Unleash the Value in Your Learning Technology

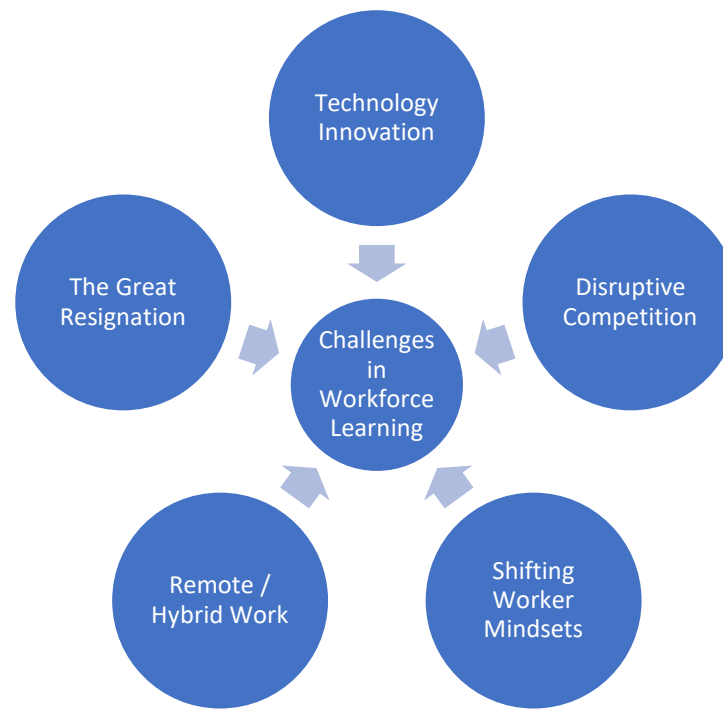## How Application Management Services Can Increase The Value Your Learning Platforms Deliver

Introduction: Five Challenges in Workforce Learning

Rapid technological advances, workforce dynamics, and skill gaps confront nearly every organization. Learning and development teams and all of HR find themselves helping their organizations manage rapid change. while dealing with the same pressures in their teams.

L&D organizations have a role in countering each of the challenges. As worker mobility increases, learning has become a primary retention tool. Technology advances require a nearly constant renewal of onboarding and training, and learning teams have a central role in creating an agile, responsive workforce.

In this white paper, we've identified five major trends and how they can affect your learning operations. Then, we'll show you how

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                    Technology
                    Innovation
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                        v
The Great                           Disruptive
Resignation  -->  Challenges  <--  Competition
                      in
                  Workforce
                   Learning
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Remote /                            Shifting
Hybrid Work                         Worker
                                    Mindsets
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application management services (AMS) can help you smooth the road ahead.

Technology Innovation

The rising speed of technological progress has almost become a cliché.

New technologies took years to roll out, but we now measure the time in months or weeks. Technology is firmly embedded in our lives in ways we don't see or even think about. For example, today's automobile has over 3,000 processors delivering monitoring, convenience, and safety systems.

More remarkable is the rising speed of technological adoption.[i] Most of the workforce are digital natives, and septuagenarians still working have been immersed in technology since the dawn of the internet.

Still, in the past two years, new technologies outpaced the available skills to manage them. One nearly universal example is the ability to use new tech to manage disrupted supply chains.[ii]

A related challenge is a need for manufacturers to transition from product producers to service providers. Today's auto companies don't build cars—they assemble them from outsourced parts and create a revenue through sales and service.

The Learning Management System (LMS) became the technology of choice for enterprise learning, but the past few years have brought us the Learning Experience Platform (LXP) and a robust market of online learning providers. We have hundreds of learning delivery platforms competing for a slice of the learning tech market.

Now, we have learning tools embedded in our work applications and the new Workforce Experience Layer.[iii]

With technological advances, such as adaptive learning, augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR), L&D teams are challenged to take advantage of them.

For example, virtual reality training driven by artificial intelligence can speed up learning but demand more advanced skills to manage them. The technologies solve one gap and create another.[iv]

Disruptive Competition

When your company counters a competitive threat, what was hot two weeks ago may not be relevant today. You may need to delay that project you looked forward to while you gear up for new programs. How quickly you can adapt may determine the long-term success of your business.

The pandemic showed us how to manage workplace disruption,[v] and the same principles of reassessing, closing gaps, and re-adapting apply to competitive disruption.

- **Adapt:** embrace new methods of delivering and measuring learning.

- **Reassess:** Audit skills and evolving business needs.

- **Close Gaps:** respond quickly to close gaps.

That flexibility requires the ability to scale your efforts quickly, which may create the need for more flexible staffing.

Stay on top of contingent worker sources to give you that flexibility. You will enhance flexibility when you have a relationship with a service provider's technology and content expert portfolio.

Adapting to Disrupting Competition

Reassess	Close Gaps	Re-adapt
•Audit skills and evolving business needs	•Respond quickly to close gaps.	•Adapt to new methods of deliving and measuring learning
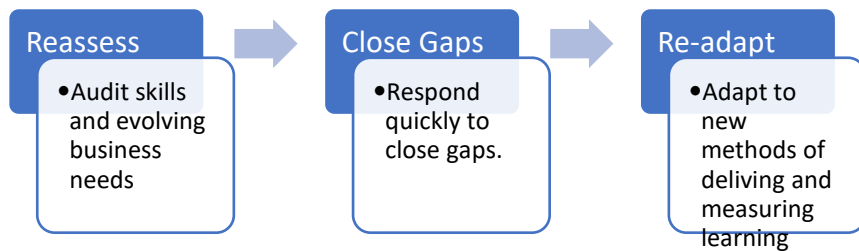
Shifting Worker Mindsets

Demographic and social changes have shifted the way people view work and life. We now have five generations in the workforce, but the working-age population is still shrinking in developed countries—even though people are retiring later.

There's a focus on equality of pay and treatment and how organizations help individuals improve their lives.

Workers now expect their employers to address social problems, manage the impact of technology on work-life, and act fairly and equitably.[vi]

Shifting to a human-focused learning environment may drive a fresh look at soft skills development and your analytical capabilities to stay in tune with your people.

Remote / Hybrid Work

The COVID pandemic changed the way we work overnight. Offices emptied, and millions became remote workers for the first time.

It wasn't long before workers began to prefer their new arrangements. Now, employees are balking when employers want their people to return to the office.

According to a 2021 McKinsey report, 52% want more flexible working arrangements, and at least 25% will resign if forced to return to the office.[vii]

People need more than connective technology to create effective teams and new skills to manage distance relationships.

The Great Resignation

Since early 2021, millions of US workers have quit their jobs. The forced isolation of the pandemic has made them grieve over lost connections and missed family and social events. They want employers more focused on the human side of work than a transactional relationship.[viii]

Others, especially the highly skilled, are taking their careers into their own hands and becoming independent contractors and freelancers.

In the US, 36% of the workforce is freelancing, with 53% of those providing skilled services in IT, marketing, business consulting, and other professional work.[ix] They often work through contracting companies.

Expectations are that the contingent workers' percentage will grow to 24 percent in 2022 and 29 percent by 2030. The US Government Accountability Office expects it to be 50 percent by 2050.[x]

Challenges in Managing Learning Applications

The growing complexity of learning technology tools has created a need for specialized skills to maintain and update learning software to adapt to changing business needs.

The need to manage your technology is a never-ending commitment that can't wait on a backlogged list of process improvements. The result is that many L&D teams, mired in day-to-day operations, can't find the time to optimize or innovate.

How often do you review and optimize your learning platforms?

On every new software release?

Once a year?

Every few years?

Never?

The difference between surviving and thriving is the time and freedom to optimize and innovate.

Is your team proactive?

How an AMS Can Make Administration More Efficient

Over the past two decades, learning technology has become much more complex. We have seen common challenges in managing learning administration, particularly companies requiring compliance tracking and reporting.

Staffing

The right skill set can be scarce. Salaries for Senior LMS Managers in the US range from $72,000 to $108,000, with a median of $90,000.[xi] For non-manager administrators, the rage is $49,176 to $63,250, with a median of $55,596.[xii]   A LinkedIn search showed 43,051 LMS admin jobs.[xiii]

An AMS can be much more economical when sharing costs across many businesses using the same technology. You may realize substantial cost reductions in addition to stability.

Training

Vendors usually require rigorous initial training to become certified administrators, and most learning platforms update two or three times per year. Each update may require new training.

If you have a large admin team fully staffed, you might be fine, but can your people keep up with training on new technology?

An AMS will have certified staff who recertify according to your vendor's requirements.

Resource Skill Gaps

Most companies don't have advanced technical skills for a new integration, an upgrade, or specialized learning environments. Their IT teams are already pushed to the limit, so they are at the mercy of the freelance or consulting market.

An AMS partner will have connections with skilled, certified technical workers, so you need not worry about finding the talent to help you.

Support

One of the most troubling challenges is when a business doesn't have the resources to respond quickly to support requests. Disgruntled users can have an enormous impact on your productivity and employee retention.

When you engage with an AMS, you will have a negotiated service level agreement (SLA) to set a strict standard for support responses.

Other Duties

If your administrator has other duties assigned that take priority over learning services, you increase the risk of disengagement, not only with your learners but also with administrators.

Engaging with an AMS is like having a ready administrator in your pocket.

Temporary Staffing Gaps

With a large admin team, fully staffed, you might be fine, but if your admin team is stretched to its limit, what will happen when someone needs family leave or suddenly exits the organization? What if you have a backup who hasn't kept up with training?

An AMS will anticipate heavy workloads and staff their teams accordingly.

Understanding New Features

Keeping up with updates and technology improvements will enable you to capitalize on new developments as they happen. Too often, organizations will decide they don't have the time to explore those improvements, so they put them off until later—but "later" usually means never.

Your AMS provider will explore those opportunities with you and help you prepare to take advantage of them. As a part of your service, your AMS can prepare for updates, test them, show you how to leverage new features, and help you get trained on extracting value from them.
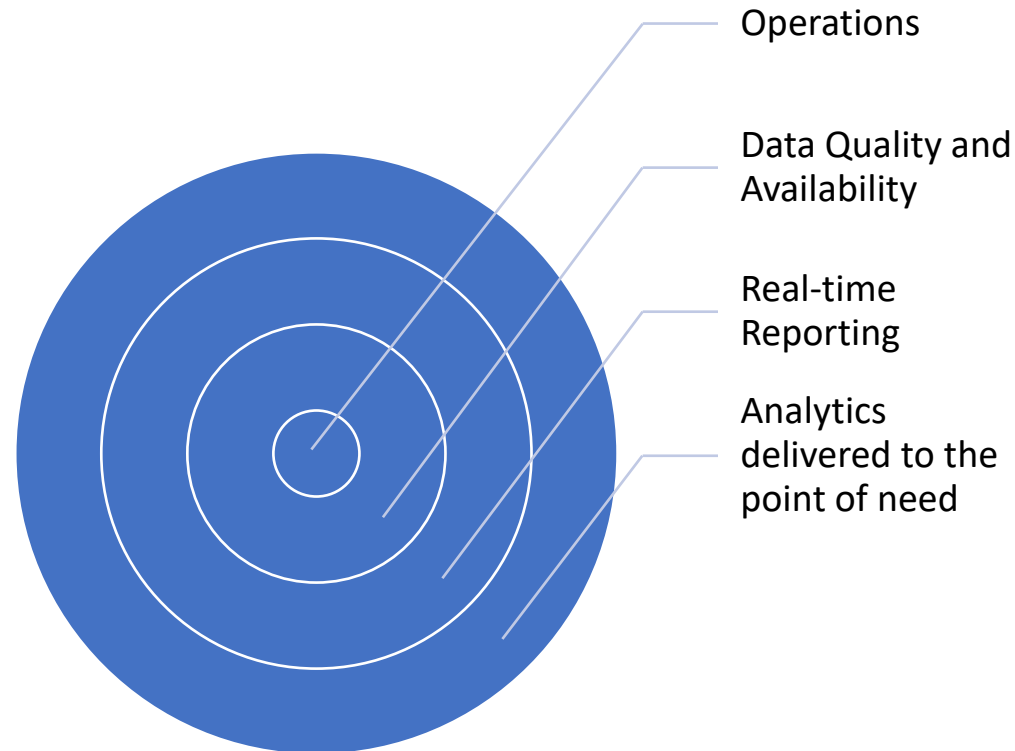
How an AMS Can Help You Drive Value From Your Learning Platforms

We've shown you how application management services can relieve you of your administrative burdens and give you efficiency, stability, and predictability.

But there's much more to today's learning AMS provider than keeping things running smoothly. In recent years, the services have expanded into an active role in optimizing your operations.

With insights into your processes, your AMS provider can take you beyond the baseline to higher returns on your learning investment.

Operations

Data Quality and Availability

Real-time Reporting

Analytics delivered to the point of need

Integrations

If your applications aren't working together, they aren't delivering the value they could, and your people are bogged down in work that integrated data systems can do for them.

Those resource-intensive tasks include:

- looking for information to do their work,

- typing data that already exists in another system or application,

- correcting missing or erroneous data,

- dealing with complaints about bad data,

- cobbling data together to produce reports, or

- scrambling to get ready for audits.

With insights into your workflow and processes, your AMS provider is uniquely positioned to help you connect your applications.

A good partner can show you how to map a unique, single source of truth for every data set, which makes it easier for you to stop data errors at the source.

That support will enable you to create and control the free flow of information where it's needed.

If you are still using manual uploads for user data, your partner will integrate your sources of learner data and status changes so you can keep your learning aligned to the right organizations, jobs, and people.

Your AMS partner will also integrate new learning resources into your infrastructure.

Your AMS support team is keen on optimizing your data flow because it will simplify their work and make it easier for them to improve your processes.

Reporting

Once you have data fit for use, your AMS partner can assist you to create a reporting taxonomy that standardizes and streamlines your reporting library.

You always know what data you have and where to get it.

They can also help you with data governance to control user access and secure sensitive information.

The next step you will want to take is to leverage your support team's resources to optimize your learning and people analytics.

The result will be:

- the right data,

- in the right place,

- at the right time.

Analytics

Measurement and analytics in learning have always been a focus of attention, but it has become a critical function in the past few years.

- L&D leaders need to justify learning expenses by measuring their impact on the business.

- The L&D team analyzes how their efforts are working.

- Adaptive learning requires analysis of learning behaviors to adapt learning paths to individual needs.

Outsourcing analytics can give you access to data scientists and other critical skills on an as-needed basis.

You can hire consultants to do the work, but do you want to manage those relationships when your provider can do it for you?

A managed services team can:

- connect you with experts to help you embed analytics in your learning delivery,

- monitor and manage your reports and reporting tools, and

- minimize your cost, ensuring you pay only for the services you need.
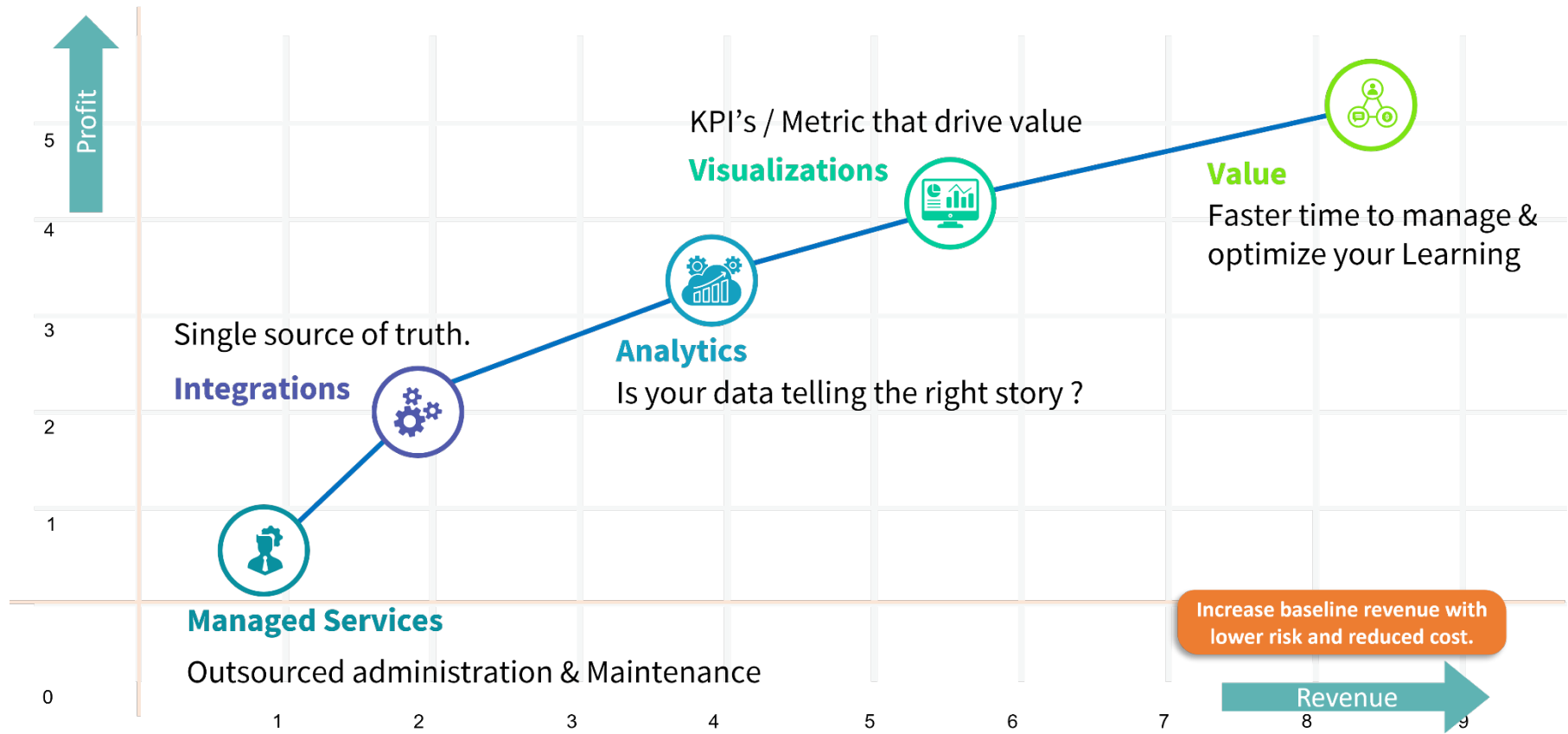
Dashboard with KPI and trend chart

Delivering Value

Pressures to help grow the business and show the value of learning has driven L&D teams to expand their reliance on outsourcing.

But there's much more to today's AMS provider than keeping things running smoothly. In recent years, the services expanded into an active role in optimizing your operations. With insights into your processes, your provider can:

- make timely recommendations for efficiencies in your workflows

- optimize your integrations and data streams.

- help you deliver on-time data and analytics to the people who need it.

- advise you on how to keep your information both available and secure.

- increase the value of learning in your organization, and

- enable your people to deliver more value to your company, communities, and each other.

Pixentia Continuous Optimization Roadmap

Profit

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Managed Services

Outsourced administration & Maintenance

Integrations

Single source of truth.

Analytics

Is your data telling the right story ?

KPI's / Metric that drive value

Visualizations

Value

Faster time to manage & optimize your Learning

Increase baseline revenue with lower risk and reduced cost.

Revenue

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

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