



# Four Crucial Characteristics of a Compliance LMS

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with Tracie Cantu, Tom King, and Christy Tucker



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# INTRODUCTION

Companies often turn to a learning management system to handle the administration, delivery, tracking, and reporting of instructor-led classes and eLearning programs. A good LMS is particularly important for firms that are required to provide compliance training. The LMS can help the organization limit legal risks by making it easier to track and report the delivery and completion of compulsory training. The government is serious about compliance, and firms that defy or ignore mandated regulations can face steep consequences.

In addition to adhering to strict federal and state compliance regulations, many companies today also abide by in-house compliance initiatives. An LMS is also useful in these situations, as it can aid administrators in selecting and targeting specific learners or groups of learners, and can be a valuable tool for conducting employee risk assessments.

## Four crucial characteristics of a compliance LMS

When choosing an LMS that can track compliance, there are many features an organization might look for. Four characteristics are crucial. The LMS must:

- Provide an automated workflow
- Manage revisions of compliance training material
- Maintain a record of receipt of training schedules and related information on trainings
- Use a central storage location

This paper will cover these specific topics in greater detail.

## What is compliance training?

Compliance training is the process of educating employees on the laws, policies, and/or procedures deemed mandatory by regulatory agencies or the company itself. While many types of corporate-sponsored training are voluntary, compliance training is usually required. Typically, a third party such as a regulatory agency or a trade association establishes the criteria that define successful completion, such as a score, performance observation, training duration, or a combination of measures. In some cases, an internal organization may be responsible for establishing criteria, adapting criteria, or acting as a liaison to the oversight agency or association.

Compliance training is important, and there are severe consequences for noncompliance. Individuals who do not successfully complete training can be prohibited from working or face termination, while firms can be held criminally liable, face steep fines, and suffer damage to their reputation.

In order to sustain compliance, employees must regularly be retrained, which often means reviewing the same material over and over again. Compliance training may be viewed as required “check the box” training that organizations must provide to legally protect themselves. However, when it’s done well, compliance training can change attitudes and behaviors, rather than simply increasing awareness of regulations.

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## Provide an automated workflow

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A compliance LMS may feature tools to automate the workflow, including content creation, editing, revision, approval, publishing, and archiving. There are many benefits to automating the workflow. Firms can establish project timelines that enable them to maintain compliance with regulatory due dates and content requirements, and establish workflows that display revision tracking and approvals. The automation decreases potential timing errors caused by manual calculations, and allows firms to retain an archival system for audits and reviews.

Automating the workflow through an LMS is particularly important for large enterprises with a lot of employees, as well as firms that operate in highly regulated industries. A centralized tool with automated processes can significantly improve efficiency and reduce costs when regulations change frequently. Examples of this might include annual changes in tax code or environmental regulations, which in turn might require regular updates to the compliance training module.

That being said, there can be disadvantages to relying upon an LMS to handle the entire workflow. Sometimes the trade-off for using a single tool for everything means sacrificing performance of one or more features, when specialized tools might actually do a better job. To use a common example, consider the difference between a chef's knife and an all-in-one multi-tool that features a knife, screwdriver, wrench, and scissors. When camping, the multi-tool would be preferable. However, when cooking a gourmet meal, the chef's knife is a better choice. Firms must consider the trade-off in efficiency of a single tool versus using best-in-class tools for each function.

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## Manage revisions of compliance training material

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Policies and regulations that define compliance can, and do, change. For this reason, a compliance LMS should have a document revision management feature that stores copies of the revision history in an easily accessible place and permits revisions of the training content by authorized users.

While it is unusual for government regulations or company policies to undergo complete overhauls, it is common for additional requirements to be added to existing code or policy. A compliance LMS will track the changes made by authorized users to the content and allow for a clear audit trail. Such a trail will allow an organization to demonstrate that it has made a good-faith effort to maintain compliance standards.

In the event of a formal investigation, a company may be required to document exactly which employees received specific training, their performance data, and the content at the date in question. Likewise, there may be requests for a complete audit trail of changes, access controls, and other confirmations of data integrity. An agile LMS must be able to provide this.

### Revision notes and bookmarking

Adobe's LMS, Captivate Prime, boasts a unique content player that allows learners to take revision notes in real time on the player itself while consuming the content. [Click here](#) to learn more.

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Proper version control is required to assure the right content is being provided, both currently and historically. In the event of an incident or investigation, oversight agencies may request verification of the content, access, and performance information for past sessions, or versions of content on specific dates. In such cases, pointers to the current or “latest” content or scores will not suffice.

Keeping a history of document revisions is important while developing any type of training, but is especially crucial when it comes to compliance training, which is more likely to undergo scrutiny.

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## **Maintain a record of receipt of training schedules and related information on trainings**

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Organizations need to show a good-faith effort to enforce all aspects of a regulatory or company policy, training included. By having the LMS require employees to acknowledge receipt of items such as policies, schedules, test results, and other communications, firms can establish a clear paper trail showing proof that an organization has a strong communication plan and tracking system in place. It also allows for progressive discipline steps if an employee fails to complete the training despite acknowledging receipt of the training requirements.

Risk management and mitigation of liability often go hand-in-hand with compliance measures supported by training. As such, capabilities for a comprehensive, robust, and trustworthy audit trail are critical to an LMS supporting compliance. The LMS should house specific digital certificates from a trusted certificate authority, and digital certificates and signatures from users to address concerns about authentication and nonrepudiation.

Companies must demonstrate and document that they have properly delivered compliance training. There are several methods for doing this. One of the easiest is to require users to acknowledge receipt of policies, instead of creating compulsory media-rich training about the policies. In fact, if the compliance training consists primarily of a narrator reading the policy, it may be preferable to simply provide employees with a PDF copy of the policy to read themselves, and require a signature. This can save significant time and resources.

Of course, other types of training require learners to practice making decisions that abide by regulations. In such cases, more detailed compliance training is needed, and assessment may be required. That data can be recorded and tracked in the LMS.

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## Use a central storage location

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There are many reasons why the contents of a compliance LMS should reside in a central storage location. One is ease of access. An online repository with a formalized naming and filing convention allows data to be pulled quickly and reliably. This facilitates the process when an organization is preparing for a regulatory audit from a government agency. In addition, housing all course material and training data in one centralized location reinforces the perception that the company is organized and maintains high data integrity standards.

Another concern is staff turnover. It is essential that compliance documentation is not altered or lost during transitions or when particular employees leave the organization. This is less likely to be a problem when all data is safely housed in a central location.

In addition, most of today's large enterprises are global, and a growing percentage of the workforce now works remotely. Legally, all employees must be trained in a consistent manner. An LMS that stores everything in a central location can make compliance training accessible for all employees, wherever they are located.

Experts point out that while a central storage location is a sound solution for many organizations, it is unlikely that a single monolithic approach will serve the needs of every organization or set of compliance requirements. Flexibility to configure mirrored servers, load balancing, edge network CDN (content distribution networks), and encryption in-transit and at-rest are all important considerations for storage and access. In some cases, compliance training may require a secure environment without direct access to cloud-based servers.

# CONCLUSION

When it comes to compliance, firms seek solid solutions. An LMS that carefully and effectively tracks compliance will save a company time, money, and peace of mind. While there are many considerations when selecting a compliance LMS, four crucial characteristics are that the LMS must provide an automated workflow, manage revisions of compliance training material, maintain a record of receipt of training schedules and related information on trainings, and use a central storage location.

Many companies depend on Adobe's LMS solution, Captivate Prime, to support their compliance needs. [Click here](#) to learn more about Adobe Captivate Prime.

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