

The right platform enables a large K12 association to achieve its Professional Development Goals



Abstract

The Association of Supervisory and Curriculum Development (ASCD) needed assistance in selecting an appropriate professional development platform that would help the organization leverage its resources and achieve its eLearning goals. With over 100 vendors to choose from and each offering a wide diversity of features and technical requirements, the association found the task of matching its particular requirements to various commercial systems to be overwhelming. A fully managed vendor selection process by the Gilfus Education Group helped the association choose a platform that is meeting its requirements and enabling its professional development strategies, while reducing expense and risk.

The Challenge

Selecting an appropriate Learning Management System (LMS) is one of the most important and difficult decisions that K12 organizations providing education and professional development can make. For the past decade ASCD had been developing and maintaining and supporting its own learning system. With advances in today's technology ASCD realized it could make a strategic decision to obtain greater functionality and sup-



port by using a commercial vendor. However, the organization was not intimately familiar with various vendors and their capabilities.

The association, representing over 250,000 members in the K12 education industry, wanted to leverage its professional development materials and workshops by making those resources available online. The internal committee initially tasked with reviewing and selecting a new LMS quickly found vendors choices of platforms for professional development to be confusing. Vendor marketecture and team members further clouded the issues by not aligning capabilities directly to ASCD's critical needs.

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The Solution

The Gilfus Education Group began by collaborating with the association to determine how eLearning related to its overall mission. Features such as video conferencing and social media integration, for example, were identified as essential to support the association's online strategy. Based on a ranked list of features, a scoring matrix was developed to shortlist the best-possible LMS vendors from the Gilfus Education Group's research database of over 140 LMS vendor profiles.

A request for proposal (RFP) process was conducted on the association's behalf to secure the best possible vendor at the lowest possible cost. The Gilfus Education Group and ASCD evaluated proposal submissions from select LMS vendors, facilitated demonstrations to association members, and scored each platform based on user feedback. After a

final LMS vendor candidate was selected, by ASCD, pricing and contract provisions were reviewed and negotiated to ensure the association received the best possible terms.

The Results

The LMS selection process identified a vendor that not only exceeded the association's evaluation criteria but also cost 31% less than the second best option. A thorough contract review and expert analysis of technical requirements further reduced risks of "hidden" expenses, such as system integration or maintenance costs. The participation of stakeholder groups in vendor demonstrations and scoring ensured a high degree of consensus among end users on the final recommendation. Most importantly, the Gilfus Education Group's management of the RFP process, along with its ongoing research and intimate knowledge of LMS vendors, allowed the association to focus on its strategic objectives rather than become mired in a cumbersome and unproductive research project.

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