



**2026**

# LMS Buyer Office Hours

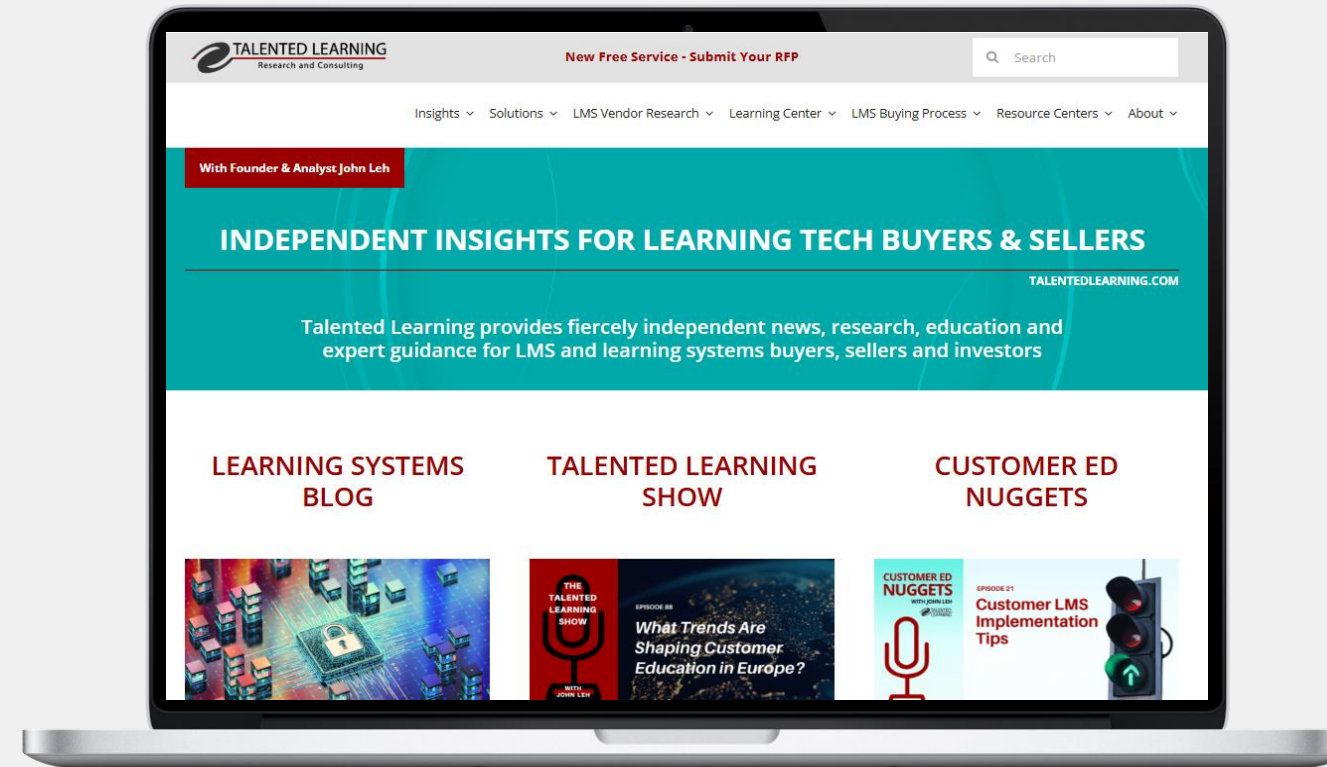
# About Talented Learning

Fiercely independent research and consulting firm dedicated to the business of learning technology

Helping buyers buy their best LMS since 2014

Founded by John Leh

- [Learning Systems Blog](#)
- [The Talented Learning Show Podcast](#)
- [Customer Ed Nuggets Podcast](#)



# About John Leh



- Founder, CEO and lead analyst of Talented Learning
- 25 years LMS buying and selling LMS experience
- Trusted advisor, blogger, podcaster and educator
- Helped hundreds of organizations select their best LMS
- You can connect with John on [LinkedIn](#).

# Today's Agenda

- How to understand the 2026 learning system market
- The opportunity of contract renewal
- Creating the business case
  
- LMS Decision Scorecard
- LMS Replacement Business Case Template
- 2026 RightFit Grid



# Why Do LMS Selections Fail?

- Start too late
- Don't follow a defined process
- Too many vendors
- Lack of defined requirements
- Unaware of existing resources
- Subjective, rapid decision-making



eurekaos

Sana™

CYPHER Learning™



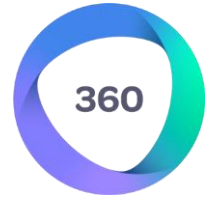
litmos

LearningCart

sumtotal.

Thought INDUSTRIES

D2L DESIRE2LEARN



SmarterU TRAIN · LEARN · RETAIN

totaralearn



learningpool



OPENedX

schoox

GROWTH INEERING

canvas BY INSTRUCTURE

LearnDash

lemonadeLXP

thinkingcap

UPSIDE LMS

skyprep



docebo

Administrate

skilljar by Gainsight



digitalCHALK

Propelr



moodle bongo

schoolology

northpass

skilljar

VALAMIS

iSpring Learn

degreed.

brainier educate. engage. empower.

Learn Dash

eloomi



MATRIX

CROSSKNOWLEDGE Learning Suite LS



cornerstone eThink

Learnie Community Microlearning

ProProfs Training Maker

incentli

edcast ClearCo.

talentlms

LifterLMS

moodle Partner

totara PLATINUM PARTNER

COURSE CONTAINER

digitalCHALK

# LMS Vendor Differentiation

1. Business goals
2. Use case specialization
3. Functional capabilities
4. Technical capabilities
5. Services and support
6. License and cost
7. Vendor experience



# Talented Learning's Independent Research

[Learning System Directory](#)

[Case Study Directory](#)

[Annual Awards](#)

[In-Depth Demonstrations](#)

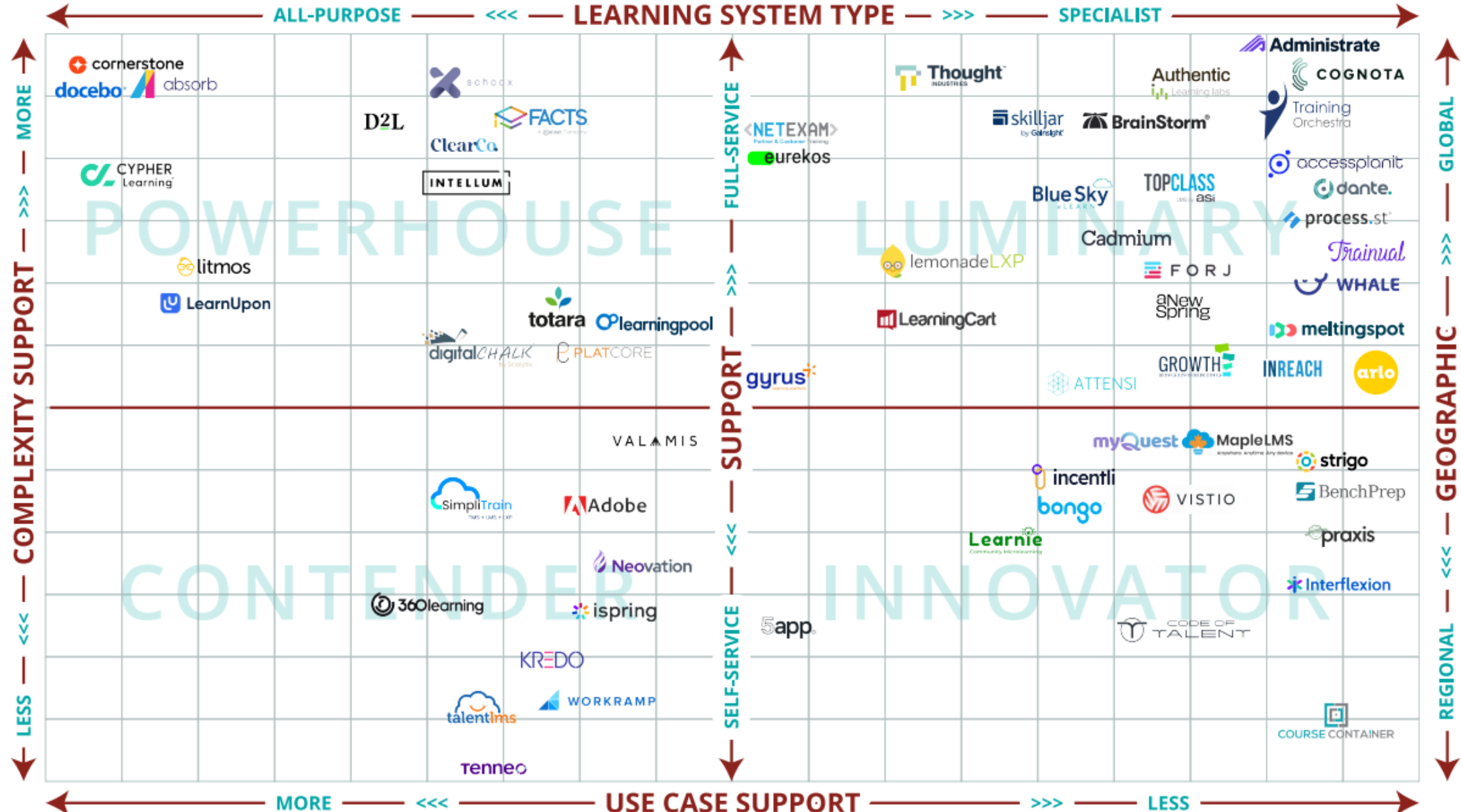
[Reviews by John Leh](#)

**TALENTED LEARNING 2025 WINNERS LEARNING SYSTEMS AWARDS**

[CHECK OUT OUR AWARDS POST FOR MORE DETAILS!](#)

## Best of the Best

TOP 10 ENTERPRISE LMS	TOP 10 EMPLOYEE LMS	TOP 10 CUSTOMER/PARTNER LMS
absorb, cornerstone, CYPHER Learning, D2L, docebo, LearnUpon, litmos, Propelr, schoox, totara	360learning, ClearCo, continu, digitalWALK, V Scheer IMC, KREDO Learning Problem, lemonadeLXP, Neovation, PLATCORE, Sana, tenneo, VALAMIS	Adobe, BrainStorm, eurekaos, INTELLUM, meltingspot, NETEXAM, pendo, skilljar, Thought, Trainn.
TOP 10 PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION LMS	TOP 10 LEARNING OPS SYSTEMS	TOP 10 LEARNING TECH INNOVATIONS
Authentic Learning Labs, BeachPrep, BrainCert, Cadmium, FORJ, kajabi, LearningCafe, LearnWorlds, MapleLMS, OasisLMS, Path LMS, TOPCLASS	accesspoint, Administrate, arto, axcelerate, cloud assess, COGNOTA, connecteam, SimpliTrain, Training Orchestra, Trainual	bongo, Clueso, COURSE CONTAINER, evolve, hubLMS, Interflexion, incentli, instruct, Learnie, LearnExperts



# 6-Step LMS Buying Process

*Proven process to overcome challenges and confidently find your best learning system*



# Business Case

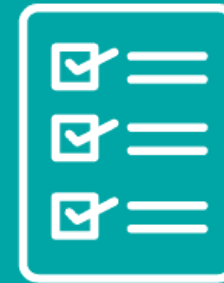
- Stay or go?
- Cost / usage patterns
- Cost of manual workarounds
- Opportunity costs
- Measurable success criteria



**BUSINESS  
CASE**

# Define Requirements

- Business goals
- Use case specialization
- Functional capabilities
- Technical capabilities
- Services and support
- License and cost
- Vendor experience



**DEFINE  
REQUIREMENTS**

# Vendor Shortlisting

- Most overlooked step
- Better to highly evaluate fewer qualified vendors vs. trying to qualify many vendors
- Deeper level of evaluation
- Most productive use of limited time



# RFPs and Proposals

- Most hated step (not for me)
- Mandatory
- Define the scope and parameters
- Independent templates and help
- Complimentary review



**RFP &  
PROPOSALS**

# Use Case Demos

- Tied directly to your use case – not vendor’s feature demo
- How features and functions work together
- Shows clicks, not what the vendor wants to show
- Basis for sandbox/POC evaluation



**USE CASE  
DEMOS**

# Verify and Negotiate

- Sandbox and use case testing
- Client references
- Network references
- Negotiation strategy
- What's negotiable?



**VERIFY &  
NEGOTIATE**

# Question / Answer / Discussion

## This portion will not be published

- Questions on today?
- Your use case? Audiences?
- 1st solution / replacing?
- Biggest challenge you are facing?
- Vendor questions?



# Find Your Best Learning System



- Don't reinvent the wheel – follow a proven process
- Leverage our free research and tools
- Get started yesterday
- Book a complimentary consult with me

# Upcoming Office Hour Sessions

2<sup>nd</sup> Wed Every Month @ 11am ET

**Feb 11** – How to Build a Strong Business Case for LMS  
Replacement: Stay or Go

**March 11** – How to Define Requirements:

**April 8** – How to Build a Qualified Shortlist

**May 13** – How to Write a Valuable RFP

**June 10<sup>th</sup>** - How to Manage Vendors

**Send email with follow-up and links to resources**



# OFFICE HOURS FOR LMS BUYERS

with John Leh

February 11, 2026

How to Build an LMS  
Replacement Business Case



# Agenda – How to Build Replace Business Case

- Jan recap
- Contract life cycle
- Why/why not renew?
- 4 Decision gates to renewal
- Resources and tools
- Q&A



# Jan Office Hour Session - 6-Step LMS Buying Process



- [Learning System Buying Process 2026](#)
- Don't reinvent the wheel – follow a proven process
- Leverage research and tools for each step

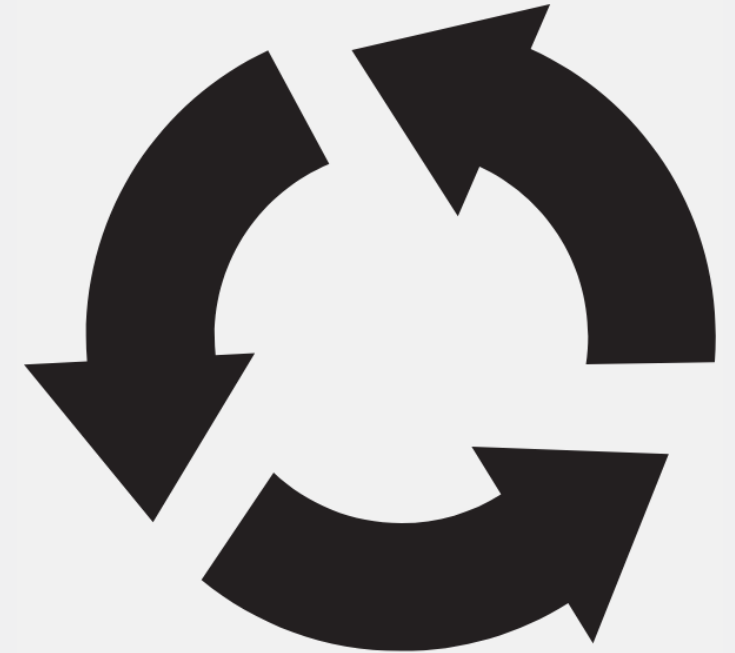
# 2026 State of the Learning System Market

- Over 1000 vendors
- Specialist for everything
- AI has changed everything
- Simplification of license models
- Downward price pressure



# The LMS Contract Life Cycle

- Inexpensive entry LMSs seldom have contract terms
  - Month to month renewal – leave at anytime
  - Pay the vendor's current rate
  - Decision to select another LMS driven by hitting the functional wall
- Enterprise Grade LMSs have a license agreement
  - Initial contract of 3 years contract is typical
  - Locks in terms, costs, annual increases for the contract term
- Contract Renewal
  - Renewal time often includes cost increases
  - Renewal commitments can be 1-3 years
  - Sometime forced migration to another platform due to M&A
  - Vendors begin sweet talking 1 year in advance



# Why Renew Automatically?

- Easy!
- Previous LMS selection assumptions have not changed
- Functionality and capabilities are sufficient
- Customer support is satisfactory
- Costs are reasonable, predictable
- License model is aligned with usage patterns
- Vendor innovation remains strong
- Vendor is a partner



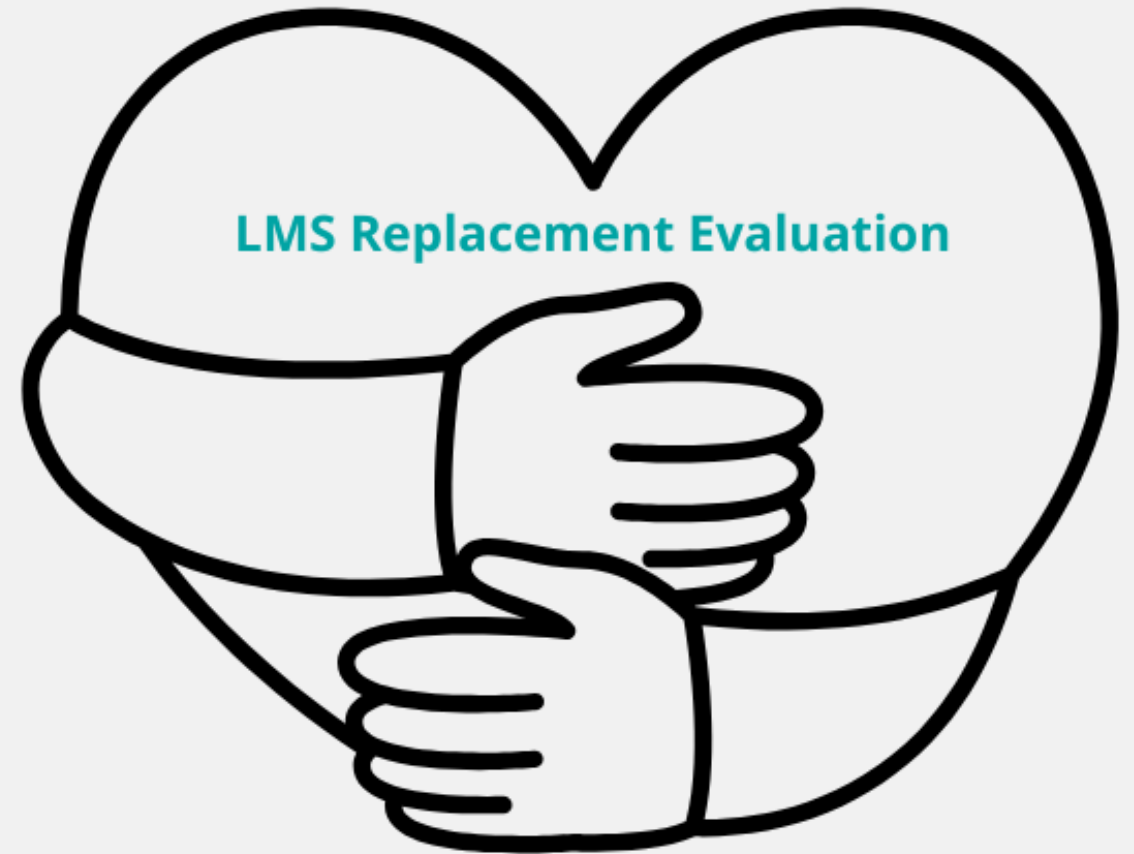
# Why Not Renew Automatically?

- Your LMS vendor was acquired
  - Price increase or worse - a forced platform migration
  - Stalled roadmap, brain drain of experts
  - Saba, Momentive, Coursewebs, EthosCE, Skilljar, Northpass, Workramp, Sana
- Your organization has acquired other businesses with LMSs
  - Integration into mother ship LMS
  - Consolidation of all LMSs into a new enterprise LMS
- Functional, technical, support challenges
- Manual workarounds, more admin staff
- Lack of innovation
- Not maximizing learning as competitive advantage
- Learner complaints, support interactions
- **Time, effort and political capital**



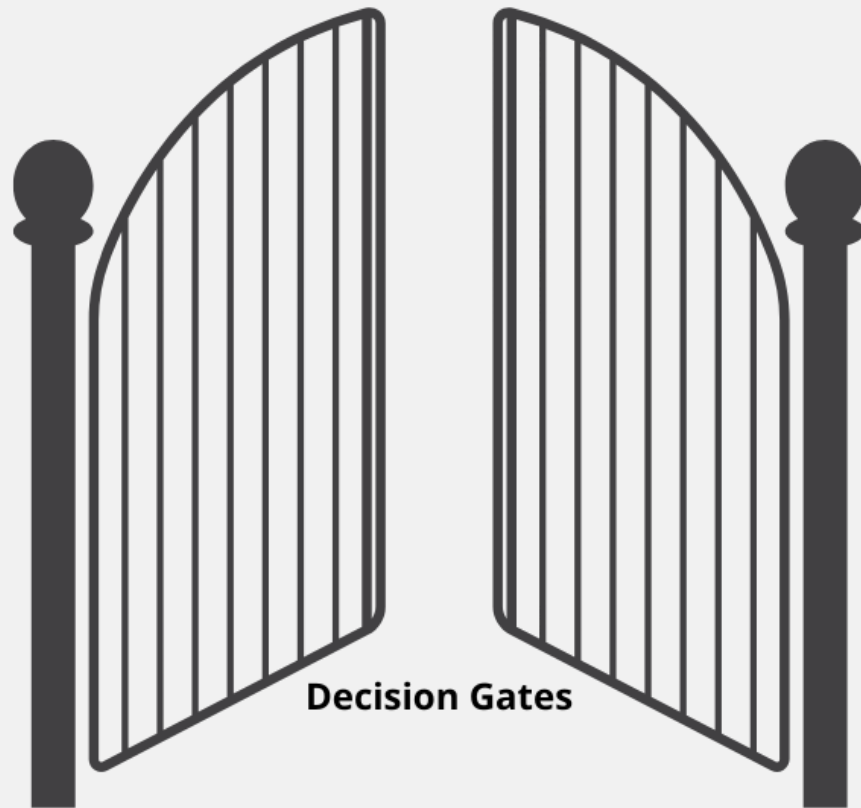
# Embrace the Opportunity!

- Won't get another chance for years
- Innovation is so fast, you'll be surprised
- Specialist LMS providers move faster
- Platform costs are a waste
- Content and experience rule



Both

# 4 Distinct “Decision Gates” to Renewal Decision

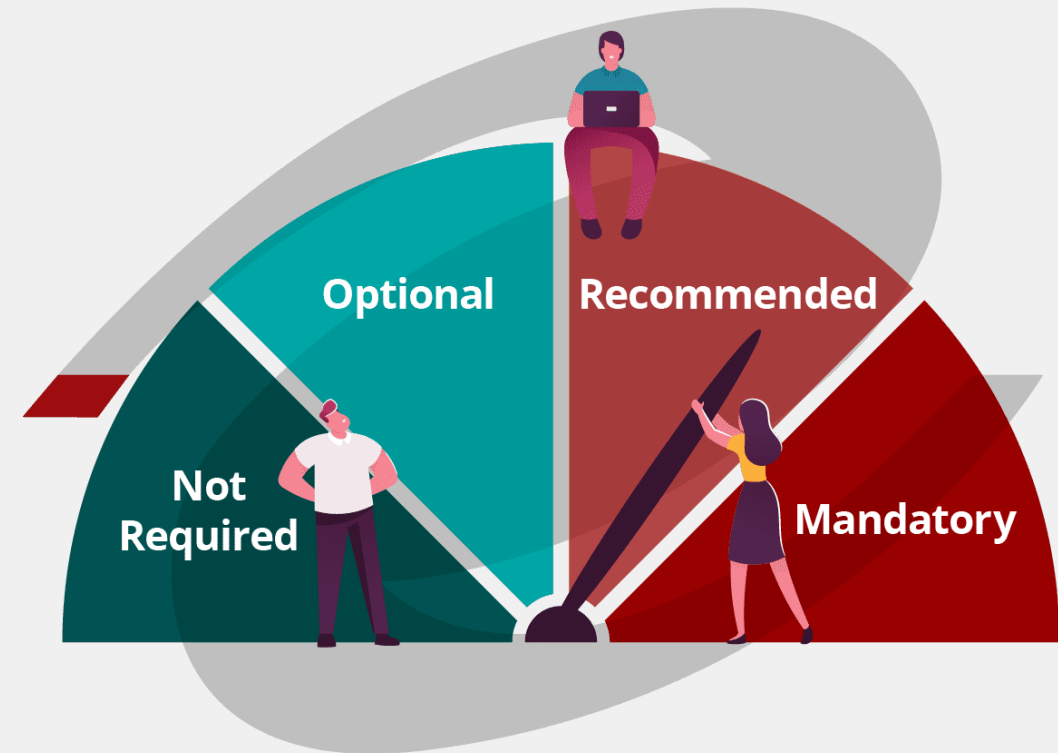


- LMS replacement is not one decision
- Doesn't start with a RFP
- Sequence of 4 decision gates
  1. Validation obligation
  2. Economic viability
  3. Executive approval
  4. Formal selection
- **At each gate, renewing is a valid and successful outcome.**

# Decision Gate 1 – Validation Obligation

*Are we obligated to validate the renewal decision?*

- Contract renewal with a meaningful price increase
- Vendor acquisition, product sunset, or roadmap shift
- Forced migration to another platform
- Persistent workarounds or operational friction
- Growth in audiences or use cases stretching the platform
- [Talented Learning's LMS Renewal Decision Scorecard](#)
- If obligation is low or optional, renew with confidence



# Decision Gate 2 – Economic Viability

*Does replacement or consolidation offer meaningful upside compared to renewing?*

- Create the business case for a formal LMS evaluation
  1. Document current costs, renewal costs
  2. Document current soft costs of missed opportunities, manual workarounds, additional headcount
  3. Identify and summarize critical requirements and usage patterns
  4. Identify potential replacement solutions
  5. Solicit **non-binding price ranges** based on your requirements
  6. Determine the potential range of measurable benefit to replace current solution
- If upside is marginal, renew with confidence
- [Learning System Buying Process: Business Case - Talented Learning](#)
- [LMS Replacement Readiness Review](#)



# Decision Gate 3 - Executive Approval

*Is leadership willing to sponsor the time, disruption, and resources required to proceed?*

- The expected upside is meaningful enough to justify the effort and disruption
- The timeline and level of organizational change are realistic

Who must be aligned?

- Executive sponsor accountable for the outcome
- IT leadership responsible for integrations, security, and data
- Business leaders from functions impacted, such as customer support, sales, channel, or operations
- Learning leadership responsible for delivery and adoption
- If aligned, proceed to formal LMS selection or renew with confidence



# Decision Gate 4 - Formal LMS Selection

*Is leadership willing to sponsor the time, disruption, and resources required to proceed?*

- Conduct a formal LMS selection process
- If upside is marginal, renew with confidence



# Timing Considerations

**Begin the decision gate process 12-18 months before content renewal**

1-3 Months – Business case

1-3 Months – Executive approval

2-3 Months – LMS Selection

2-3 Months – LMS Deployment

6 -12 months for all

**Time Is your Enemy!**



# Wrap Up

- Get started a year or more in advance
- In most cases, validation of renewal decision is prudent
- Decision gates makes it easy:
  - Obligation
  - Business Case
  - Executive Approval
  - Formal Buying Process
- Embrace the opportunity



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[Office Hours Resources for LMS Buyers: 2026 Webinar Series](#)



# 6-Step LMS Buying Process

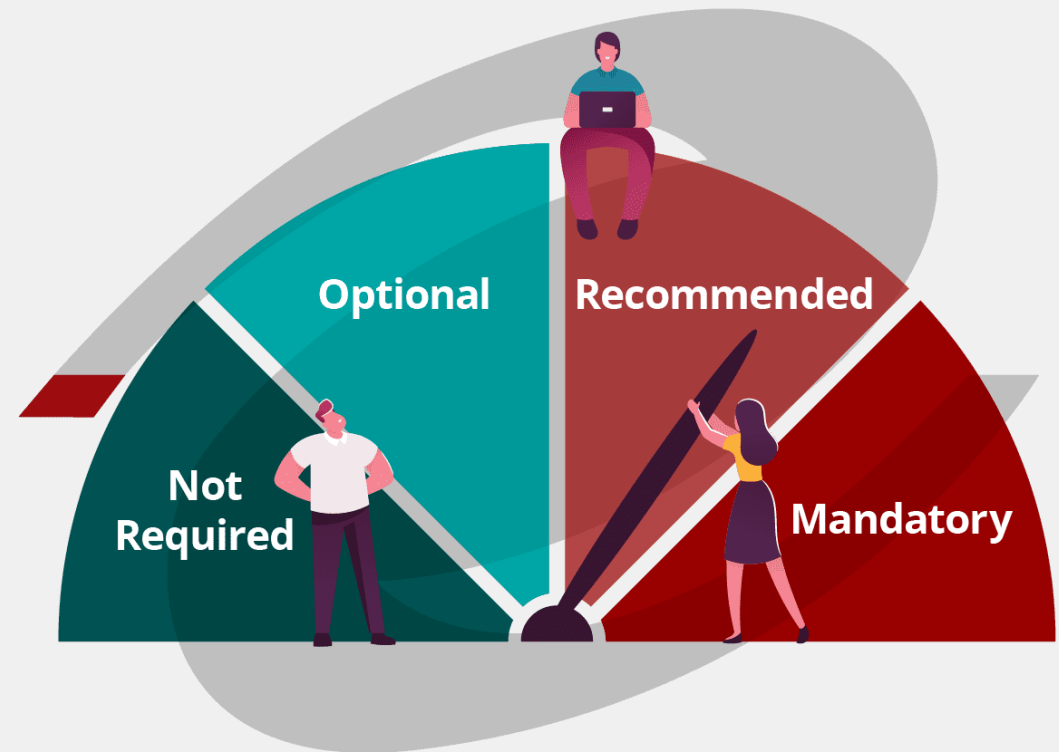


- [Learning System Buying Process 2026](#)
- Don't reinvent the wheel – follow a proven process
- Leverage research and tools for each step

# LMS Renewal Decision Scorecard

## Is Validation of your Upcoming LMS Renewal Required?

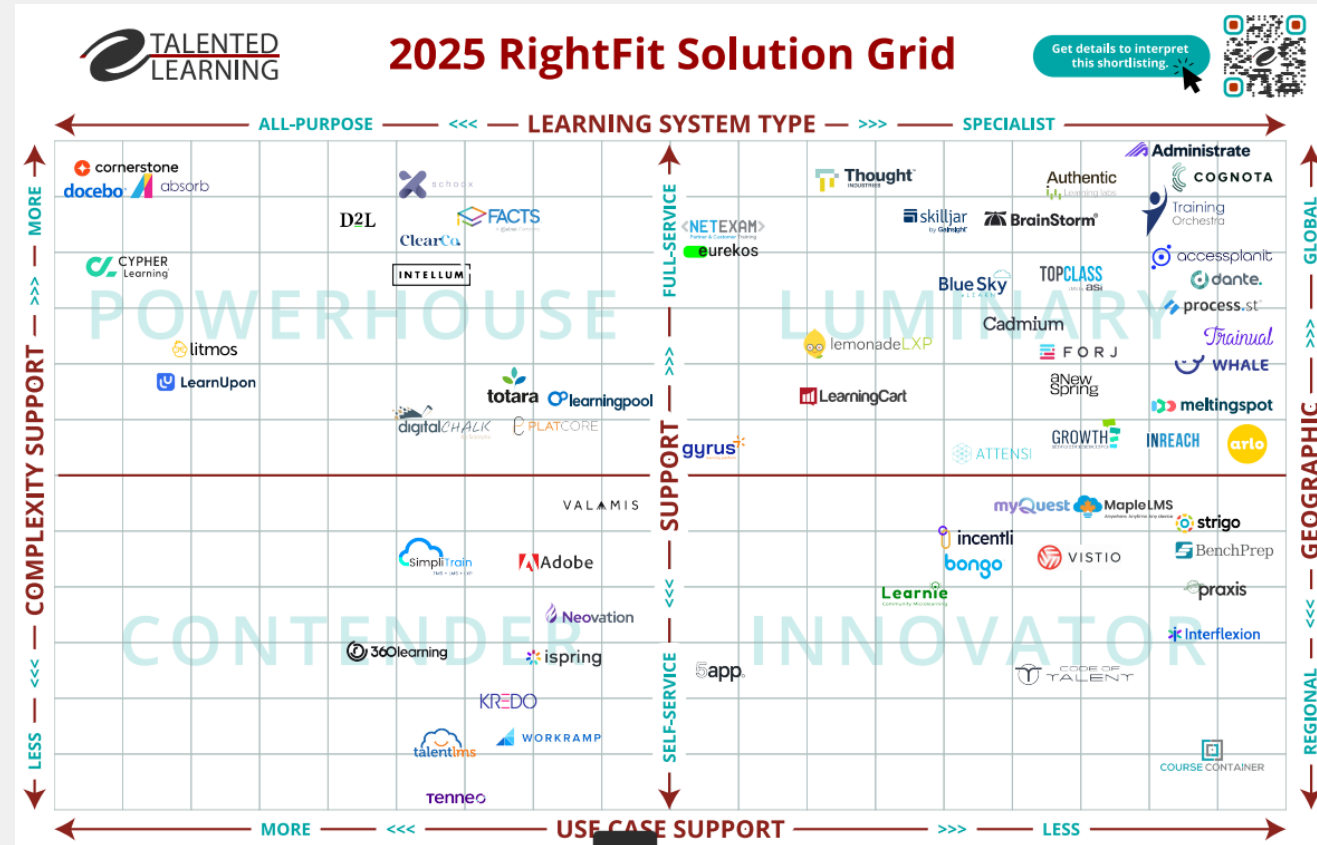
- 10-Question Quiz
- Immediate feedback and guidance
- [LMS Renewal Decision Scorecard](#)



# 2025 Talented Learning RightFit Grid

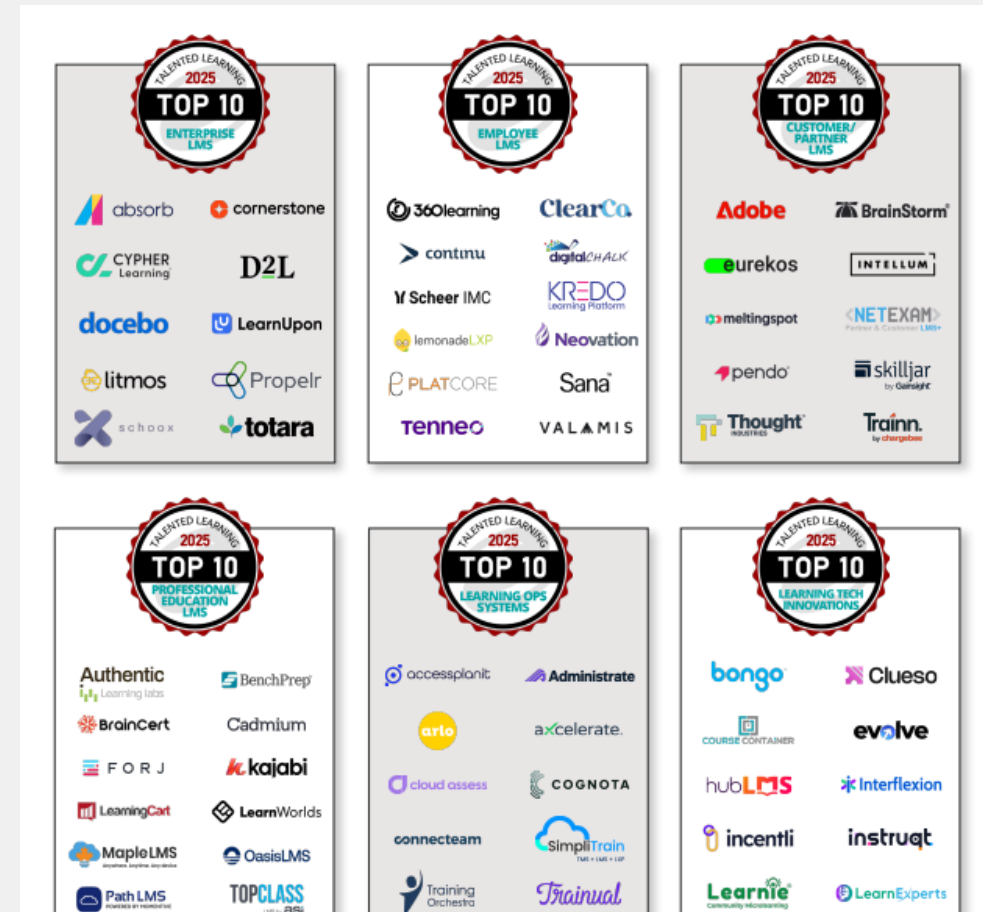
## Identify potential replacements for your current solution

- Award-winning vendors
- Vendors grouped by common characteristics of clients
- No wrong or best quadrant
- [2025 RightFit Solution Grid: Best LMS Shortlisting Tool - Talented Learning](#)



# Annual Talented Learning Award Winners

- Awards by Use Case
  - Extended enterprise
  - Customer/Partner
  - Employee
  - Professional Education
  - Learning Operations
  - New Innovators
- Surveys and demos with me
- LMS selection experience



# Questions, Discussion?