

# Engagement & Employability Driving Next Gen Platforms

It's still harder than it should be to create an effective sequence of learning experiences in K-12, postsecondary or organizational training. Owing to underinvestment and weak demand articulation, learning management systems (LMS) are at least five years behind the growing demand for engaging, learner-centered, competency-based experiences that result in employment (and other favorable outcomes).

The worldwide [LMS market is expected to grow](#) from about \$3 to \$8 billion over the next five years. Demand for better learner outcomes—particularly employability—and interest in customizing individual learning trajectories—particularly competency-based progressions—are two factors driving investment in learning platforms.

**10 next-gen components.** As [noted last year](#), next-gen learning platforms will include six core elements:

1. Tagged libraries of open and proprietary content with search and content management tools;
2. Social, collaborative, and productivity tools;
3. Assessment tools and achievement analytics;
4. Learner profiles and portfolios;
5. Recommendation engines that build custom playlists; and
6. Learning management tools (e.g. achievement recognition systems—badges or other micro-credentialed strategies—and reporting tools including data visualization).

Successful platforms will become ecosystems with a constellation of four aligned services:

1. Student services: tutoring, guidance, health, youth and family services;
2. Teacher services: professional development, lesson and tool sharing;
3. School services: implementation support, new school development, and school improvement; and
4. Back-office service: enrollment, finance, and personnel.

The [Buzz platform in Michigan's EAA](#), supported by School Improvement, is a good early example of K-12 example of a platform supported by professional services. [Moodle](#), the free open LMS, has a mature platform ecosystem with 70 million users on 83,000 mostly higher education sites. Partners like

[MoodleRooms](#) offer an enterprise version. Next week, I'm visiting [Moodle Moot in New Orleans](#), a regional users convening.

**10 Development Vectors.** There are at least 10 change forces generally coalescing around these next-gen components. They include:

**1. MOOCs.** Coursera, the leading Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) provider, marked its second birthday with triple milestones: 100 institutional partners, 500 courses, and 5 million students. The dramatic improvement in access to high demand courses for improved employability has sent shock waves throughout the postsecondary landscapes. Community colleges [wrapping MOOCs in student services](#) appear to be a picture of emerging low cost ecosystems likely to produce improved completion rates.

**2. Anywhere anytime learning.** A variety of job training sites starting with [Lynda](#) to [Udemy](#) support individual learners and corporate clients. [General Assembly](#) created a premium experience with talented instructors and a community of entrepreneurial learners.

**3. Updated LMS.** Some LMS providers have adding MOOC-like features and open content: [Instructure](#) launched [Canvas.net](#), [Desire2Learn](#) launched [Open Courses](#), [Pearson](#) launched [OpenClass](#).

**4. Social learning.** Free social learning platform Edmodo serves 28 million users. LMS platforms are adding social features that improve instructors ability to utilize dynamic grouping and improve communication and collaboration.

**5. Engagement.** Most learning institutions want to better engage students to boost persistence and performance. Some high schools are attempting to blend personalized and project-based learning. The [Activate Instruction](#), built by Illuminate for [Summit Public Schools](#), is an open platform that combines skill building playlists and standards-based projects. School [networks](#) are collaborating to improve the ability to assess engaging projects.

**6. Competency.** Where it's possible to backmap from job requirements, professional training will increasingly become competency-based—and that's likely to include [educator preparation](#). There will multiple ways to learn—some degree-based, some job-embedded, some informal—with several ways to demonstrate competence.

A recent demo of [Agilix xLi](#) illustrated the LMS vendor challenge of decade—straddling cohorts and competency. Agilix can toggle between synchronous delivering to a class and largely asynchronous individual progress models.

**7. Data & assessment.** The shift to digital launched an explosion of keystroke data, but today's platforms are ill equipped to capture and synthesize information from multiple sources. Tablet bundles

and online learning providers may be among the early leaders using data to improve learning and measuring learner dispositions including collaboration and mindset. Secondary and postsecondary schools are encouraging students to build portfolios using apps like [EduClipper](#) and [Pathbrite](#).

**8. Adaptive learning.** Elementary adaptive learning products including [i-Ready](#) and [Dreambox](#) are gaining widespread elementary adoption. [ALEKS](#) and [Knewton](#) are gaining secondary and postsecondary adoption. Current adaptive products live in a “walled garden” of proprietary content but as learner profiles improve, predictive algorithms will be applied across larger content libraries.

**9. App ecosystems.** A few platforms are attempting to harness the mobile app explosion. [Edmodo](#) has hundreds of apps. [Fingerprint](#) started by helping parents tame the preschool app market and is now helping schools build app networks. [Google Apps for Education](#) has enough functionality to be considered an app ecosystem.

**10. Free LMS.** [Amazon Web Services](#) (AWS) offers cloud computing service which provides free training to entrepreneurs. John Grave hosts a G+ community, [Using Google Apps as a Free LMS](#), where he recently noted that “In discussions about MOOCs, educators have paid scant attention to the notion that businesses and employers can now make their employee and customer training materials freely available online.” Amazon’s recent acquisition of [TenMarks](#) suggests we’ll see more of them in the learning space.

As outlined last week in [Networks, Platforms, & Procurement](#), smart planning and purchasing by groups of institutions is the fuel behind most of these change vectors. By aggregating demand and improving market signaling, networks can accelerate platform improvements to better serve students.

For more, see:

- [Why Aren’t There Any Next Gen Learning Platforms?](#)
- [Edmodo: From Social Network to Learning Platform](#)
- [Teaching Online: Choosing the Right Platform](#)
- [From LMS to Learning Ecosystems](#)
- [OpenClass Leverages Open Content & Social Learning](#)
- [PLTW Chooses Instructure for Active STEM Learning](#)
- [Canvas.net: An Open MOOC From Instructure](#)
- [Next Generation Professional Training, Blending For-Me & For-Degree](#)

- [Powering Lifelong Learning Relationships](#)

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