Brandon Hall Group™
EXCELLENCE AWARDS™ 2024

Speed Meets Strategy: How Aptive's LMS Rollout Transformed Employee Learning

Aptive Resources and LearnUpon

Best Learning Technology Implementation

October 2024

Brandon Hall Group
HCM Excellence Award
LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT
GOLD 2024

Company Background

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Company-at-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Alexandria, Virginia
Year Founded	2012
Revenue	2023: $143,541,906
Employees	As of March 2024: 530
Global Scale	United States
Customers/Output, etc.	Aptive Resources is a management consulting firm based in Alexandria, Virginia. Aptive primarily supports the federal government, where a team of more than 530 employees harnesses the power of new technology, innovation, and communication to improve services, bridge divides, and elevate the lives of millions of people who count on government services every day. Aptive provides services in strategy and transformation, experience, data and analytics, marketing and communications, performance optimization, human capital, and research and evaluation. Aptive has 15 prime contract vehicles, more than 75 contracts, employees in 42 states, and works with more than a dozen government departments and agencies, including Veterans Affairs, Transportation, Defense, the Library of Congress, Commerce, Customs and Border Protection, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and more.
Industry	Federal government professional services contractor
Website	www.aptiveresources.com

Company Background

LearnUpon

Company-at-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Dublin
Year Founded	2012
Revenue	Less than $50 million
Employees	250+
Global Scale	LearnUpon is a global company with an HQ in Dublin (IE), and offices in Philadelphia (USA), Salt Lake City (USA), Sydney (AUS), and Belgrade (SRB).
Customers/Output, etc.	LearnUpon partners with over 1,400 customers to champion simple, learner-centric experiences for over 19 million learners across over 35 countries globally.
	With 290+ employees and offices in Dublin, Philadelphia, Salt Lake City, Belgrade, and Sydney, LearnUpon LMS makes it easy for businesses to deliver learning that impacts what matters: performance, retention, and growth.
Industry	Technology & Software
Website	https://www.learnupon.com

Budget and Timeframe

Budget and Timeframe	
Overall budget	$24,000 for LMS/2-year term
Number of (HR, Learning, Talent) employees involved with the implementation?	2
Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?	2 (IT Director, IT Software Engineer)
Number of contractors involved with implementation	0
Timeframe to implement	4 months
Start date of the program	January 2, 2024

Fit to the Needs

Aptive Resources is a government contracting firm that has doubled in staff size year over year for the past three years. More than half (51%) of the company's staff is fully remote. As Aptive expanded its contracting work from primarily supporting the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to supporting over 15 federal agencies, the two-person L&D team needed to implement an LMS capable of supporting the evolving needs of the company's growing and increasingly remote workforce.

Aptive's rapid growth required corporate investment in new company systems, including a new HRIS in 2022 and a new travel accounting platform in 2023. The LMS was the last major system the company needed to scale to size as a large business.

Neither of Aptive's former learning systems (KnowBe4 and LinkedIn Learning) could meet the learning requirements of its expanding workforce. KnowBe4's cybersecurity focus lacked a user-friendly interface or robust reporting capabilities. LinkedIn Learning couldn't host the team's custom-developed eLearning courses or scale with the company's growth within budget constraints.

In response, the L&D team sought an LMS that could balance scalability with customization for key learning audiences. The platform needed to grow with the organization while providing custom learning paths for different job roles and hosting custom eLearning content for those audiences. The team also prioritized finding a platform with a user-friendly design and robust reporting features to track ROI, completions, and other key learning metrics.

Overview

After carefully vetting five finalists, the L&D team selected LearnUpon as the preferred vendor. LearnUpon offers scalability while allowing for a customized, learner-centric look and feel, with the ability to easily report on key metrics. LearnUpon's thoughtfully designed interface consistently ranks among the top 10 LMS systems (according to user reviews on eLearningindustry.com).

Following executive approval to contract with LearnUpon in late August 2023, the team devised a comprehensive implementation plan on an accelerated timeline to achieve a January 2024 launch. This ensured learners would have access to the LMS for their learning needs at the start of the new fiscal year.

On January 2, 2024, in partnership with IT, the team successfully launched the Aptive Academy LMS.
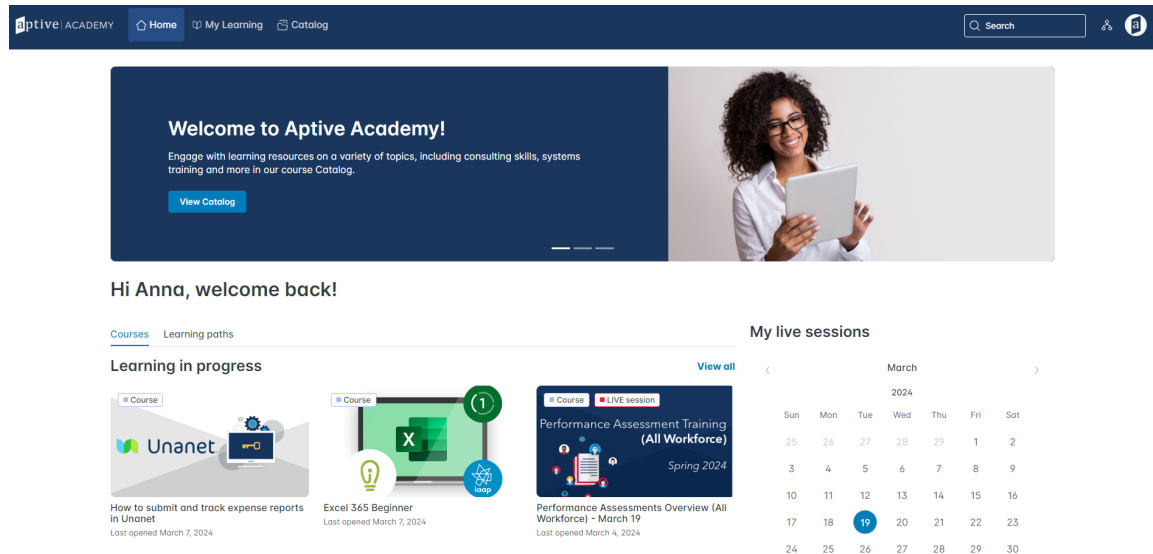
Key business goals achieved through the implementation of the Aptive Academy LMS included:

- **Implementing a scalable LMS.** The LearnUpon LMS allows for the creation of custom learner groups and one-click automated enrollments into required training based on those groupings. This automation is essential for managing a rapidly growing number of users, while still ensuring those users receive content tailored to their needs.

- **Implementing a user-friendly LMS.** The team needed an LMS that could support mandatory training campaigns while also being a user-friendly system that learners would <u>want</u> to access. This is one of the reasons the team selected the LearnUpon LMS, which is known for its simple and clean user design. This LMS also integrates with existing Aptive systems such as ADP, Microsoft Azure, and Microsoft Teams, allowing for a seamless login experience and smoother adoption for users.

- **Customizing the learning platform for Aptive.** Alongside a well-designed user experience, the LMS needed to be tailored to Aptive's learners. LearnUpon seamlessly integrates Aptive's pre-existing custom eLearning and recorded content alongside "upskilling" content from external vendors within the LMS catalog. Learners can peruse the catalog to find content relevant to their role, sorting by keyword, category or course format. Aptive's custom courses have branded course thumbnails for easy distinction. This emphasis on customization led one LMS user to comment post-launch that they "love that Aptive has its own version of LinkedIn Learning!"
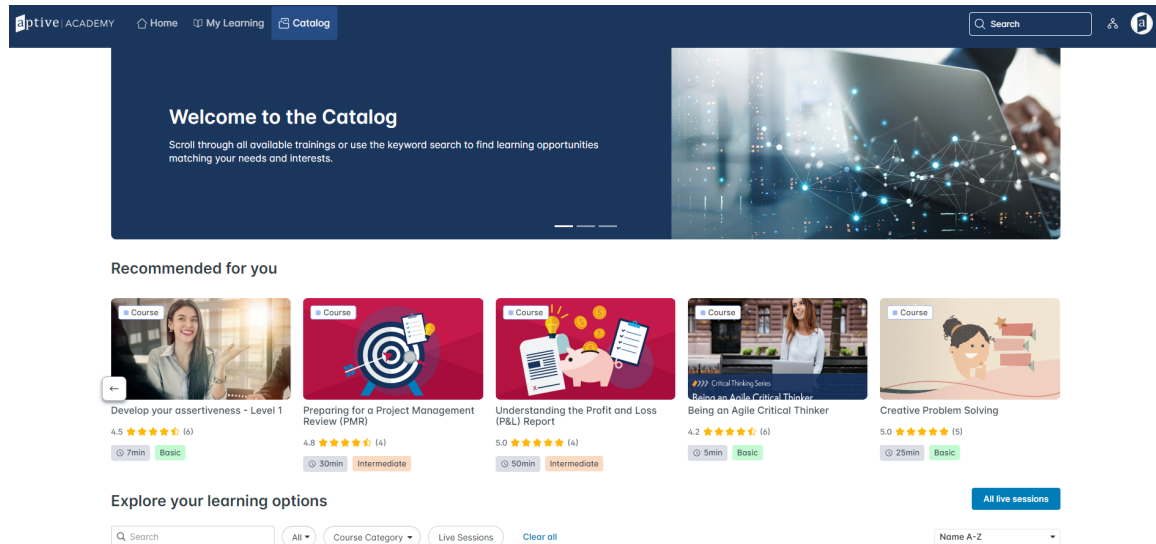
- **Launching tailored learning paths for different employee roles.** The LMS enables the creation of customized learning paths for various employee audiences. Since launch, the team has designed and implemented an onboarding learning path for new employees, with customized content for more and less experienced new hires, as well as a consulting skills learning path for employees new to the consulting industry. The team plans to launch additional learning paths for supervisors and project managers.

- **Achieving robust LMS reporting to track key metrics.** Prior to the LMS, the team did not have easy access to reporting or learning metrics. The team ran 53 live trainings in Microsoft Teams in 2023 but had no way to track on-demand content use or to collect all completion and attendance data in one system. LearnUpon's reporting features allow the team to centralize, manage, and track learning content and employee interactions with that content in one place. This has made it easier to track the completion of training campaigns and other key metrics.

Design of the Implementation Plan

Despite working under a tight implementation timeline of four months, the team prioritized early collaboration with internal teams and the Implementation Team at LearnUpon, conducted a comprehensive user testing plan, and developed a strategic communication plan for launch. These efforts ensured the LMS would be designed thoughtfully and tailored directly to the needs of Aptive's users.
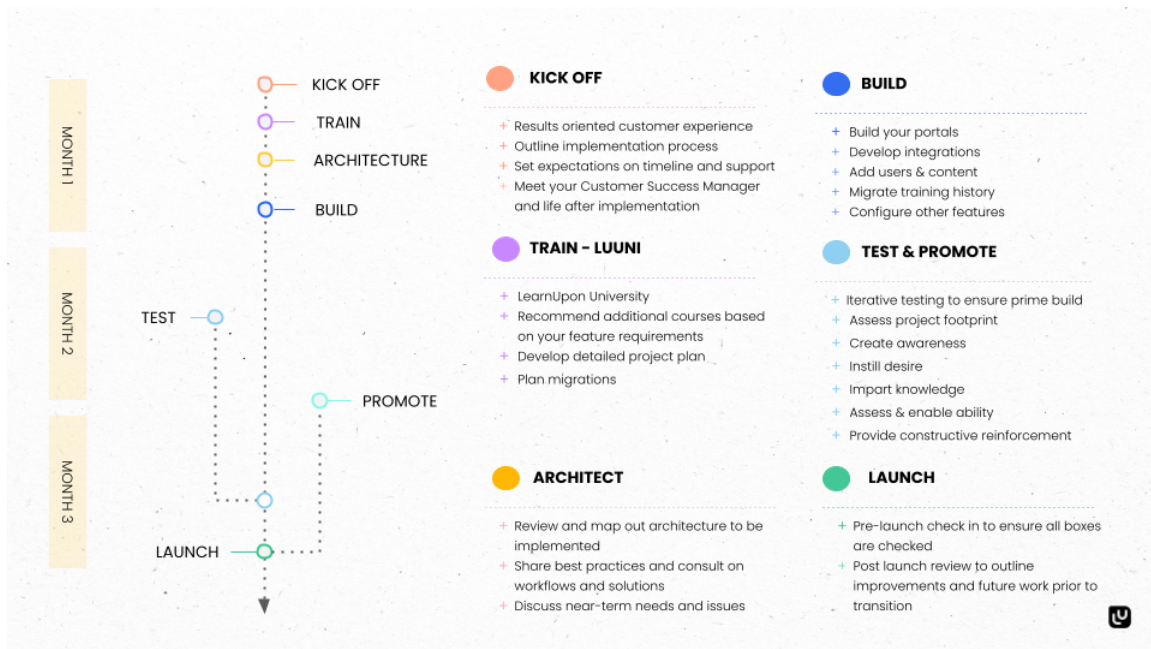

Image showing example of LearnUpon's implementation process

Immediately after gaining approval for the LMS, L&D began outreach to key internal teams, including IT, HR and marketing.

IT created an Application Programming Interface (API) for the LMS and ensured Single Sign-On (SSO) technology was up and running to allow users to log in to the LMS the same way they did for other Aptive systems.

HR provided information about custom user data fields that could transfer from ADP (Aptive's HRIS system) to the LMS, such as employee role, start date and department. These custom fields facilitated the creation of automated learner groups in the LMS, allowing for tailored training to be assigned by role or department.
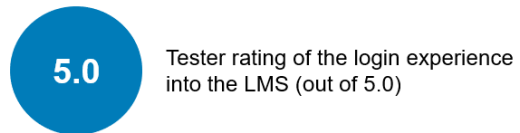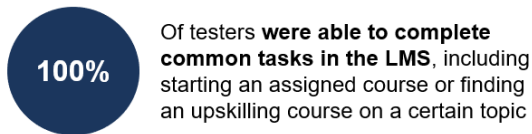
Marketing created branded LMS email banners, images, gamification badges and more to ensure the Aptive Academy would feel familiar to users.

The team also conducted comprehensive user testing with 16 employees representing various job roles, departments and tenures at Aptive in the month before launch. The team troubleshooted issues user testers had identified with LearnUpon and shared those outcomes with key stakeholders. The team's emphasis on careful user testing and sharing results ahead of launch demonstrated its commitment to due diligence in testing and customizing the system to meet real user needs.

User Testing

Overview of our results from 16 Aptive user testers

100% Of testers **were able to complete common tasks in the LMS**, including starting an assigned course or finding an upskilling course on a certain topic

5.0 Tester rating of the login experience into the LMS (out of 5.0)

Most common words used to describe the LMS

Easy   Simple   Clean

*"I like the application, **it's branded for Aptive and feels like it's built by our company**. [It's] specialized and not some massive list of options that becomes overwhelming."*

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Additionally, in the critical weeks just before and just after launch, the team implemented a strategic internal communication plan.

The team hosted an LMS demonstration for executive leaders to share user testing results and key LMS features to ensure buy-in through the "go live" phase and beyond. The team also provided a sneak preview of the Aptive Academy LMS to the whole Aptive workforce during the December 2023 All Hands meeting.

Aptive Academy *Learning Management System (LMS)*

Learning and Development Team

Our new LMS will launch in January!

What is it?

- A **one stop shop** to access trainings and learning resources relevant to your role

What can I do with it?

- Find and enroll in custom Aptive courses
- Take upskilling courses on a variety of topics
  - *Project management, change management, data and analytics, Excel, Power BI and more!*
- Track your own training history as you go
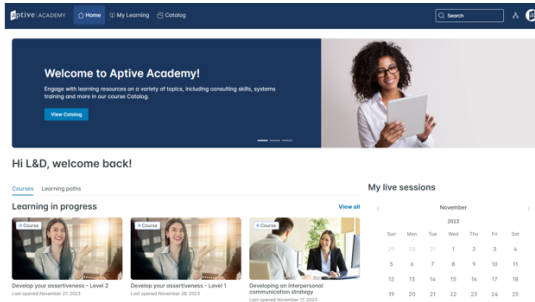
After launch, the team posted about the LMS weekly on the company-wide Microsoft Teams channel. Each post included LMS-related action items, such as "Explore the My Learning tab" or "Browse the Course Catalog" to familiarize users with the system's key features.

Anna Kraemer 1/10 12:27 PM Edited

Have you checked out the NEW Aptive Academy Learning Management System (LMS)?

👉 Over 40% of our Aptivators have already dived in to the learning catalog!

🌟 Discover Aptive custom courses and vendor courses all in one place.

🎓 Enroll in FREE on-demand courses and earn badges while you do.

🌐 View any required or assigned trainings with ease.

📼 Watch the quick, 3 minute Intro to Aptive Academy LMS video in your dashboard for more info!

🔗 **Login via SSO here:** Aptive Academy

General: If you've already joined the fun, drop a comment below about course topics you're most excited about (or want to see more of!) in the LMS!

see less

❤️ 12   👍 7   ⏳ 2

Despite the challenge of a condensed implementation timeline, the team's emphasis on collaboration with key internal teams, comprehensive user testing and strategic internal communication ensured an efficient yet customized launch tailored to Aptive's learning audience.

Delivery of the Plan

After the January 2024 launch, the team initiated several learning campaigns that capitalized on Aptive Academy's key features and let learners experience the system's new, customized approach to learning.

First, all new employees were automatically enrolled in the LMS onboarding learning path. To date, all 71 new hires that have started at Aptive since the LMS launch have been automatically enrolled in this path. This path includes four to five required courses, including two custom eLearning courses and one live, introductory training automatically assigned to employees at the senior manager level or below.

The ability to automatically enroll new users and tailor the path's courses according to employee role has been pivotal for enhancing the onboarding learning experience. Moreover, having a system that automatically assigns these trainings saves essential work time for members of the small Aptive L&D team.

To build immediate engagement and familiarity with the system, the team enrolled all employees in a short, optional video course titled "Intro to the Aptive Academy LMS." The video provided an overview of the system's features and encouraged exploration of the course catalog. Hosting the course within the LMS provided an easy way for users to take the course and explore the new system for the first time. This course achieved 88% learner completion, which is higher than average, particularly for an optional course.

Finally, the team planned required training campaigns in the LMS in direct alignment with key corporate initiatives. At the end of January 2024, 162 supervisors received their annual, mandatory training through the LMS to encourage compliance and introduce them to the new platform. This campaign boasts a 99% completion rate. The team has also planned performance assessment training for employees and supervisors to launch in the LMS in conjunction with Aptive's spring performance cycle.

Change Management Efforts

To gain leadership and stakeholder buy-in, the team prioritized early and consistent communication throughout the LMS testing and implementation process. The team engaged with departmental leadership to request assistance in selecting employee user testers to ensure input from all departments would be considered. As previously mentioned, the team also conducted a presentation for all executive leaders and managers to share the system's key benefits and the user testing results ahead of launch.

To ensure a smooth transition from the previous system (Microsoft SharePoint) to the new LMS, the L&D team replaced all old course links (SharePoint files) with direct links to the same courses in the LMS catalog over the holiday break prior to launch. This ensured learners would log in and immediately see direct links to the LMS courses within the Aptive SharePoint intranet they were used to visiting.
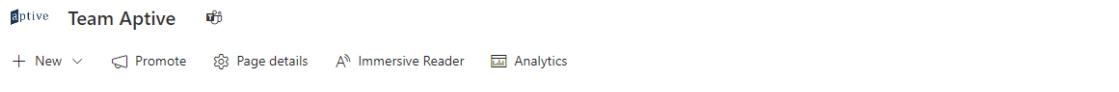
Additionally, the team created a new Jira Workforce Management service desk specifically for LMS inquiries, issues and requests. This Jira desk is linked directly within the LMS so users have an immediate, internal point of contact.

Because the user experience offered in the Aptive Academy LMS was such an improvement from the previous SharePoint interface, encouraging users to explore the new system was not a major challenge.

However, one issue the team faced was encouraging users to see the Aptive Academy as a place to go for optional learning resources in addition to mandatory training. Because some Aptive employees have access to LinkedIn Learning, change management techniques were necessary to get users to engage with the free, on-demand upskilling courses that also existed in the Aptive Academy catalog.

In response to this challenge, the team posted the most popular, optional courses in the Aptive Academy LMS on the company-wide Microsoft Teams channel. This allowed Aptive users to see the content other employees were engaging with and to click direct links to those popular LMS courses.
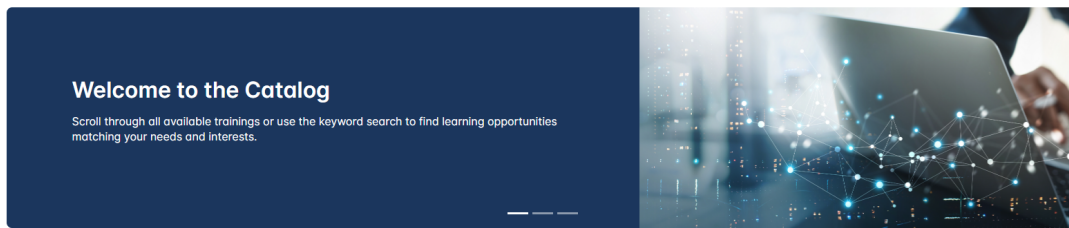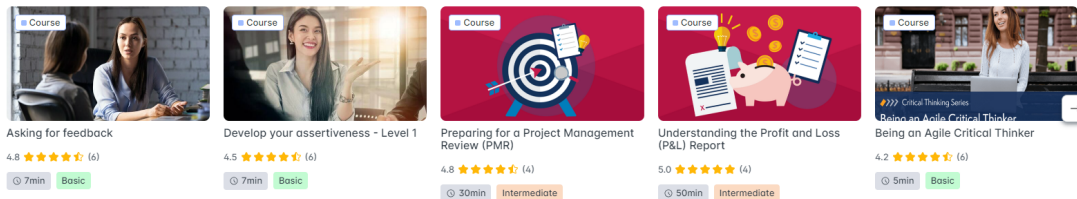

The team also worked with LearnUpon to activate the LMS "Recommended Courses" feature. This feature allowed users to immediately see a carousel of optional, on-demand LMS courses popular among learners.

Catalog

The team also curated on-demand resources for several enterprise-wide learning initiatives, such as Aptive's 200-member Communities of Practice (CoP) groups. The L&D team curated optional learning resources for the Project Management, Change Management, Process Improvement and Data Analytics CoPs.

Overall, learners continue to self-enroll in courses in the LMS and the team tracks these metrics monthly to understand learner engagement and interest in optional courses.

Measurable Benefits

The integration of the LMS into the team's learning strategy has yielded several significant benefits for both learners and Aptive as an organization.
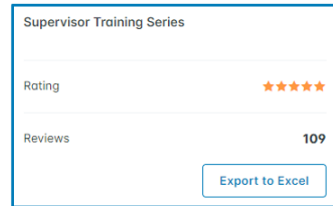
Ability to track key metrics to inform learning strategy. A large impact of the LMS was simply the ability to track key learning metrics and ROI all in one system. Prior to the LMS, learning metrics were scattered across various systems and required additional labor hours for the team to track them appropriately. With LearnUpon's custom reporting tool, the team can quickly track key utilization metrics to inform learning strategy, all in one system.

The team tracks learning metrics monthly using this reporting tool. The L&D director uses these metrics in monthly executive summary reports to the CEO and COO. The team focuses on completion and LMS usage metrics, such as completion status for required and optional training campaigns, virtual training attendance rosters, and monthly active users in the LMS.

(Updated) Supervisor Training Series Course Stats
As of 3/1/2024

Supervisor Training Series
(Due 2/2/24)
Course Completions

Not Started 1%

Completed 99%

Supervisor Training Series

Rating ★★★★★

Reviews 109

Export to Excel
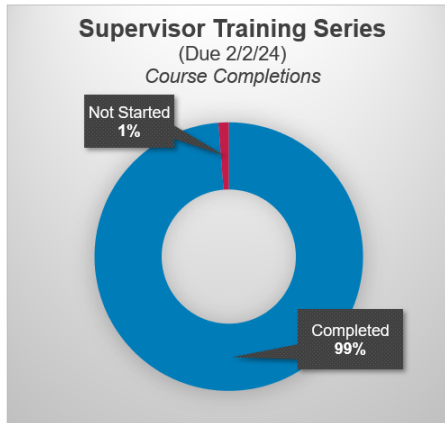
"This was engaging and well-designed. Thanks!"

"A must-have for new / current supervisors!"

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The team also tracks metrics that give insight into learner satisfaction, engagement and interest in courses: for example, learner course ratings and open-ended course review comments.

Increased monthly active learner usage. Though the Aptive Academy LMS has only been active for three months, initial usage metrics show the significant learning impact of the system. In the launch month of January, the system garnered 479 monthly active users, representing 93% of Aptive's workforce. In February and March, the active user rate hovered around 75% of users logging in monthly. This represents a nearly twofold increase in monthly users compared to LinkedIn Learning usage, where only 41% of users logged in monthly. Additionally, the first required training campaign in the LMS (the Supervisor Training Series) boasts a 99% completion rate.

Increased learner engagement with non-required, upskilling courses. There were 716 "self-enrollments" in Aptive Academy catalog courses within the first two months. The team tracks these metrics using the system's "enrollment source" data field, which indicates whether the employee enrolled themselves or whether an administrator enrolled them as part of a required course. This number of self-enrollments indicates employees are proactively searching the catalog and identifying upskilling courses relevant to their work. Data from these self-enrollments provide insight for the L&D team about which course topics are most popular and help identify areas for additional skill-building and training needs among Aptive employees.

Increased efficiency in training leading to measurable cost savings. There is also significant ROI in terms of fewer employee hours spent on training due to the ability to host shorter, on-demand courses in the LMS. Prior to the LMS, many trainings were synchronous, virtual sessions in Microsoft Teams. The typical duration for these live trainings was 45 to 60 minutes. Since the LMS is capable of hosting eLearning courses, the team has developed additional eLearning courses to replace live trainings (when this format is appropriate to achieve key learning objectives). The team's custom eLearning courses are 15 to 20 minutes long on average — 1/3 the length of an average live Teams training.

Using the average labor hour cost of $50.00 for an Aptive employee, this means a required eLearning training hosted in the Aptive Academy LMS saves an average of $33.33 per training per employee. For all 530 Aptive employees, that's **a cost savings of $17,664.90 per training when delivered via LMS eLearning**. Having employees spend less time on non-billable training and more time working as billable consultants for their government clients has a direct impact on Aptive's financial metrics and contract gross margins.

Finally, significant labor hours are saved by using LMS automation features. The LMS can automate course assignments and learning paths for specific employee groups, saving time for the L&D team and enabling quick enrollment into relevant courses. For instance, the required "Consulting Foundations" onboarding course saw an increase from **72%** of required learners completing the course in 2023 to **93%** of required learners completing it after the LMS was implemented.

The team will continue to track the Aptive Academy's ROI in terms of overall employee satisfaction at Aptive. In Aptive's upcoming employee engagement survey, the team will track the employee satisfaction metric for the L&D function to see if this number has increased since implementing the system.

Overall

Overall, within a condensed timeline of four months, the L&D team successfully identified and implemented a scalable, user-friendly LMS to meet Aptive's growing learning needs. The team conducted thorough user testing, customized the system and ensured it aligned with user needs before launch.

The Aptive Academy LMS project will always be ongoing. The team continues to monitor metrics such as course completion and satisfaction ratings to enhance the system and its courses. They maintain an active collaboration with their LearnUpon customer success representative and actively participate in the LearnUpon online user community to identify valuable improvements and updates.

Key lessons learned from this process include the importance of early and frequent communication with key internal teams, such as IT, marketing and HR; comprehensive, pre-launch user testing; and tracking user interaction and satisfaction metrics to make continuous improvements. The team is currently working with Aptive's internal Data and Analytics CoP to develop PowerBI dashboards to better visualize and track LMS data. The team also continues to build specialized, employee learning paths and is currently creating an Aptive Project Manager Learning Path for 80+ project managers.

The L&D team will have the opportunity to immediately apply implementation lessons learned as they prepare to offer LMS access to employees at Aptive's sister organization, Artemis Arc. Their next step will be to implement an LMS sub-portal for Artemis (Artemis Academy) and provide a system with the same customized, user-friendly experience.

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