

# Decentralized Learning

What the Future  
LMS *Could* Be



The typical promised land of L&D is getting as many people as possible to engage with the LMS, where the learning portal – whatever you want to call it – serves as The Tree of Knowledge. The tree houses all the content, the resources, and the pathways for employees to find the content they want.

**It's stable, traditional, and dead. The future of learning won't be like that.**

Instead of a tree, the future of learning looks more like leaves blowing wherever the wind takes them. It's decentralized and scary, but in some ways it's already here, whether you like it or not.





## History Repeats Itself

They say those who don't study history will be doomed to repeat it. Think about it like this:

**Five hundred years ago**, where did everyone get their knowledge? The local library. Books were handwritten by an educated elite.

Then Gutenberg invented the printing press, and everything changed.

Information was decentralized from these institutions and distributed to individual homes and bookshelves.

Public libraries used to be everywhere. They were the lifeblood of learning and entertainment. Now, though, the Internet contains lifetimes of data and potential for education.

However, without content curation, it could be a lifetime of learning by guess and check.

Access to education has never been easier, but the need for wisdom in picking the lesson remains.

### **This is where the LMS comes in.**

Virtually all of human knowledge is available online, mostly for free. You don't have to visit a library or a special web portal with often limited, outdated, irrelevant content. The LMS of the future will simply package the world's information and distribute it to your personal device or medium of choice.

**Note:** What you're about to read in this e-book is a dream of what the future of learning could be, and we invite you to dream with us.



# Three trends are driving this vision of the future.

## 1 Globalization

The world is only getting smaller. Learning must be available in many languages, channels, and countries. Time, space, and languages will all dissolve into one single point.



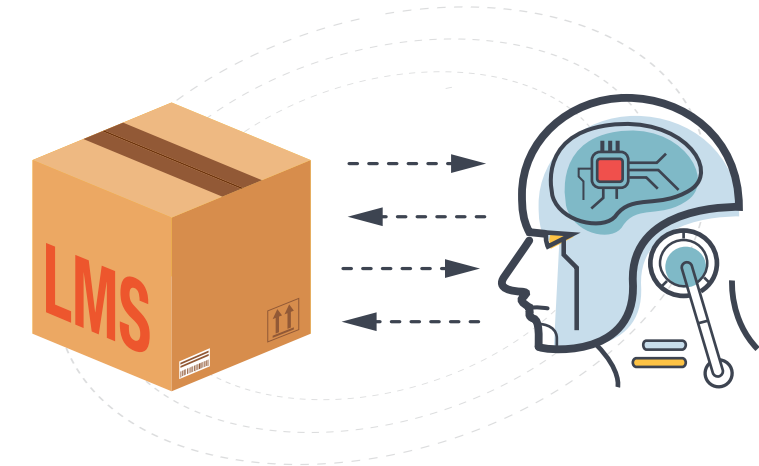
## 2 Consumption

You expect that if what you want is on the Internet, it should be available wherever you are — on a phone, a tablet, a computer, a refrigerator, VR headset, smart home hub, or shower screen and car displays (just wait). Not only that, but the content will move seamlessly between devices, picking up where you left off.



## 3 Hyperpersonalization

Every learning vendor talks about personalized, relevant content, but the way we talk about it is limited and narrow. Because specialized teams are the future of work — whether remote or in-person — learning must take place in small, fast-paced networks of individuals needing very specific information to even more specific problems. The future LMS will use AI to make these networks even more efficient.



Let's explore these trends in depth.

## GLOBALIZATION

# 1 Globalization Increases Complexity

The Internet is like a gas – it fills the volume of its container with no standard size or shape. It expands into every continent, country, and crevice regardless of restrictions or regulations. The Internet brings together worlds and people and culture instantaneously, which shatters old notions of where a business operates.



In the future, firms will no longer be “U.S.-based” or “Chinese” or any other geographic identifier. The Internet will continue to disintegrate geographic borders. Even today you can FaceTime a colleague in Europe or Asia with a few clicks.

Meetings today are simulcast in multiple languages, time zones, and geographies. So, too, will learning be, and providers must adapt. This will only accelerate and continue to complicate business for decades to come.

## Language

We envision a learning platform that automatically translates your content into multiple languages, anticipating the user’s native language from their device preferences. A Google Duplex-like AI assistant will pause, play, and answer simple questions based on the content served.

## Time

Learning will be both asynchronous and in real time, much like it is today. However, time zones will be a thing of the past, and we will have global, live-streamed classes at a standard time, ready for tens of thousands of learners all over the world. Conversations and networking events will all happen in real time in virtual reality, surrounding the content and events held on your LMS.

**To prepare for a decentralized future like this, your LMS will have to adapt to a language-less, timeless, and boundary-less space that is the Internet. Are you ready?**



## CONSUMPTION

## Consumption Preferences Are Changing

This is the understatement of the year, but the way people consume information today changes constantly. And the biggest changes of all? Devices, speed, and networks.

### Devices

A little over a decade ago, Steve Jobs introduced the iPhone, and its impact was then unknown. Today, we have little touch screens everywhere — your car, your fridge, your baby monitor. Very soon, learning will take place on each of these screens.

**Imagine this:** You wake up in the morning and hop in the shower. You have an important presentation at the end of the week, so you catch up on all the news and the latest economic developments on your shower screen while you lather up.

Then you make breakfast and find a YouTube video on your smart home hub device to further explore that topic and what it means for your business. You get into your self-driving car to finish the lesson on your car screen during your commute. Finally, you get to your desk and finalize the presentation with the knowledge you gained while you were going about your daily routine.



**Takeaway:** The LMS of the future will have to incorporate these devices and, as Deloitte calls it, this new way of learning in the flow of life.

## Speed

Most people underestimate how little time we want to spend reading and learning, and how quickly we want to digest information. In that spirit, here's just a snapshot:

**Websites:** The average user forms an opinion about your website in 0.05 seconds (and, back to the devices section, 57% of users “say they won't recommend a business with a poorly designed website on mobile”).

**Articles:** The average reader spends 15 seconds reading your article, and they usually just read the first sentence and skim the headings.

**Videos:** The average viewer spends eight seconds watching your video, and the drop-off rate becomes significant after the first two minutes.

In short, your learning content needs to be extremely quick, with more in-depth, real-time, and longer trainings worked into the learning ecosystem to support the microlearning.



## Networks



Learning of the future will take on a more bottom-up approach. More and more organizations will adopt a “culture of learning,” where quality content is shared socially within the LMS.

Like social media sites, specific subgroups will form to create a repository for best practices, like a forum for ongoing debate and ideas for betterment, just like Facebook has groups for parents, classic car enthusiasts, fantasy football, and so on.

Networks of groups will form based on location, job role, office, department, and many others. In organizations where there is an established “culture of learning,” learners tend to form groups and subgroups, like a Facebook or LinkedIn group.

These groups frequently serve to support members in the same learning programs and center around discussion of best practices. The discussion often benefits from alumni of the learning programs offering their advice to current users.

The LMS of the future will bring those groups and the discussion increasingly under the umbrella of the LMS.

And unfortunately, much like Facebook, the correctness of the advice and information won't be the primary concern.

**The focus will be on engagement and interaction, and learning platforms will have to accompany these networks to stay ahead.**

## HYPERPERSONALIZATION

# 3 Hyperpersonalization Forces Agility

As mentioned earlier, the LMS of the future will anticipate users' needs. It's already happening with YouTube — the platform's algorithms "drive 70% of what we watch." LMS technology will soon catch up, and through fancy AI technology, learning platforms will recommend content based on "known social media preferences: likes, comments, and other shared profile metrics.

Similarly, the marketplace of ideas will influence learning even more. Content that is highly rated, viewed, or both will maintain that inertia and help AI to suggest it to peers.

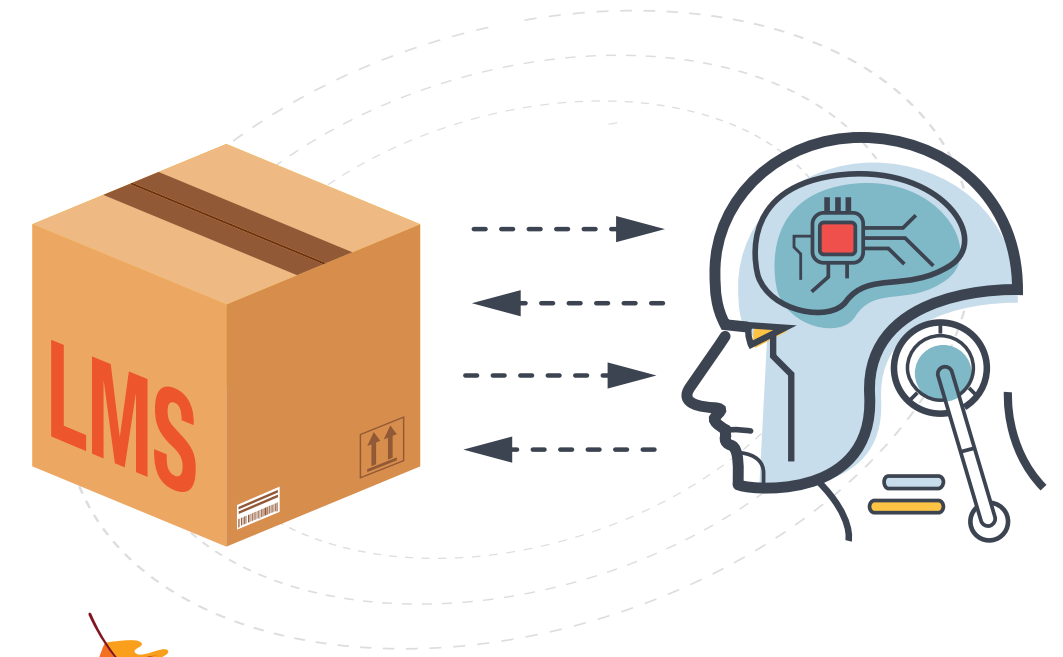
**Obvious disclaimer:** Privacy will become increasingly important.

We also see that xAPI integrations will find some footing. People will increasingly "discover" their own learning content and choose to share it through a social channel in the repository of learning (LMS), or it will be captured and logged in the LMS as learning content they viewed.

The content landscape will widen to include nontraditional sources like Netflix specials, TED Talks, Twitter threads, Twitch streams, YouTube channels, and sources that are yet to be developed.

Learning providers will be forced to adapt to the ever-changing organism of the Internet — its darkest corners and its brightest lights.

**Agility will be king.**







**Think about this:** Do you have a content producer on your staff who can create interesting, engaging, and relevant content at a moment's notice? As data scientists are the most in-demand jobs nowadays, content producer will be the most in-demand job of the future, and L&D will take preeminence in the organizational hierarchy.

We're already seeing businesses struggle with this. *The Wall Street Journal* reported that companies are failing at reskilling, but that skill is more crucial than it's ever been.

So, imagine the next learning leader has the skills of a podcaster like Laurie Ruettimann or a "journalist-engineer" like those at Polygraph who create content, shoot videos, design the packaging, code it onto your LMS or CMS, and then promote it on the web through your digital channels.

You might laugh now, but you'll soon need to spin up content in a matter of days, not months. And someone with this skill set might be your best asset. In the future of learning, hyperpersonalization and agility will win the day.

## CONCLUSION

# What's Your Future?

You spent a few minutes dreaming about the future with us, but what does the future of learning look like for you? Do you have visions like these? Are you already preparing for a decentralized future like the one we've imagined?

**Let us know.**







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