

Communication Gym Online LMS Analysis

Section 1 - Needs Analysis

Executive Summary

The Communication Gym, a local professional communication and professional development business, seeks to launch their new subdivision of online learning. Currently training takes place in the classroom. The online training initiative will be a hybrid of asynchronous e-learning and synchronous webinars. A research strategy will analyze current practices for transitioning classroom to online learning and to compare costs to ROI.

An LMS or similar wrapper is needed to host the new course series. A technology selection analysis will be used to assist the client in choosing an LMS. In addition, further options for blended learning will be addressed.

The project was framed in Google docs, forms and spreadsheets in order to get ballpark costs and organize research analysis outcomes.

Business Need

The Communication Gym would like to convert their courses online so that they can expand their audience and increase the revenue in their business.

Expected Benefits

Asynchronous Learning: Students may access the training as needed and may be more likely to select course offerings. Students that miss the with the option of asynchronous learning. Courses will be accessible at any time of the day.

Synchronous Learning: Live webinars allow the the business to have a wider audience, where students can practice with real examples of participants' conversations simultaneously over the internet. It is expected that the business will receive additional revenues. course

Learning Opportunity

Asynchronous Learning: Students will be able to access Communication Gym video courses online. A library of skills has already been recorded. For example, if the learner chooses to review specific skills before critical business meetings, they may access the lessons at their convenience.

Synchronous Learning: Live webinars can attract a wider audience not

limited to the greater central Pennsylvania area. In addition, webinars can be recorded and placed into an LMS so that students can review what they learned at any time.

As live webinar presentations become more mainstreamed in business, participants will have more options to apply their new skills in a variety of platforms. Instructors and peers can assist participants as they evaluate and provide feedback of how their communication styles come across media technology. Students will appreciate the values and interests of their audience from the clients perspective. Participants will practice using the latest in webinar communication etiquette such as polling, raising hands, chatting, forums and emails. Communication gym instructors will expand these activities while they build upon these exercises with style, content, and delivery of their verbal presentations.

A blended approach allows webinars to take place during regular courses. A producer runs the webinar and assists the online audience during the live course.

The online expansion will allow students to further examine communication habits. Learners will break down and strengthen crucial communication elements in a broader setting. Students learn to adjust their personal style of communication by participating in a series of like courses through webinars, classroom and asynchronous learning, skills will be reinforced.

Online Learner Profile

Most of the learners will be in the sales or business management fields. Age ranges are anticipated to be consistent with the work force with a wide range of technology skills.

Section 2 – Project Outline

Project Goals

- Select a Learning Management System or appropriate wrapper to host courses
- Discuss options for blended learning platforms

Project Objectives

- Analyze technology selection needs vs wants
- Assist client in choosing an appropriate LMS based on his unique business needs
- Compare costs to ROI
- Discuss further options for blended learning

Project Conflicts

- Time and expenses related to the purchase of a functioning LMS and web conferencing host will need to be sorted out prior to the project.
- The instructional designer will provide some guidance to the selection of these platforms but ultimately, the client must make the final purchasing decision.
- The instructional designer will work on this project on a part time basis. (A gantt chart will be created after technology selection).

Out of Scope

The following items are not considered to be within the scope of the project:

- Providing, designing or coding a website
- Designing and formatting a platform or LMS for more than 20 unpaid hours total
- Coding an LMS
- Analysing, designing, developing or teaching a course
- Assisting with the production of live webinars for more than 6 unpaid hours
- Maintaining files, updates, media or courses after the end of the project
- Additional training or evaluation after project completion

Clients Responsibilities

The client is ultimately responsible to provide an LMS or similar platform for the instructional designer to work on at his expense. The client shall provide a web conferencing host for the webinar courses at his expense. All additional maintenance and expenses related to platforms and upkeep are the responsibility of the client.

Project Success Measures

- An LMS is selected and purchased
- A webinar is discussed and evaluated

Project Milestones

- Analysis of LMS needs vs. wants
- A total of six LMS will be considered and evaluated
- Meeting with Harrisburg University and Avalon Foster
- A consultation of the preliminary results
- Schedule vendor demonstrations
- Establish Budget
- Design a Return for Proposal (RFP) for LMS Bids
- Selection of LMS

Timeline and Resources

A Gantt chart will be created after the selection of an LMS

Project Design Summary

An embedded [questionnaire](#) was sent to vendors selected to contact for an RFI. 30 vendors responded.

Research Methods:

- Questionnaire
- Phone calls/ e-mails
- Google Docs
- Estimated Project Costs
- Establish Budget
- ROI

Section 3 – Business Profile

Business Goal

The Communication Gym seeks to improve communication skills in individuals and organizations by receiving the benefit of an ideal development environment - fun, interactive sessions that focus on the most powerful tools and techniques.

[Business Objectives](#)

[Business Philosophy and Values](#)

Business Mission

Improve communication skills by experimenting in a safe and risk-free

environment.

Vision

The Communication Gym business is founded on a "Gym" concept. "Workouts" are designed for 'delivering confidence through competence' by drill and practice.

Members are able to try new methods, styles and techniques where feedback can be provided. Online learning provides greater flexibility and increased potential for revenue.

Projected Growth

By expanding into online learning, students will be able to access and review courses through the internet. Webinars provide additional opportunities to expand the audience beyond the parameters of the Harrisburg Metropolitan area.

Research Methods:

- Interview
- e-mails
 - Phone calls
 - CG Web Site
 - YouTube Videos
 - Attend a CG Course

Section 4 – Research

Research Goals

Research effective online learning models that take into account the subject matter, online learning requirements, course materials, learning objectives.

Research Objectives

By September 2012, the client will be able to:

- Distinguish between a [SaaS Versus Hosted App](#) and select the appropriate application for his business
- Determine his business [learning management system needs versus wants](#)
 - Access information on LMS selection considerations to optimize

purchasing decision

~ [elearning guild 2007](#)

~ <http://lms.findthebest.com>

- Establish a budget based on current LMS rates and price points

~ [epathlearning.com](#)

- [LMS Price Comparison](#)

Research Methods

- Brandon Hall Research (Learning Tech Products: LMS Research Report 2009)
- [e-Learning Guild 2007](#)
- [Google Scholar Search](#)
 - <http://lms.findthebest.com>
 - [epathlearning.com](#)

[Initial LMS e-mail price and feature inquiries](#) (See [Appendix B](#) for list of LMS recipients and responses)

[Survey Request for Information \(RFI\)](#) (See [Appendix C](#))

A Request for Information was created after the initial e-mail inquiries in the form of an [embeddable survey](#). This was sent to over [100 LMS vendors](#). The survey had 32 [responses](#) and several vendors responded to the e-mail but declined to participate in the survey for various reasons. Based on the e-mail responses, it appeared that some of the LMS vendors preferred to receive a more formal Request for Proposal (RFP) from their potential customers to bid on.

The survey was helpful in that it confirmed the initial selection as to be in alignment with the needs and wants of the client. Price breakdowns were varied per business model and the survey uncovered some creative ways for LMS companies to charge customers for additional services. The survey allowed scoring of specific features to be more accurate and made the phone calls to the sales representatives go more smoothly.

LMS Websites

Product websites were researched and reviewed for several LMS companies including those on the final list.

LMS Free Trials

Some of the LMS companies that were reviewed offered free trials. The free trials were used as a sandbox to experiment with navigational features.

Phone calls to LMS representatives

Most of the companies were contacted and interviewed by telephone in the final round. Gaps of information were covered and price structures were verified.

Virtual LMS Demonstrations

Only one LMS was selected for a live virtual demonstration. efront was chosen because of the high score that it received and its remote location in Grease. A second demonstration is available upon request. Vendors from the final LMS list are eager to demonstrate their products at the clients convenience!

Research Conclusion

A [LMS Decision Selection Analysis](#) was created to rate the features and costs of the following selected LMS systems. The rating criteria was based on the needs and wants of the client. The following scores are based on the combined costs and features and ranked accordingly.

[LMS Short List](#) (See [Appendix A](#) for extended results.)

LMS Final List:

Approx Price	Name	Score	Notes
\$1000/mo	Fugu (Comparative)	Total: 3246 Rank: 6	Difficult to calculate (See Notes)
\$300/mo	WestNet MLP	Total: 3946 Rank: 4	Free storage for first 50 courses
\$320/mo	Efront	Total: 4457 Rank: 1	3 month minimum

\$399/mo	<u>iSpring Online</u>	Total: 3261 Rank: n/a	Disqualified due to limited registration and shopping cart capabilities
\$475/mo	<u>Accord Interzoic Media</u>	Total: 4174 Rank: 3	Storage Fees extra Each 5gb storage is \$20
\$495/mo	<u>iLMS</u>	Total: 4190 Rank:2	up to 100 courses only
\$300-\$500/mo	<u>TeraLearn LCMS</u>	3796 Rank: 5	Additional Storage Fees, negotiable

It is recommended to schedule demonstrations for each LMS moving forward. A Return for Proposal should be created to start the bidding process. The formal RFP would allow the client to state their maximum budget.

The client should plan for a \$300 - \$500/mo budget with initial bidding around or under \$300/month. If the \$300/month bid does not produce favorable results, a new bid can be submitted. The instructional technologist would like to create the RFP for the client as the next step in the process and schedule the first round of LMS demonstrations.

Section 5 – Development and Implementation

Development Plan

How many hours from the development team will be put in the project?
TBD

Implementation Resources

- Discussion with Harrisburg University about using Adobe Connect as a platform for webinars.
- Avalon Foster may be available to assist with marketing

Available Technology

- You Tube videos
- CG Video Camcorder

Comparative LMS

Fugu ([Gracie University](#)) was the comparable LMS selected due to its slick interface design, usability and client likability. Fugu was contacted about its services as a potential LMS. Unfortunately the business model would not fit well with the Communication Gym and the price would be too costly to make it worth it. Fugu wanted to retain its branding and receive 35 percent of all revenues. Fugu would be unable to serve blended learning management for the classroom side of the communication gym.

LMS Interface Design Considerations:

Considerations should be made to keep the interface more intuitive. Currently in the classroom, the Communication Gym curriculum takes participants through four levels of competency. As students learn the fundamentals of each level, new skills are tested.

As participants progress through the various levels and display competence, they receive insignia pins to indicate their new level. (Insignia pins are similar to that in martial arts and coded sequentially in white, yellow, blue, silver, and black.) This process allows participants to move at their own pace.

The interface design should correspond to the classroom competency levels so that participants that utilize both classroom and online learning can more easily navigate through the interface.

Uniformity:

Uniformity should be a consideration to align the new online learning with the classroom and business model.

Individual Services:

Business coaching and programs are set to 90 minute classroom workouts. Current gym membership allows you to attend up to two communication “workouts” per week. Online courses should be designed to correspond with classroom courses for uniformity.

An interface should allow users to access free and member based videos, these can be the video shorts that were already created on ‘You Tube.’ Members can access two live or recorded webinars per week. Additional courses should be extra.

Corporate Services:

Currently, each Communication Competency Module (CCM) is 8 hours of coached sessions scheduled to meet the needs of individual companies. The Communication Gym can upsell corporate packages. Companies can have their sessions recorded by webinar and presented as a live blended option accessible later as an asynchronous learning CD or hosted on the LMS for a specific time period. Sessions can be produced on or off site. Currently the optimum classroom format is four two-hour sessions spaced one or two weeks apart. Five basic CCM's are available and custom courses can be designed for an additional fee.

Limitations:

The ideal LMS will be one that the Communication Gym will be able to easily maintain without hiring a developer. Videos should be easy to upload and maintain. The LMS should have a shopping cart feature, utilize assessments and generate scores. Maintenance and bandwidth will need to be analyzed further. Plug-ins such as captivate should be compatible with the LMS. Webinars that can automatically be loaded would be a bonus. An LMS should be considered for a small business budget.