Major Benefits of eZ LMS

A Turnkey Solution – Not Just a Software Purchase

eZ LMS is not a typical software purchase or license. A licensed or purchased software solution often creates as many problems as it solves. For example, with licensed or purchased software, institutions have to purchase and maintain the hardware on which the licensed software is to run. They have to upgrade or replace these machines on a periodic basis. They also have to install, maintain and troubleshoot the software, and employ a staff of technicians and database administrators to maintain the hardware and software, possibly at multiple locations. Licensed software carries hidden costs (hardware and personnel) that often exceed the licensing fees, and must be considered as part of the total cost of ownership.

The eZ LMS system is a complete, turnkey solution, a service that can be implemented and utilized without additional effort on the part of the purchaser. This solution is already running and ready to go. Everything necessary is ready to immediately begin putting courses online, including all supporting server hardware and maintenance personnel necessary to keep that hardware running. There is no hardware or software to buy, install, or maintain – this is part of the package. Hardware will be periodically upgraded, as it becomes necessary. We will handle all software installation, maintenance, and upgrades as well.
Please bear this in mind when comparing eZ LMS to other products. Our solution includes the server hardware, continually updated software, and associated IT support services necessary to provide the service – commercial or open source software products will not. These costs will easily multiply the cost of ownership of licensed software many times.

For example, the hardware on which eZ LMS resides has recently been upgraded to two dual-processor servers valued at approximately $38,000 at the time of purchase. These servers reside in our machine room, which was specifically designed to accommodate the special operating requirements of computer equipment. This 6,400-square-foot, access controlled computer room is outfitted with filtered, redundant power systems and temperature and humidity control. Two levels of electronic security as well as two levels of physical security protect the area.

Including the eZ LMS servers, twenty-three servers are housed in the Computer Room. The value of equipment in the machine room and associated support areas approaches $4 million. This operation is staffed by 15 full-time IT professionals, and has an annual operating budget in excess of $700,000. All this infrastructure and support already exists behind the eZ LMS service – our users do not have to make this infrastructure investment.

A Cost Effective, Hosted Solution

eZ LMS is an Internet-delivered application – a hosted solution in the Application Service Provider (ASP) model. As an ASP, we will deliver the benefits of a complete IT infrastructure without the overhead, associated costs and maintenance challenges. We will remove the burden of day-to-day LMS management by assuming total responsibility for rollout, updates, and on-going maintenance and support. This solution provides a viable alternative to procuring and implementing a complex software system on your own.
Aside from the cost efficiencies, this model has many advantages over software licensing or purchase. eZ LMS offers the following distinct characteristics.

- **Alleviate shortage of IT employees** - no worries about hiring and retaining scarce and expensive technical personnel. We will provide all the necessary technical support and maintenance, including security and backup.

- **Faster implementation** - all equipment, software, and expertise is already in place and ready to go. You will be up and running almost immediately.

- **Predictable** - more reliable and consistent, higher performance levels than individually hosted licensed software: higher levels of security, and greater scalable network storage. Provides consistent applications and performance across dispersed geographic locations.

- **Decreased obsolescence** – software and hardware is continually updated.

- **Reduced initial capital costs, low up-front investment** - no large up-front payments for software licenses and hardware. Instead, an annual fee spreads IT costs evenly over time.

- **Reduced total cost of ownership** - reduced fixed costs and lowered overall expenditures for hardware, applications and ongoing management. According to the Gartner Group, a leading provider of global IT industry research and analysis, application outsourcing can reduce the cost of application ownership by 50 percent or more.

- **Reduced risk** - with no capital expenditure on software, hardware, and IT personnel, colleges and schools can "test" this technology with minimal impact to their existing environment and bottom line.

**Ease of Use for Faculty and Trainers**

This is perhaps the most important feature of eZ LMS. Instructors and content developers are very busy individuals. If software tools are difficult to learn and utilize, they simply will not be used, no matter how functional they may be. We have taken great care to make eZ LMS intuitive, straightforward, and user-friendly. The interface has been developed with extensive input from our user community. It is quite simply the easiest to use LMS available.

eZ LMS allows instructors and content developers to quickly and easily create and maintain graphically rich course Web sites on their own, without learning any HTML or proprietary software. Working with standard desktop productivity applications, instructors create content incorporating graphics, images, tables, links, anchors, and other materials as desired. They upload their documents to the system through a Web interface, where it is converted to HTML. All links, image names and locations, fonts, colors and other page elements are handled automatically by the system.
Ease of Use for Students

Unlike commercial LMS products, eZ LMS does not require the student to own any particular software (other than a Web browser) to view course material. Course material is presented in the language of the Web, as HTML, not a document that must be downloaded and opened in another software application.

Minimal Training Required

Using eZ LMS does not require special skills or training. If an instructor or content developer knows how to use a Web browser (e.g. Internet Explorer) and a word processor (e.g. Microsoft Word) they already have the skills they need to create a fully customizable, graphically rich course Web site. Learning eZ LMS is fast and easy. Instructors who use it actually say its fun!

Instructors Have Complete Control

Some tools only allow instructors to insert text into a rigidly defined template. Others simply allow document uploads. eZ LMS does much more. Rather than providing a fill-in-the-blank Web site or a document repository, eZ LMS enables instructors to create and maintain an actual Web site.

eZ LMS puts complete control in the hands of the instructor or course developer, who is able to control every aspect of their course Web site(s). eZ LMS allows instructors to create and modify all aspects of their course Web site, including content, layout, design scheme, and site navigation. They choose font face, size, color, and alignment. Pages can include backgrounds, graphics, images, tables, links, anchors and other materials as desired.
Tomorrow’s LMS

Unlike software license providers, we do not simply offer today’s version of our LMS, forcing your institution to either deal with obsolete software in the near future or putting you on a treadmill of constant updates. Rather, we provide the latest, most up-to-date software we have available, at all times. eZ LMS is constantly updated, and users will always experience the latest version when they log on.

Updates are not driven by company marketers who can only guess which features faculty might need, or programmers who have never taught a class – eZ LMS is faculty driven. From its inception, eZ LMS has been built for faculty, with extensive input from faculty and teachers who use it. Most of the software tools within eZ LMS have been created in direct response to faculty needs and desires.

Fully Customizable

eZ LMS is extremely customizable, and in fact, has been extensively customized to suit the needs of university faculty and students over the course of its development. eZ LMS is proprietary, which means we know who owns it, its development history, and its level of standardization.

Not only is the functionality of eZ LMS customizable, but so is its look and feel. We can customize the look of eZ LMS to suit individual institutions, schools, or departments within those institutions. We can make eZ look like existing university or school Web sites. This is a user-requested feature, built into the software.

Advantage Over Open Source Software

Open Source software has lately been given much attention. Unlike proprietary software, Open Source makes source code readily available to developers. It promises lower cost than proprietary software solutions and flexibility to modify the source code to augment the software’s functionality. The main argument for Open Source is the ability to individually customize the software application to suit the user’s needs – i.e. it adds flexibility.

While Open Source software may offer benefits, there are concerns about its viability. These concerns include software security, ownership issues, and quality and reliability questions. Standardization is also a concern – it is not uncommon to see multiple applications evolve to conflicting standards, fragmenting the user community.

Cutting-Edge Research in Educational Technology

eZ LMS is an educational technology research project as well as a useful teaching tool. Our research in the development of eZ LMS helps us push the envelope in the application of Internet and computer technology towards classroom and distance education.

The schools and colleges that use the system represent a wonderful resource – a research and development test bed distributed across the nation’s centers of learning. As it has in the past, eZ LMS will continue to be improved with input from people that use the software, and tailored to meet the specific needs of the educational community.
Included in the eZ LMS solution:

Access to the eZ LMS application service delivered via the Internet

Automatic software updates
- Access to new software features and tools, as they are developed by UNDAF
- Access to Click-iT streaming audio-graphics creation software

Server hardware updates, as needed
- UNDAF server hardware updates as needed (frequency determined by UNDAF)

Hardware and software maintenance
- UNDAF will administer the server and associated software and databases

Full data backup
Included:
- Nightly data backups
- Daily, weekly, and monthly backups
- Off-site data storage
- Data restore as needed, in event of critical failure

Training & Support
Included:
- UNDAF will provide tutorial training sessions.
- Additional tutorial training sessions available at your request.
- Follow-up support via email.
- Training support documentation provided electronically.
- Troubleshooting support via phone and email support during regular business hours
  - Monday through Friday excluding holidays, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (CST/CDT)

Optional Services
- Supplementary on-site training workshops, at your request.
- Software customization at your request.