear process, but is characterised by iteration, adaptation and context dependency (cf. Illeris, 2018). Successful learning systems are therefore not “finished”, but continue to evolve continuously.

In the specific project, this meant:

- no rigid target architecture
- deliberate openness to adjustments
- learning from use rather than planning at the drawing board

3. Speed Beats Perfection

A decisive success factor was the rapid introduction of the LMS. Instead of months of conceptual design phases, a functional system was put into productive use at an early stage and subsequently optimised step by step.

This approach is consistent with findings from change research: early visible successes increase acceptance and reduce resistance (cf. Kotter, 1996).

For the customer, this had concrete advantages:

- training could be digitalised immediately
- user feedback fed directly into improvements
- internal project resources were conserved

4. Simplicity as a Central Design Principle

A key learning from the project is: **simplicity is not a nice-to-have, but a success factor.**

Especially in the case of heterogeneous target groups – different generations, levels of education and digital competencies – usability determines use or rejection. Studies show that perceived usability has a significant influence on the acceptance of e-learning systems (cf. Davis, 1989; Sun et al., 2008).

This was implemented in concrete terms through:

- clear, reduced navigation structures
- visual adaptations for operational areas
- low-barrier design
- stable system performance

5. LMS and Content from a Single Source – Reduction of Complexity

An often underestimated aspect of LMS projects is the content question. Many companies underestimate the coordination effort that arises when the platform, standard content and customised training come from different providers.

In the present project, a different approach was deliberately chosen:

LMS, standard content and customised content came from a single source.

This had several effects:

- significantly fewer interface issues
- faster implementation of WBTs
- didactically and technically consistent learning offerings

Especially during the implementation phase, this massively simplified the project – a point that the customer explicitly highlighted as relieving.

6. The Partner Factor: Flexibility Instead of a Detailed Specification Document

In addition to technology and content, the choice of partner was a central success factor. What mattered was not only professional expertise, but also the willingness to jointly carry the project and respond flexibly to change.

The quality of this partnership was also confirmed externally: the service provider was **recognised as the best provider for SMEs in the WirtschaftsWoche ranking** – an indicator of sustainable project quality rather than short-term tool features.

From the customer's perspective, this meant:

- fast response times
- solution-oriented collaboration
- genuine shared responsibility instead of a purely supplier role

7. Cost Efficiency and Strategic Independence

The economic benefits of the LMS became clearly visible:

- reduction of classroom-based training
- lower organisational time expenditure
- improved scalability
- transparent evidence and reporting

At the same time, a strategic advantage emerged: independence. Content, processes and further development could be managed internally – an aspect that research identifies as central to sustainable learning cultures (cf. Senge, 2006).

8. Organisational Impact: Learning as Part of Everyday Work

In the long term, the benefits of an LMS go beyond efficiency. It changes how learning is perceived within the organisation. Studies on learning culture show that low-threshold, integrated learning offerings increase the likelihood that learning is experienced as a natural part of work (cf. Deci & Ryan, 2000).

This is precisely where the future potential of the system lies:

- building a new learning culture
- integration of new learning formats (e.g. VR)
- stronger self-direction of learners

9. Conclusion: Life Prevails Over the Concept – and That Is a Good Thing

This best-practice example clearly demonstrates:

successful LMS implementations do not arise from perfect planning, but from adaptability, simplicity and strong partnerships.

Or, to put it in the words of the introductory quotation:

concepts must be allowed to adapt – this is not failure, this is learning.

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