

# Learning Management Systems: Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.”*

–Mahatma Gandhi

Across the nation, with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act and health care reform, the demands of the health and social service departments have grown in astronomical numbers. Throughout the state of California, social service departments made the necessary changes to their policies and procedures in order to meet these demands effectively. With these changes came an increase in work; higher volumes of consumers and caseloads along with the heightened demands made it difficult for staff to get away from their desks to attend and meet essential training requirements. As a result, Santa Clara County and Santa Cruz County successfully put into operation a Learning Management System (LMS)

alongside updated policy and procedural changes to meet the training prerequisites of their departments. These two counties continue to effectively manage and upgrade their learning management systems with the upsurge of department personnel and program changes.

This case study looks at the staff development departments of both the Santa Clara County and Santa Cruz County learning management systems and their efforts to train outside the traditional classroom training environment. This case study will outline the benefits of using a learning management system and the positive impact it will have on the department.

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## Introduction

The Learning Management System (LMS) is a system used worldwide with various features benefiting both the learner and the department administrators. The LMS has countless elements and advantages for its users as well as the establishments that chose to use it. The LMS is a system that allows courses to be provided and taken online. It provides a place for users to go for easy access training catalogs, self-paced eLearning, user training history, and transcripts. It has also the capability to allow users to upload external training certifications to their user transcripts. The LMS has the capability to create various reports, manage training courses, and account for trainings provided to staff. Using the reports, the LMS allows county departments to gather statistics that are essential to the future success of all departments as they implement policy and procedural changes.

## Santa Clara County

Prior to the implementing the LMS in 2009, Santa Clara County was using a paper tracking system. Staff members were required to fax, email, and/or call in order to register for a training course. The Staff Development Department did not have any other filing system to keep track of training materials except to use binders.

A team of department members collaborated to make changes to their business process to successfully implement and meet the system's needs. In 2012, Santa Clara County implemented the LMS countywide with other county agencies. As it implemented the system countywide, Santa Clara County also changed the name of its LMS from

SSA Learn and rebranded it using the name "SCC Learn." The county also decided to move away from the word "training" and use "learn," as learn represents a shared responsibility of training for all parties involved. Recently in 2013, Santa Clara County began using the Cloud version, improving storage capabilities and accessibility for both the learners and the staff development trainers.

## Santa Cruz County

The Staff Development Unit of the Santa Cruz Human Services Department implemented its LMS in May 2010, and is providing an online learning center and interactive video library. The unit is able to provide mandated trainings, policy communications, as well as other pertinent information to staff. Its web-based trainings provide an online training that combines virtual classroom learning.

Santa Cruz is a much smaller county than Santa Clara County, and purchased a version with different components of the LMS compared to that of the LMS Santa Clara County purchased. However, using the LMS the Santa Cruz County Staff Development Unit has continued to successfully adapt and meet the department's demands.

## Background of Contra Costa County

Contra Costa County launched its learning management system on March 17, 2014. As Contra Costa County is still in the infancy stage of the LMS, a study of the challenges and benefits Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties have experienced would be beneficial for them.

Previously, Contra Costa County's process of managing training courses and staff attendance was completed manually by the staff development clerical staff, and with a less sophisticated online system. This system did not have the capacity to provide online courses and/or webinars. Staff members could register for courses and review their training transcripts; however, the clerical staff updated user transcripts manually and it would often take a considerable amount of time to update individual transcripts. Transcripts were not easily accessible for the user and/or their supervisors. It was also difficult to navigate through the list of training courses available if the individual was unsure of which category to search in. Also, similar to Santa Clara County, training materials were managed by using binders and the department's computer G drive. As items were duplicated on the G drive, it often made it difficult for the staff development specialist to easily locate training materials.

Contra Costa County branded its LMS by naming it Staff Development Management Automated Reinforcement Training (SMART) System. Although staff members are still adjusting to the recent implementation of the SMART System, they continue to be receptive to the new process.

## Implementation

Prior to implementation, both Santa Clara County and Santa Cruz County formed a core team of individuals to collaborate and develop best business processes around the learning management system. The teams consisted of a variety of different level of staff members ranging from project managers, IT managers, subject matter experts in the Staff Development Program, and technical support. The teams developed best strategies of implementation, and made policy changes reviewing current policies and how those would look with the new system and current business model. Santa Clara County took a step further and developed new policy and procedures to meet the LMS. Rather than trying to outline the system to work for the county, the business process

was changed to meet the system's needs. Taking this approach to the LMS unquestionably contributed to its success of staff acceptance to the new business process.

The core teams for both counties prepared project plan presentations for the different staff levels, from the executive teams to front-line staff. These teams created marketing plans that would positively reach all levels of learners keeping in mind that staff acceptance was key to the success of the LMS. Positive marketing of the LMS and showing staff "what's in it for them" would influence a reduced amount of resistance from staff.

As part of the implementation, it became evident that a strong ongoing collaborative relationship between the Staff Development Department and the IT Department was essential for the success of the LMS. As with any new system, there are always hiccups along the way and maintaining a strong relationship with IT helps with network challenges.

## Benefits

There are many benefits and advantages to an LMS. Below is a list of just a few benefits the LMS offers the social service departments, the LMS users, and the staff development departments:

- Employees can manage their own professional growth and development
- ELearning can be taken as many times as desired.
- ELearning is Easily accessible
- LMS is Convenient for the user and the staff development instructors
- Reference material can be posted within the learning management system
- Storage options are available for training materials
- LMS can be used as a resource, increasing the access to learning
- Supervisors and management can sign staff up for training
- Staff can see their transcripts
- Staff can upload external training certifications to their user transcripts.

- Staff can receive Outlook calendar reminders for trainings they registered for
- Analytical reports can be generated for management

### Recommendation

It is recommended that Contra Costa County continue moving forward with the learning management system technology. It is important to maintain a strong SMART system administrative team to maintain and administer all the elements and advantages the LMS has to offer. This would include establishing and sustaining an energized staff development team to reinforce the vision of successful usage of their SMART system. If LMS training is available, it is extremely important for the Contra Costa County LMS administrators to continue to enrich the staff development team as upgrades and changes are made to the learning management system. The Staff Development Department and the IT Departments should also continue to enhance and develop a strong relationship to avoid any unnecessary challenges when managing and upgrading their SMART system.

### Conclusion

Contra Costa County's execution of the learning management system is a step towards the future of the professional development of the Employment and Human Services Department. As federal and state regulations and policies change, there is a need to employ additional employees at every level. As staff members grow in numbers and the generations of young invincibles join the existing workforce, it is evident that it is necessary to adapt and transition with new technology. The learning management system is the most efficient way to reach all levels of personnel.

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