



Learning
Light

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VIRTUAL
COLLEGE

E▶nable LMS vs Open Source Platforms

An independent review
completed by Learning Light

Learning Light is a research-led e-learning company with in depth knowledge and experience of how to succeed with online training. Their experts help businesses, education / training providers, not-for-profit organisations or government departments who are looking for e-learning solutions, consultancy and advice.

David Patterson, Director and Consultant, has worked for Learning Light since 2005. He has reviewed numerous pieces of learning technology on behalf of buyers and suppliers. His reviews are objective, independent and impartial.

Enable LMS vs Open Source Platforms

Enable is a secure, cloud-based Learning Management System developed by Virtual College - one of the leading providers of e-learning in the UK.

There are many reports into the similarities and differences between open source learning platforms and a proprietary LMS like Enable. Cost and flexibility are often highlighted as the key advantages of an open source LMS. Reliability and support as the big advantages of a proprietary LMS.

Some Enable customers started with an open source LMS only to switch because of rising costs and frustration over customisation. Free does not always mean trouble free!

On the next page is a side-by-side comparison of Enable and open source systems.

Many of the comparisons made also apply to out-of-the-box vendor solutions that are based on open source code.



Innovation and ongoing development

Enable LMS

- Enable has a clear development pathway. Virtual College listens to their customers and closely monitors learning technology trends.
- Updates are not whole version upgrades, which can be disruptive and costly.

Open Source LMS

- Typically, the roadmap for an open source product is unclear, fragmented by competing customer needs and community plans.
- Functionality can be determined and skewed by a single customer's business processes.

Active Development Tab

Completed Learning Tab

Personal Development Tab

Requested Learning Tab

Upgrades and new functionality

Flexibility



Enable LMS

- Two planned and managed upgrades per year.
- Continual commitment to R&D and LMS development.
- Changes configured to meet business needs.
- Client led innovation.
- Client feedback informs upgrade plans and new developments.

- Will develop custom functionality for customers.
- Enable comes configured, tested, and branded.

Open Source LMS

- No upgrade cycle.

Open source upgrades are either:

1. In house built solutions need ongoing investment and someone with a strong grasp of the software.
 2. Externally sourced developers or users may make changes available to the community, but quality often can be an issue leading to more complex problems.
- Technology-focused and not learning led upgrades.

- To build your required functionality, complex bespoke coding will be needed.
- Design work will be needed to tailor the look and feel of the LMS to your organisation.

Bug fixes / security

Ongoing cost

Enable LMS

- Included in service level agreement (SLA).
- Bug fixes rolled out to customers at no extra cost.
- Quick response to security threats.
- Updates kept up-to-date for all customers.

- Enable's cost is predictable since LMS support, maintenance and upgrades are often included in the fee.

Open Source LMS

- Increased costs and downtime when there is a problem.
- Must rely on availability, quality and speed of execution by third-party resources and/or online community.
- Expected to feed back to the community if you fix a bug or make an improvement.
- Onus on you to keep abreast of security threats and ensure your LMS version and plugins are up-to-date.
- Repair/upgrade costs vary depending on severity and on the availability of skilled, external resources.

Hosting and implementation

Enable LMS

- Hosting is included - by buying and supplying these services in bulk, Virtual College is able to pass on the savings to customers.
- Implementation is performed by an experienced team.
- Staff training is included.

Open Source LMS

- Must make your own hosting and support arrangements.
- Cost of hosting (server lease or purchase) alongside staff and support costs.
- Some information is provided for installation, but it is mostly 'DIY' and that's a risk (especially if the in-house guru leaves).
- May need to hire third-party resources. Can be 'here today gone tomorrow' with no long term commitment.

LMS support

Learner support

Enable LMS

- Support costs shared across multiple customers.
- Immediate troubleshooting support to keep your LMS up and running, included in Service Level Agreement (SLA).
- Support documentation provided.
- No charge for LMS updates.

- Technical support included.
- First line learner support included.

Open Source LMS

When the service is outsourced:

- Extra costs for support resources.
- Quality and control issues....speed of response.
- Extra costs for updates and patches.

When the service is in-house:

- Ongoing costs of staff and training to ensure they remain compliant and up to date.
- Relying on own system knowledge for integrations and database updates can lead to issues and costs.

When relying on the open source community for support:

- It can be difficult to find timely community-based support on a specific issue. You also need to know the right questions to ask.

- Reliant on internal IT resources or external LMS partner for technical support.
- Reliant on knowledge of online community.
- First line learner support often lacking.
- IT are not usually interested in supporting Learning & Development.

Contact us

Virtual College is one of the UK's leading providers of online learning solutions with over **1.75 million** online learners. Together, we steer our online community by creating effective products, resources and services that meet the needs of organisations and individual learners.

This year, Virtual College celebrates 20 years of online learning innovation.

We hope you found this comparison helpful.

If you would like more information on Enable LMS and our services, please contact our team today:



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