

Seymour Brooks
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Dear Seymour:

Several departments have informed Human Resources that they have been having some issues in your department regarding the training of new employees. It is company policy that employees in various departments help to interview new candidates for positions within those departments, and many employees are lacking the necessary skills to successfully conduct these interviews. In addition, various departments want to be able to train new employees in protocols.

We have discussed our options in meetings in the past few weeks, and you and I have both come to the decision that an LMS, or Learning Management System, would be best. This would enable employees to access training materials as needed, and would also allow the different departments to create new training courses for their employees, including any necessary materials.

A learning management system (LMS) would allow us to do this effectively and ensure that all employees have the necessary access to materials, without photocopying new training manuals and materials. This would also ensure that both existing employees and new employees are trained properly and efficiently.

There are many learning management systems that our company could choose. Two of the main options are either Blackboard's Web Vista, or Moodle. I have had experience with both systems, as well as others, and I suggest that if we decide to go ahead with an LMS, we go with Moodle. Both have advantages and disadvantages, but I have found Moodle easier to use as an instructor, and it has the advantage of being free. With Moodle, I have explored the ease with which instructors can use the calendar to create course or individual events / due dates, create topics on the discussion board, assign users roles, change the theme of the page, create various folders for the course and upload files into those folders for use in the course by the instructor and/or students, use the weekly outline and discussion forum to post activities or resources, search the forum, tag postings, change the layout of the course main page, and more. It is easy to use and does not take much training to learn.

Perkins and Pfaffman have studied LMSs and say that “[u]nfortunately, commercial systems are often expensive to purchase and maintain, removing them from the reach of many K-12 schools. An alternative is Moodle, a free, open-source software program that not only provides a set of features similar to those of its proprietary competitors but is often easier to use” (p 34). In the current economy, it is not only important to give our employees what they need, but also to keep costs down. Since Moodle is open source software (OSS), if we find that the standard structure is insufficient to meet our needs, one of the software engineers can change the code as needed. Perkins and Pfaffman also comment on this, “Moodle is free in the sense that people are free not only to use OSS but also to study, change and redistribute it” (p.35). In addition, there is a large Moodle tech support community should our departments or employees experience any issues.

According to Panettieri, LMS systems like Web Vista can be quite costly. “As a general rule of thumb, LMS systems can cost about \$224,000 for 10,000 students during a single year (or about \$22 per learner)” (p. 61). Moodle would help us avoid much of the cost involved with using an LMS like Web Vista.

Proposal Objective

- Set up Moodle to manage current and future training for employees of VMware.
- Install Moodle as needed and test.
- Decide if Moodle platform is acceptable or if the OSS needs revision by programmers.
- Revise Moodle if necessary
- Provide training to employees in the use of Moodle as a learning platform, as well as to department employees responsible for training in how to set up courses in Moodle.

Benefits of Moodle

- Moodle is very intuitive, and as such it is easy to learn to use, and easy to use
- Using Moodle, our company will be able to “respect diverse talents and ways of learning” (Chickering and Gamson) by allowing us to use audio as well as images, text and video to train our employees.
- Departments can receive prompt feedback on their employees’ progress in the different training courses they design
- Moodle is able to easily address some of the concerns in the SECTIONS model for learning by Bates and Poole (2003, pp. 79-80), such as:
 - E - Ease of use and reliability: how easy is it for both teachers and students to use? How reliable and well tested is the technology?
 - Moodle is very easy to use, very intuitive, and reliable
 - C - Costs: what is the cost structure of each technology? What is the unit cost per learner?
 - With other LMSs, the cost per learner, as mentioned, can be more than \$20. While we will have to provide employees with training on how to use Moodle initially, the fact that it is free will greatly reduce our costs.
 - I - Interactivity: what kind of interaction does this technology enable?
 - Moodle allows for discussions within groups, emails and more which all encourage interaction if our employees wish.
 - N - Novelty: how new is this technology?
 - Moodle is a very recent technology in terms of learning, and continues to grow and evolve as more institutions and learners take it on and improve and expand upon it.
 - S - Speed: how quickly can courses be mounted with this technology? How quickly can materials be changed?
 - Moodle is very intuitive and easy to use, making it easy to create training courses, upload manuals, and change those courses as needed.
- Moodle also allows us to easily train many employees at once, without requiring us to hold several sessions for the same training information, or requiring the employee leading

the training course to take more time than needed out of their schedule to run the course. The fewer resources required, the more efficient Moodle allows us to be.

Requirements

- We will need to train several key Human Resources employees in the use of Moodle, both as instructors as well as students. These employees would then be able to run seminars to teach others on the use of Moodle. These employees, and sessions, should run in the month or two preceding the implementation of Moodle as a training system.
- Moodle itself is free, but of course setting up Moodle initially will require training personnel, installing Moodle (or setting it up online), and potentially changing the code if needed. We may also need to purchase additional equipment for this project. I suggest a team of five personnel be dedicated to the set-up of the project, instructed in the use of Moodle, and then run training sessions for other employees.

The budget I propose for this initial set-up and purchasing would be \$350,000. The project would also require an ongoing cost for maintenance of approximately \$100,000/year.

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References:

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