



SCORM is Still Slowing Us Down—Here's How We Can Fix It



Executive summary

👉 **Four years ago, we started an uncomfortable conversation.**

Back in 2017, we launched a report titled *LES, LMS, SCORM: An Invisible Prison for Digital Companies?* Informed by surveys conducted with over 8,000 companies, this report sounded the alarm on the learning industry's over-reliance on using SCORM to deliver training. We pointed out how SCORM offers no flexibility or dynamism, how its one-way delivery stifles innovation and creativity, and how its clunky interface makes training longer, duller, and way less fun. This publication caused a real splash, and even attracted some [media coverage](#) (in French).

✉️ **Then came the emails.**

Over the following days and weeks, we opened our inbox to hundreds of angry missives from instructional designers and L&D professionals outraged to hear us attacking SCORM. According to them, we were crooks and cranks out to destroy their livelihoods. It's understandable, after all: SCORM is a key tool for many within the learning industry, and here we were, pointing out major flaws in their best practices. It's no wonder some people took it personally.

But despite some challenging conversations—not to mention a few sleepless nights—our board stood by our CEO, Nick Hernandez. They knew the most critical

conversations can be tough at the start, and they believed in the body of research we'd done to back up our criticisms of SCORM. So, we held on tight, stuck to our guns, and waited to see what would happen.

As it turned out, we didn't have to wait long. The month after the release of the report turned out to be our best ever for generating new requests for demos of our Collaborative Learning platform. Despite all the anger we were seeing in our inbox, we knew we'd struck a note in the learning community. Even back then, people were fed up with SCORM, and were looking for a better way to deliver learning. In the end, all the outrage was just a SCORM in a teacup. 🍵

So, where does SCORM stand in 2021? What's changed since 2017?

Not much, as it turns out.

Despite a growing community of organizations finding better ways to help their teams collaborate by sharing their skills and growing together, far too many L&D teams are still relying on SCORM to deliver learning content. In practice, this means using a library of thousands of flat, paint-by-number courses. In an Alexa world, this is the equivalent of still using Windows 95. It's no wonder course completions are [hovering at a miserable 20-30%](#).

We knew there was a better way of doing things back in 2017.

And now, four years later, those same SCORM limitations are still holding a lot of organizations back. Except now we have even more evidence to prove it.

In this ebook, we'll explain how the continued reliance on SCORM content within the learning industry is slowing us down. We'll show how this functional yet flat format doesn't meet today's expectations for interactive and engaging learning experiences, and we'll explore the rise of interactive platforms powered by human exchange. Finally, we'll show how L&D teams can move past SCORM to something better: Collaborative Learning. 💪



Before we begin, let's get one thing clear: the 360Learning platform integrates quickly and easily with SCORM.

Despite its many flaws, SCORM is still a widely-used tool. So don't worry: we're not here to tell you to throw all those thousands of SCORM courses out the window. Not yet, anyway. We're just here to show you a better way to deliver the kinds of exciting, stimulating learning experiences people need and expect in today's world.



Estimated reading time for this ebook: **20 minutes.**

About

360Learning

👉 **360Learning** empowers Learning and Development teams to drive culture and growth through Collaborative Learning. Our Learning Platform combines collaborative tools with the power of a Learning Management System, enabling high-growth companies to unlock learning based on collective expertise, instead of relying on traditional solo-based eLearning. **360Learning** is the easiest way to onboard new employees, train customer-facing teams, and develop professional skills—all from one place.

360Learning powers the future of work at over 1,200 organizations, including Toyota, AlphaSights, and Airbus. Founded in 2012, 360Learning has raised \$41 million, with over 200 team members across New York, Paris, and London.



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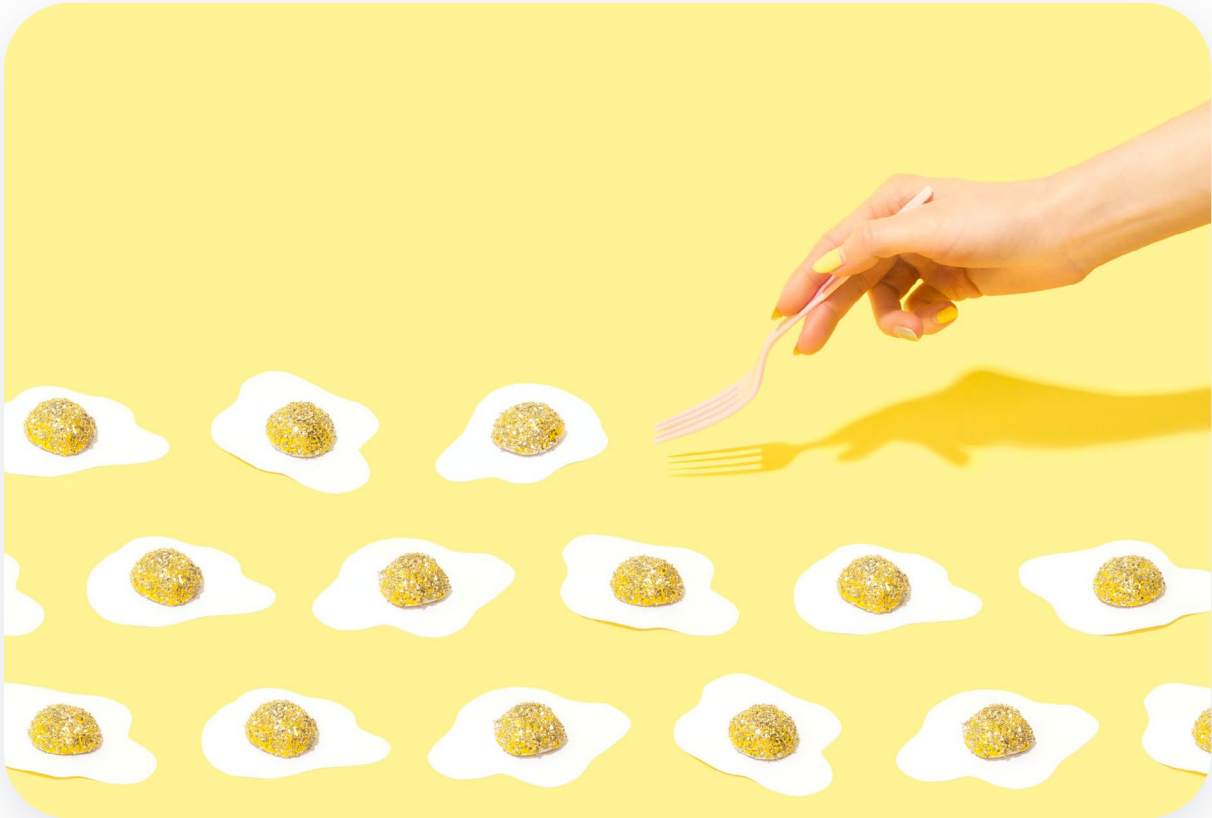
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Want to see how we can help you make
Collaborative Learning a reality?

Request a demo with 360Learning today. 💡

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Chapter 1

A brief history of SCORM—and why it doesn't cut it anymore

So, what is SCORM, exactly? 🤖

SCORM stands for Sharable Content Object Reference Model. Super helpful, right?



SCORM is a set of technical standards and specifications used to create online training programs.

In practice, SCORM is a set of technical standards and specifications used to create online training programs. It makes it possible to create and share learning content, or purchase existing third-party content and use it on the learning platform of your choice. Basically, it's a common language that allows learning content to be shared across different systems.

In the late 1990s, this was a radical idea. Back then, the Internet was connecting more and more organizations with shared learning resources. The ability to distribute digital learning material was revolutionary, and Flash-based animations offered a new degree of flexibility and freedom for L&D teams and instructional designers to develop bespoke learning content and train people at scale. All they needed was the right set of shared standards to make it work.



And hey presto, along came SCORM. Interestingly, SCORM had its origins as part of a [US Department of Defense program](#) aimed at improving interoperability and distributed learning across a range of public and private organizations.

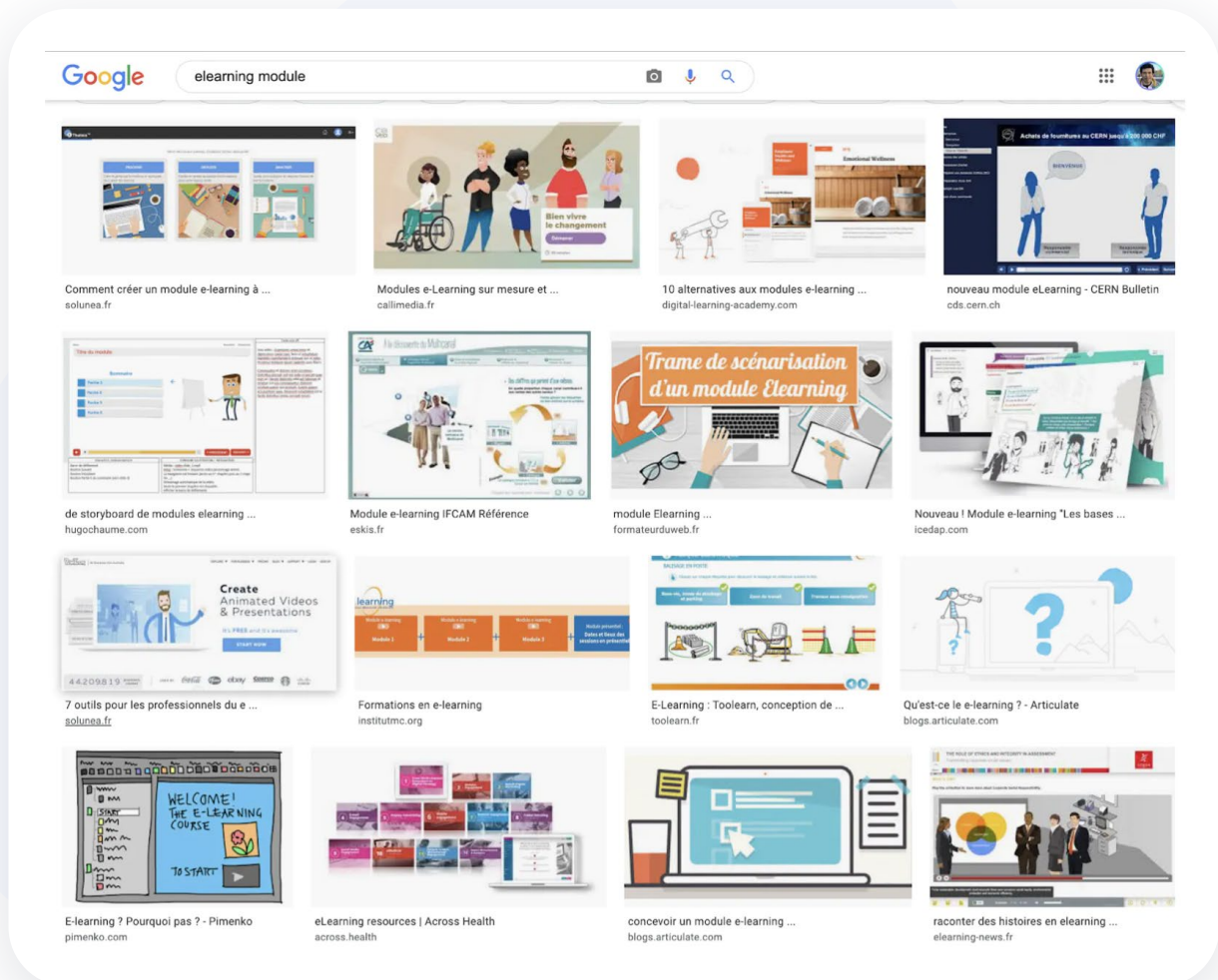
**So, that's a bit of background.
But what does SCORM actually look like?**

Blocky, flat, unengaging: what SCORM looks like in 2021 🦵

SCORM training courses were initially designed to support Flash-based animations. Even though [the rest of the world has now moved on to HTML 5](#), Flash is still the standard for many SCORM courses. This is because

updating every SCORM course out there would be too costly. That's why most SCORM-based learning materials look a bit retro and lack much of the modern web functionality people have come to expect.

In 2021, a SCORM eLearning course still looks like what you see below. 🙄 Unfortunately, this is how most companies are doing digital learning today:



As you can see, this learning content is pretty clunky and old-fashioned. It's focused around static images and text, and doesn't offer many opportunities for interaction. You won't see bookmarks, comments, collaboration, starred reviews, or versioning here. There's no ability for learners to bookmark material, no edit histories showing how a course has improved over time, and a limited ability to search content for specific information.



In short, SCORM is a Windows 95 solution in an Alexa world. Don't get us wrong—we love Windows 95. In its day, it was the workhorse solution that changed the world. But here's the thing—nobody in 2021 is still running Windows 95. And yet, somehow, SCORM just refuses to go away.

5 ways SCORM is slowing us down

In our 2017 report, we pointed out the specific limitations of SCORM, and noted how these limitations were holding us all back. In 2021, these limitations are doing [even more harm to learning](#) than before.

Here are five ways SCORM is slowing us down:

1 SCORM makes course creation slow, unresponsive, and expensive:

With SCORM, building a new course can take several months. That's because it involves a number of players: instructional designers, business analysts, technical experts, and operational managers. From initial storyboarding through to validation and content production, L&D teams need to manage course creation as a large-scale project. And naturally, with a large scale comes a large price tag: new courses can frequently cost over USD 20,000 to produce. The cost and time involved in creating new courses make organizations a lot less agile, and make it harder to respond to emergent opportunities for learning.

2 It's even harder to update courses once they go live:

This lack of flexibility is one of the biggest pain points with SCORM. Because courses are produced and released as a single unit, it's tricky and time-consuming to update individual pages, sections, or modules

to reflect new information or changes in the market. This is a big reason why so many courses in existing SCORM content libraries are outdated. Asking your learners to rely on inaccurate information is risky: you might end up missing out on key market opportunities, or worse, create liabilities for your organization.

3 There's no collaboration in the creation process:

Creating courses in SCORM involves getting sign-off and approval from a number of layers, but it isn't truly collaborative. Subject-matter experts are rarely involved in course creation, meaning organizations miss out on the chance to capture institutional knowledge for the benefit of others. This also makes it harder to iterate content over time in response to learner feedback.

4 SCORM content is flat and unengaging:

As you can see from the search results above, a standard SCORM course is clunky and cartoony. There might be some basic animations, but it's still a one-way exchange: your learners don't have the opportunity to interact with the content or share their thoughts, responses, and ideas with other learners. This makes learning a purely passive exercise, instead of the flexible, active, and user-driven learning people expect today.

5 It creates a real headache for L&D teams:

Relying on SCORM content is a huge pain for L&D teams. Not only do you spend too much time on basic administrative tasks like distributing courses, counting completions, and reviewing older content for accuracy, but it's a lot harder to measure learner engagement with specific pages. This makes it tough to identify which courses or modules are getting the best response and driving the greatest engagement. It also rules out running A/B testing to test different options.



Asking your learners to rely on inaccurate information is risky: you might end up missing out on key market opportunities, or worse, create liabilities for your organization.



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Most organizations didn't *choose* SCORM. Instead, by being baked-in to the tools and platforms we use to create, deliver, and measure learning experiences, SCORM is being chosen *for* us. It's not our fault that we're stuck with it.

💡 All of this adds up to a lot of lost opportunities for innovation in learning.

The most unfortunate thing of all? Most organizations didn't *choose* SCORM. Instead, by being baked-in to the tools and platforms we use to create, deliver, and measure learning experiences, SCORM is being chosen *for* us. It's not our fault that we're stuck with it.

Fortunately, it doesn't have to be like this. The rise of dynamic, interactive, and user-centered learning platforms over the last decade has shown us a new way to deliver fast, peer-based, and scalable learning experiences.

Let's take a closer look at the three major advantages of interactive learning platforms.

Chapter 2

A better alternative: the 3 advantages of interactive learning platforms

Since the early 2010s, we've continued to see major shifts in the learning landscape.

We've seen the rise of the [Learning Experience Platform \(LXP\)](#) in response to the lack of user engagement in most traditional [Learning Management Systems \(LMSs\)](#). We've seen a move away from traditional classroom-based learning to [flexible, user-driven learning](#) in the flow of work. And perhaps most importantly, we've seen more platforms and providers recognizing the [central role of peer interaction](#) in the learning process.



Alongside these trends, the rise of interactive learning platforms has made human exchange the heart of the learning experience. Instead of [dictating what people should learn](#), more organizations are using these platforms to put learners in charge of declaring their own needs and taking advantage of their greatest learning asset: their colleagues.

All of this adds up to a learning experience that is fast, peer-based, and scalable: everything SCORM isn't.

Here's what this means for L&D teams. 

1. Fast course creation

Traditional learning relies on **top-down management** to help set learner objectives and priorities. Then, it's up to L&D teams and instructional designers to develop SCORM-based content that fulfills these objectives—hopefully engaging learners in the process.

In contrast, interactive learning platforms approach things from the

opposite direction. These platforms empower learners to **declare their own learning needs**, and task internal subject-matter experts to **respond to these needs** with content developed in-house. With these platforms, L&D teams are there to oversee course creation, foster collaboration between teams, and measure course performance to see what's working.



This way, teams can create courses in minutes instead of months, and organizations can respond to learning opportunities as soon as they arise. Courses are shipped and improved over time through user feedback, meaning each course is the end result of peer collaboration.

And speaking of peer collaboration...

2. Peer-based learning

Courses delivered via SCORM are typically prescribed and delivered on an individual basis. Management sets the objectives, L&D produces content, the learner completes the course work, and L&D counts off the completions. There's very little room for any interactions with other learners, and no chance of any peer collaboration.

Once again, interactive learning platforms turn this process on its head, prioritizing active, peer-based learning instead. After all, if learning is something that is merely done to people without them having a say in what—or how—they learn, then it's hardly surprising that learners aren't engaged. 🌟



Focusing on human interactions within learning fosters better motivation, stronger retention and comprehension, and above all, it creates a human connection—a **key cognitive function which is vital in learning.** 🔍

Instead of promoting individual learning, these interactive platforms support learners to engage with peers at every step of the learning process, giving them the chance to offer **reactions, comments, and feedback** on every page of every course. Learners can also benefit from being able to see other learners' feedback on course material, making it easy to find answers to common questions. They can also **complete interactive quizzes**, and can give thanks and recognition to subject-matter experts for their input.

Industry research firm AlphaSights offers a great example of this peer-based learning in action. By onboarding 240 subject-matter experts to contribute to digital training programs, AlphaSights turned a massive 27% of its workforce into expert contributors to course content. This not only helped AlphaSights' learning content to be more current and informed; it also helped them **boost their course completion rates to 95%.**

3. Scalable training

One of the most challenging limitations of SCORM-based content is its inability to scale over time in response to new learning opportunities. Once a course has been published, it's fixed, meaning designers and authors have to start all over again from the storyboarding

phase to update and scale content.

Instead, with dynamic, peer-driven platforms, content creators can scale and iterate courses as the company grows. This means updating details on individual pages, switching out pages

or modules, or even combining multiple existing courses to suit business needs.

In a competitive, fast-paced market, this scalability can make all the difference. It allows L&D teams, learners, and

subject-matter experts to move at the speed of the market, making it easier for teams to have the skills and information they need to pursue every opportunity.



With new interactive learning platforms, organizations can develop and test learning content in a small group, before scaling it out to wider teams, divisions, and clients.

[AI consulting firm Appen](#) offers a great case study highlighting this in action. The company saved a huge 102 days' worth of training over a three-month period by scaling up their employee onboarding.

So, those are the three advantages offered by dynamic learning platforms. Now, it's up to us to take the chance to use them to overcome the limitations of SCORM. 📌



Chapter 3

Now is our chance to move past SCORM

For some readers, it might seem like we're being a little unfair on SCORM. After all, it's still a widespread technology, and plenty of organizations use it on a daily basis without even realizing they have a problem.

 **Trust us: we get it.** It's nobody's fault that so many organizations are still using SCORM in 2021.

With SCORM being over 20 years old, it's likely nobody in your organization had much of a say in choosing the platform in the first place. The only difference is, we now know all about its limitations. We have a proven track record of using new interactive alternatives, and a library of dynamic content created by subject-matter experts that is growing and improving everyday.

And now more than ever, we need better alternatives to this slow, prescriptive, and unengaging form of learning. That's because we're facing a crisis in learning.


A crisis in learning: why we need something better than SCORM

Right now, organizations around the world are facing a crisis of learning. There are simply too many demands on us at once, and we don't always have the space to learn the way we want to.

This crisis is about more than just [COVID-19](#) and the rise of [remote working](#). It's bigger than the growing expectations to get more done during the day, and low average course completions. L&D leaders are fighting a war for attention. Unfortunately, it's a war they're losing.

So, what's the answer? How can we help people lift their heads above the water? And how can we help people think about learning not just as a requirement, but as something to be celebrated?

Some say we need to turn our [LMSs into Netflix](#) and drive binge-style learning. But that simply won't work: the algorithms driving these platforms are too different. Instead, we need a way to make our learning platforms [as interactive and peer-driven as possible](#).

 **We need a way to get people excited about learning again.** Instead of setting a standardized SCORM-based curriculum, engaging learners one-by-one, and monitoring course completions, we need to connect people to each other, get out of the way, and let them learn together. Our collective subject-matter expertise is our greatest asset—all we need is a way to put it to work.



L&D leaders are fighting a war for attention. Unfortunately, it's a war they're losing.

Investing in the **right interactive learning platform** is a great start. This is a key first step in putting your learners in the driver's seat, unlocking connections between teams, and **sharing all that amazing institutional knowledge** your experts have built up. But it isn't enough.

On top of that, we have a tough question to face: what do we do with existing SCORM content?



The challenge of migrating existing SCORM-based content

SCORM has been a staple of organizational learning for over two decades. As others have pointed out, this is the **biggest barrier to moving past SCORM to something better: it's all a question of volume**. According to these commentators, there's simply too much SCORM-based learning content out there for us to be able to switch to something better.

And sure, the numbers are scary. Some providers offer libraries of **over 10,000 existing SCORM courses**. 10,000! That's a mountain of blocky paint-by-numbers

content, and a lot of hours we could spend recreating these courses within interactive platforms.

Of course, we can't just throw these all out—instead, we need a way to migrate them across to interactive platforms piece-by-piece. There are some other middleground options like **Captivate**, Adobe's attempt to bring an element of interactivity to SCORM content, but it requires **extensive training** or dedicated instructional designers just to create your first course.



As daunting as the challenge of SCORM content migration may sound, it's only going to get worse over time. Every year that goes by without us moving past SCORM, we only become more reliant on this outdated format.

**Fortunately, there's one solution that can help:
Collaborative Learning.**



How Collaborative Learning can help

We have some good news: you don't have to throw out your existing library of SCORM courses. But you really should think about moving over to a learning platform centered around human interaction, peer learning, and recognizing subject-matter expertise.

The key thing to consider?



You need a platform that integrates seamlessly with SCORM, and gives you the chance to keep your top-performing courses while empowering your teams to learn from each other. This way, you get all the benefits of a fast, peer-based, and scalable learning platform, all without losing a single item from your existing SCORM-based library.

With [360Learning](#), you can face the challenge of moving past SCORM with a collaborative learning platform. You can empower your experts to create great new learning content, all while building on your existing library of SCORM-based courses. Even better, you can drive higher course completion rates, greater levels of engagement, and a culture of learning that is faster, more innovative, and responds to opportunities for new learning experiences.

We achieve this by making human interactions the key focus at every step of the learning journey. This way, rather than just setting a standardized curriculum of course content and tracking completions, you can support [open conversation](#), [dialogue](#), and [collaboration](#). With the right practical exercises, you can encourage experts and learners to work together.

Do you want to build a culture of learning that is nimble, flexible, and fun? Move past SCORM and [choose something better](#). 🚀

Conclusion

You didn't choose SCORM— but now, you can choose something better

We attracted a lot of criticism back in 2017 by pointing out the many limitations of SCORM. But here's the thing: we were right then, and we're still right now.



Since 2017, the rise of interactive platforms has continued to change the way we learn, making it easier to create courses, declare learning needs, leverage peer knowledge, and empower teams to collaborate and grow together. The world is catching up to us, and every day more L&D teams are looking for a better alternative to SCORM.

If you feel like you're stuck with SCORM, just remember: none of this is your fault. After all, you didn't choose SCORM—you've just had to deal with it. Now, you're stuck with flat, unengaging learning technology, and




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a huge library of content that is as painful to create as it is to update.

Fortunately, there's a solution. In this ebook, we've shown how interactive learning platforms can help you develop courses faster, generate real excitement for learning with peer-based interactions, and scale learning to grow with your business. Given the crisis in learning we're all facing right now, making this switch is more important than ever.

We talk to L&D experts on a regular basis, and these discussions tell us that [making human interaction the central focus of learning leads to better outcomes](#). With our platform, our users engage in [11 learning activities per day on average](#), with course completion rates [boosted from the industry average of 20-30% to over 90%](#).

 Interested in how our platform can help you overcome the many limitations of SCORM? [Get in touch with one of our learning experts](#) today to see how Collaborative Learning can help.

And if you're not quite ready to say goodbye to your old friend just yet, don't forget: [we integrate with SCORM!](#)

Over 1,200 companies love us already! ❤️

360Learning is already helping over 1,200 clients to transform their organizational culture through Collaborative Learning.



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AB Tasty

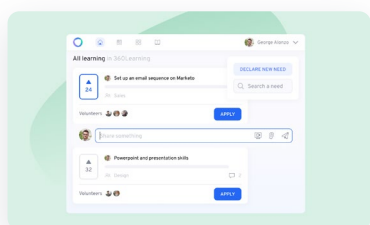


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360Learning is much more than a Learning Platform. Every single company needs a platform like this.

Josh Bersin



But don't just take our word for it: take a look at organizational learning expert Josh Bersin's exploration of [why Collaborative Learning makes such a big difference](#)—and how to all kinds of companies can put it to work.

- See how our Collaborative Learning platform can help your business keep up with the trends, opportunities, and challenges identified in Gartner's [2021 transformation report](#).
- See how we stack up against other organizational learning solutions at Gartner's [peer insights page](#).
- For a closer look at how we support collaboration between teams, check out features like our [Experts Engagement Tool](#), [Discussion Forum](#), [Authoring Tool](#), and [Learning Needs Tool](#).
- For a deeper look at how our clients embrace Collaborative Learning, read about how we helped [AI consulting firm Appen](#) save \$240k in annual training costs.

What's next?



The world is changing fast, and so is the way we learn. While SCORM might have been an amazing learning technology 20 years ago, in 2021 it simply doesn't cut it anymore.

Now, L&D teams everywhere need a better way to drive learning engagement. You need a platform that lets you respond to learning opportunities quickly, develop bespoke content that matches learner needs, and let your subject-matter experts drive learning results.

Embracing this fast, peer-based, and scalable approach to learning doesn't just keep your teams happy and engaged: it also helps L&D teams save time on low-value administrative tasks like updating old content, scheduling courses, and tracking completions. More than that, it helps your organization respond to opportunities for innovation and invention.

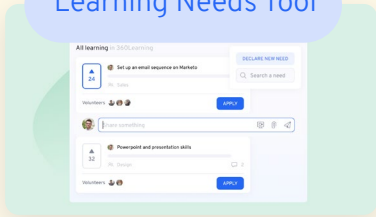
Our Collaborative Learning platform achieves this by:

- Making it easy for people to declare their learning needs
- Empowering any team to make and ship courses quickly in response
- Shaping learner recommendations based on user data relating to skills, interests, role, feedback from other learners, and more
- Encourage subject-matter experts to contribute their skills, share their knowledge, and iterate learning content over time
- Enabling L&D teams to build tailored programs by curating courses from 3rd party platforms - including existing SCORM libraries
- Using a continuous feedback loop to keep learning content current, accurate, and engaging
- Fostering a shared sense of connection and belonging through making every step of the learning process as interactive as possible

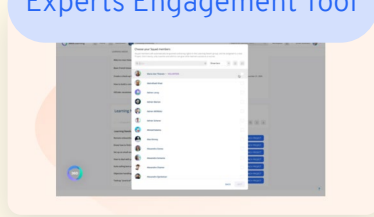
Interested in finding out how Collaborative Learning could help you?

[Request a free demo today!](#) A small, yellow lightbulb icon with a black outline, positioned at the end of the text.

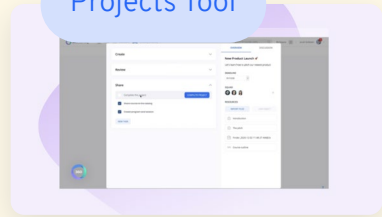
Learning Needs Tool



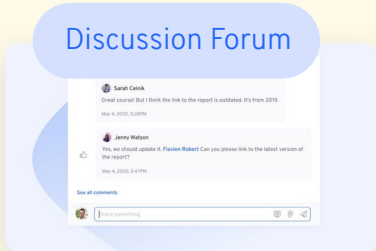
Experts Engagement Tool



Projects Tool



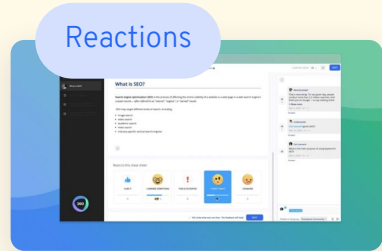
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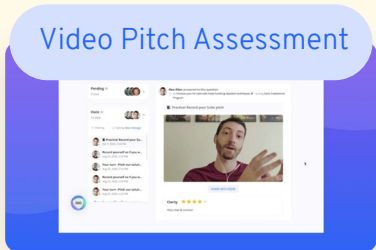
Authoring Tool



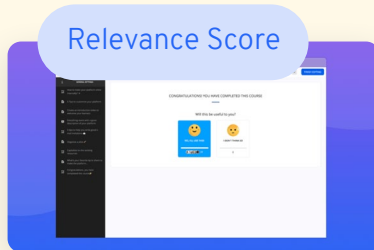
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Relevance Score



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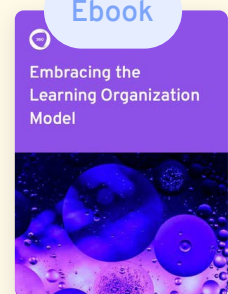
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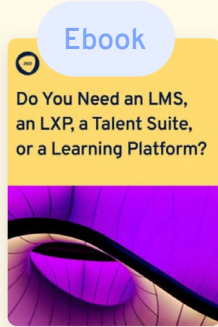


CLO Connect: A series of in-depth interviews with L&D experts

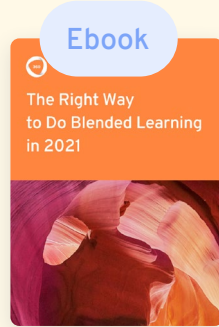
Ebook



Embracing the Learning Organization Model



Do You Need an LMS, an LXP, a Talent Suite, or a Learning Platform?



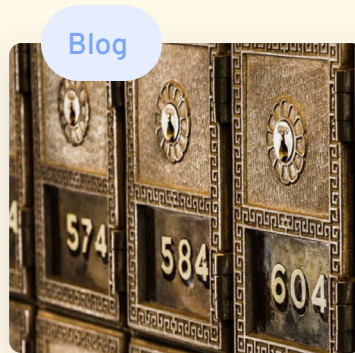
The Right Way to Do Blended Learning in 2021



Our 3-Step Process for Using OKRs to Drive Performance (+ Free OKR Template)



What is Adult Learning Theory and How Can You Apply It?



Start Thinking of Training As An Investment, Not a Quick Fix



32 onboarding templates and checklists to design great new-hire experiences



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