

Course Project, Part III: TalentLMS Reflection

Rosa Conti

Post University

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Teresa Thomas

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For this week's Unit 6 self-selected LMS assignment, I created a mock course in TalentLMS, building from the Canvas course I began in Unit 4. My experience was not as unpleasant as expected, primarily because I discovered that TalentLMS is structured to create sections to keep relevant assignments compartmentalized by units—this had been my main concern early on. Also, I was thrilled to learn that upon beginning a course, the learner is prompted through each assignment screen after marking them complete. Hence, the risk of a learner overlooking an assignment is not possible. This would be a downside if this feature prevented the learner from proactively looking ahead at tasks before they were complete (for planning purposes). However, the instructor can remedy this by removing this optional prerequisite feature.

There was a more significant learning curve to understanding TalentLMS than Canvas. For starters, there is little instruction offered online for using this tool. The short videos provided by TalentLMS were each a few minutes long and touched only on high-level steps to getting started. The few YouTube videos I found teasingly only brought me halfway to what I needed to learn. I am proud of the course simulation I created for this assignment, mainly because this accomplishment came from having to figure things out myself.

To begin developing in TalentLMS, I spent initial time poking around and creating “tests” that I would later delete once I connected the dots of how things worked. I was glad to see that, like Canvas, TalentLMS has a responsive web design, which adjusted the screen's content when I made the browser box smaller to sit alongside my Word document when I crafted the narratives for the TalentLMS pages. I also like that the assignments can be reordered after they are created. In other words, an instructor can change their mind about which element should appear in the auto-play of the learners' screens. This was helpful as I changed creative directions a few times while making my course.

Another distinction I like about TalentLMS is that there is a drop-down at the top of the page that shows the learner which course components have been completed so far. I did not notice if this is offered in Canvas. As an obsessive planner, I see the cognitive value in providing this feature in an LMS. LinkedIn Learning courses have this embedded trait, and I wish Post University's Blackboard did too.

However, the number of things I did not like about TalentLMS is greater. The biggest offense of this LMS is the way its discussion boards are structured. They are created outside the course (on the main page) and added to the course by entering the URL into an iFrame. One issue is that the accompanying text (instructions) field has a 255-character limit. Also, it is too convoluted to explain in detail here, but assigning discussion boards to a section unit is unnecessarily tricky.

There are other nuances, as well. For example, when adding video assignments to both units, I learned that TalentLMS does not allow you to add any descriptive text or preface instructions alongside the video. To remedy this, I provided instructions in the previous assignment via an "Up Next" section. This lack of foresight on TalentLMS' side requires extra planning from the instructional designer. Also, text does not wrap around images, so I used a two-column table to create a side-by-side visual. Table columns cannot be manually stretched to the desired size; I had to change the photo size, and my only options were 25%, 50%, or 100%. Photos cannot be dragged and dropped from the page into a table, as they can with most other applications. The font defaults to a serif Georgia but can be changed. However, fonts of bullets cannot, and I do not like this. These may seem like minor subtleties, but it is frustrating when applications do not adhere to what feels like universal desktop rules.

Surprisingly, deficits aside, I enjoyed the outcome in TalentLMS. It is clean looking and aesthetically simple. The biggest downfalls are the terrible construction of its discussion boards

and poor Rich Format Editor (RFE), which are presented well in Canvas' LMS. Contrary, I feel that Canvas' undoing is that there is too much visible on the course menu for the learner to know where to go next, unlike TalentLMS, which offers organized sections to house orderly assignments, as designed by the instructor. It is a very close tie when choosing between the two LMSs. All things considered, TalentLMS' visual compartmentalization of each unit's assignments and the subsequent next-screen prompting wins it for me. I choose TalentLMS.