

Buying Learning The Right Way: A Guide to Smarter Workforce Decisions

What to look for. What to ask. Resources to help you succeed.



A comprehensive industry buying map for learning professionals.



1. Buying learning has changed

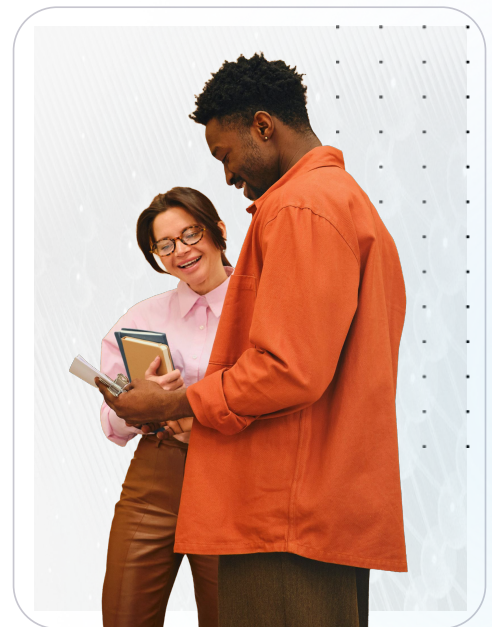
If this is your first time buying learning at this scale, it's completely normal to feel the weight of it. This quick guide can help make it manageable and help you feel confident saying **yes**.

You're not just choosing courses.

You're shaping how people build skills for the future.

In today's complex environment, you're navigating:

- Faster skill shifts
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) in every conversation
- Security and IT reviews
- Pressure to prove impact
- More stakeholders in the room



Learning decisions in 2026 shape how your workforce adapts tomorrow.

Why buying learning matters

The World Economic Forum's 2025 Future of Jobs Report says 39% of skills will become outdated by 2030. And, [LinkedIn's Workplace Learning Report](#) shows organizations are prioritizing skills development more strategically than ever before.

Learning isn't a side initiative anymore. It's part of workforce readiness.

And when you're ready to buy learning, **quality tends to matter more than ever**.

Work skills don't stand still. Roles shift, priorities change, and the training changes just as quickly. That means delivering learning that actually keeps up across different roles, regions, and needs.

Most L&D teams are working with limited resources. You don't have time to chase low-quality content or rebuild programs that don't land.

As an L&D champion in 2026, you're often not just making a content decision. You're deciding how your organization stays capable, compliant, and ready for the future of work.

The training you choose matters:

- When a manager has to navigate a difficult conversation.
- When a team handles customer data responsibly.
- When new hires are getting up to speed.

In some industries, the stakes are obvious.

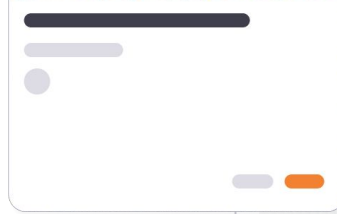
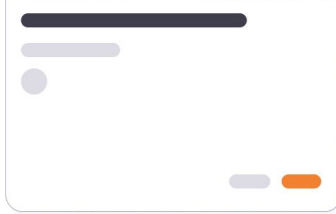
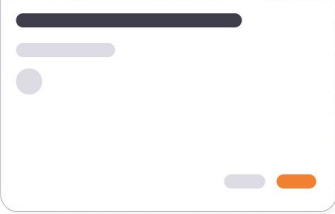
- In **construction or manufacturing**, the right training helps keep people safe.
- In **cybersecurity**, it helps protect systems and data.
- In **customer-service** roles, it shapes how your brand is experienced every day.
- In **healthcare**, it can directly impact patient outcomes.

Even when the risks aren't as visible, the impact is still there.

- Good training builds confidence.
- It helps people do their jobs well.
- It reduces mistakes, risk, and expensive rework.
- It helps your organization stay aligned with the future of work
- It keeps your team ready for advancements in your industry.



The right training doesn't just check a box. **It shows up in how work gets done every day.**



2. Before you start comparing vendors

A little clarity now will make every conversation easier later.

These questions will get you started.

1. What problem are we solving?

- Is this primarily about compliance?
- What kind of skills do you want/need to build?
- Team growth and onboarding?
- Training a global workforce?
- Artificial Intelligence adaptation?
- Leadership growth?
- Where is the business already feeling the cost of outdated skills – productivity, compliance, retention?

2. Who are your learners?

- One location or many?
- Multiple languages?
- Frontline workers?
- Managers?
- Executives?

3. How do people access your learning today?

- Are you already using an LMS?
- Are learners overwhelmed?
- Are managers asking for better visibility?



Pro Tip

Write down your top three success criteria before your first demo. It will anchor every conversation.

4. What does “good” look like six months from now?

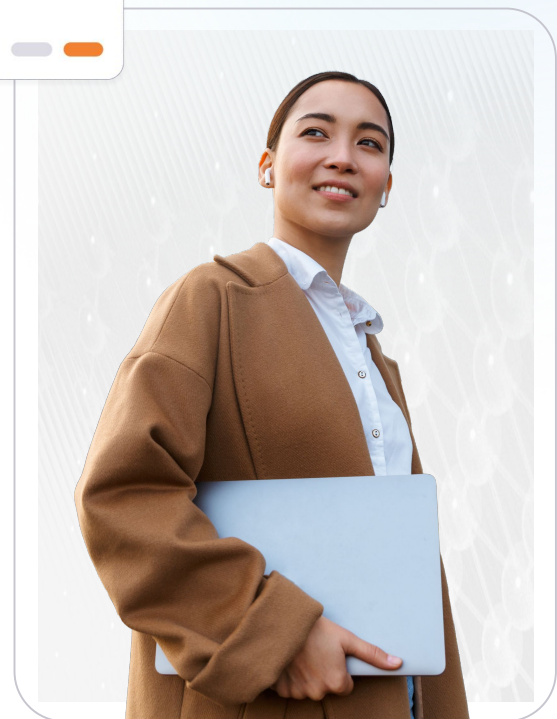
- Higher completion rates?
- Clear reporting?
- Reduced compliance risk?
- Growing at scale?
- Visible skill growth?

5. Are accessibility standards important?

- If so, look for [WCAG](#) alignment.



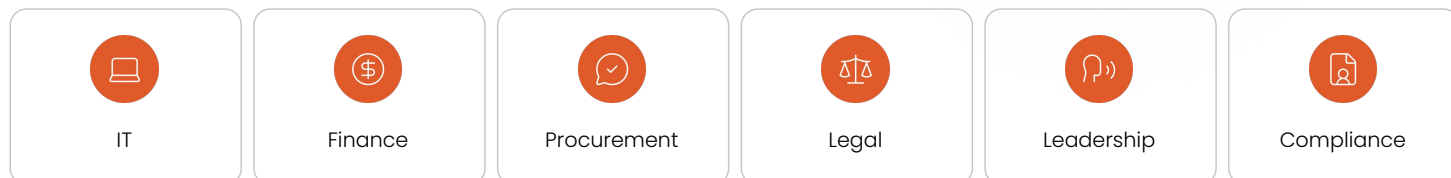
You don't need perfect answers.
You need **direction**.



3. Buying learning is a team decision

Learning may be a human imperative, but buying learning is rarely a solo decision.

Expect input from:



Each group is looking at risk from a different angle.

You're thinking about learner impact. IT is thinking about integration and security. Finance is thinking about predictability. Leadership is thinking about outcomes. Your role isn't to have every answer.

It's to bring forward well-evaluated options. Let's anticipate the questions that matter most.

[Gartner](#) notes that complex B2B decisions often involve five to 11 stakeholders.

The best learning buyers aren't experts in everything. They're prepared for the **right conversations**.



4. What your IT team is going to ask

These questions come up in almost every evaluation:

- Will this work with our LMS?
- Does it support SCORM or LTI?
- Can it integrate through APIs?
- Is learner data encrypted?
- Does it support single sign-on?
- Is the vendor SOC 2 compliant?

These aren't "gotcha" questions.

They're standard due diligence.

[The NIST Cybersecurity Framework](#) outlines common expectations for secure systems.

[Gartner](#) also emphasizes evaluating SaaS vendors for integration and data-governance risks.

IT readiness.

Things to consider include:

- Clear LMS compatibility
- Documented integration methods
- Accessible security certifications
- Transparent data handling policies
- Defined access controls

If answers feel vague, pay attention.

5. Content considerations

More courses don't mean better learning.

What often matters most is relevance. The right learning partner helps you deliver content that is current, practical, and aligned with the work your people do every day. Look for:

- Content that is updated regularly
- Coverage that reflects your industry and real-world scenarios
- Content in a range of styles
- Recognized publishers or subject matter experts

- Clear learning objectives
- Strong production quality
- Multilingual options
- Built-in accessibility
- The ability to create and deliver your own custom content when needed

[McKinsey](#) research shows that organizations investing in capability building outperform their peers over time.

Learning should aim to strengthen performance, not just fill a catalog.

Questions to ask yourself

As an L&D professional or learning administrator, it helps to be clear about what you need before evaluating options.

- What does the organization need to accomplish with this learning?
- Do different groups need different formats, like video, interactive, or short-form content?
- Do you need both quality and variety across topics?
- How important is it for content to stay current without adding extra work for your team?
- Do you need the ability to create your own content for specific use cases?
- Can you quickly discover courses that align with your specific requirements?



Buying, building, and curating content

As you evaluate options, ask yourself: do you just need access to content, OR do you need help connecting learning goals to the right mix of courses?

It's also worth considering how much content you need to build vs. curate.

Some organizations only need ready-to-use courses. Others need more flexibility. That might include translating content for different regions, customizing existing courses, or creating entirely new training for specific needs.

That could include delivering more personalized learning paths or making it easier to create and adapt content as needs change, with the support of expert curators.

If building internally is part of your plan, look for solutions that support the full process, not just the final output. Content creation tools should meet your needs, not only for instructional design, but also for content delivery and accessibility.

6. The buying process: What to expect

Use this to know what to expect and bring structure to your decision. Here's a sample of the process before you get to a signature.

In most organizations, the process looks something like this:

- Align on what success looks like, including goals and key outcomes
- Identify your internal stakeholders early, including IT, Finance, Procurement, and any executive sponsors
- Use a clear framework or rubric to compare vendors
- Shortlist a few options and validate them through demos, pilots, or sample experiences
- Work through IT and security review
- Confirm pricing aligns with your budget and expected outcomes
- Understand what implementation will look like, including timeline, onboarding support and ownership
- Prepare your internal recommendation and build alignment
- Move through approvals toward final agreement and signature

It doesn't have to be complicated. The goal is to stay organized, ask the right questions, and keep everyone aligned as you move forward.



7. A simple way to compare vendors

When demos start to blur together, come back to this. You don't need a 50-point spreadsheet. You need a few clear categories. If a vendor can answer clearly across these areas, you're evaluating from a position of strength.

Content

- Breadth and depth
- Skill coverage
- Industry coverage
- Publisher quality standards
- Update cadence
- Multilingual and accessible options

Technology

- LMS compatibility
- Integration methods
- Reporting and analytics
- Admin controls
- Simple and effective content delivery

AI capabilities

- Personalized recommendations that reflect role, skill level, or activity
- Skills-based pathways that connect learning to real work
- Intelligent search that helps learners quickly find what they need
- Tools that help you create, adapt, or update content as needs change
- Clear governance, so you understand how AI is being used and can trust the outputs

Security

- SOC 2 or equivalent
- Encryption standards
- Clear data ownership
- Accessible documentation

Support

- Onboarding guidance
- Dedicated success support
- Defined implementation timeline
- Ongoing partnership

Curation

- Do you want to curate content yourself, or would you benefit from expert guidance?
- How much time does your team realistically have to search, evaluate, and organize content?
- Do you need help aligning content to specific skills, roles, or business priorities?
- Would it be valuable to have a human partner you can reach out to for recommendations or support?
- Is your organization interested in expanded AI curation capabilities?
- Do you want curated learning paths, or are you building everything from scratch?

Curation is where many learning programs succeed or stall. It's not just about having access to content. It's about finding the right content quickly and knowing it will work for your learners. The right partner doesn't just give you access to a catalog. They help you make sense of it.

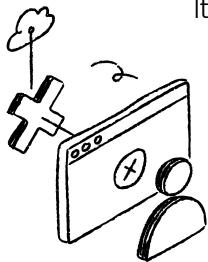
Use [this guide](#) to explore modern curation strategies.

8. AI: Helpful or hype?

AI is everywhere in 2026. That doesn't make every AI feature valuable.

In learning, AI should help you:

- Connect learning to real skills and roles
- Surface relevant content quickly
- Identify gaps and opportunities
- Reduce administrative work for your team
- Make it easier to create or adapt content as needs change



It shouldn't:

- Add complexity without clear value
- Introduce risk without transparency
- Undermine learners' trust in the accuracy of content

[The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025](#) projects that 39 percent of workers' core skills will change by 2030. Yet the fastest-growing skills include both technological capabilities, such as AI literacy and data analysis, and human capabilities, including creative thinking, resilience, flexibility, and leadership.



39%

Ask yourself:

- Does the AI being offered reduce the time your team spends managing learning?
- Does it help admins find content that's actually relevant to their learners?
- Does it make it easier to keep content current or create new content when needed?
- Can you clearly explain how it works to your leadership team?

If it feels impressive but not useful, look closer. You don't need flash. **You need function.**

The best AI tools feel invisible. They simply make learning **easier to deliver and easier to use.**



9. Before you sign: What to clarify

This is where many buyers get surprised; not because they chose the wrong partner, but because they didn't ask the right questions early.

Before you sign, ask:

- What does implementation actually look like?
- How long does integration typically take?
- Who supports onboarding?
- Is admin training included?
- What happens if we change systems later?

[Prosci research](#) shows that structured change management significantly improves adoption outcomes.



Choose a partner that grows with you

A strong partner will make implementation feel predictable, not mysterious.

Skills will continue to evolve.

AI will continue to mature.

Your workforce will continue to change.

The [World Economic Forum](#) confirms that skill disruption will remain a constant.

Choose a partner that evolves with you.

Learning isn't static.

Your partner shouldn't be either.



Pro Tip

Request a sample onboarding timeline before you finalize your agreement.

Make it easy to say yes internally

When you bring finalists to leadership, be prepared:



For IT

- Security documentation
- Integration summary



For Finance

- Clear pricing structure
- Predictable licensing
- Long-term value explanation



For Leadership

- Skill development impact
- Risk mitigation
- Workforce readiness

You don't need to defend your decision. **You need to demonstrate diligence.**

10. Proving impact without overcomplicating it

Proving ROI doesn't need to be complicated.

Start here:

- Does this reduce compliance risk?
- Does it save internal development time?
- Does it help build measurable skills?
- Can we report on usage and progress?

[ATD](#) offers practical guidance for measuring learning impact. We've also created [a resource](#) to help you connect learning metrics to business outcomes and demonstrate the value of your program to executives.

Impact isn't just about completions.

It's measured by the capabilities your people build.

Good learning reports activity.
Great learning **demonstrates progress.**



11. Buyer checklists and next steps



Strategy checklist

- Defined learning goals
- Identified key stakeholders
- Established success metrics



IT checklist

- Confirmed integration compatibility
- Reviewed security documentation
- Validated data ownership



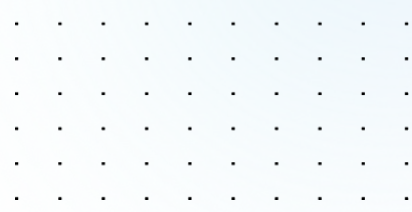
Finance checklist

- Understood pricing model
- Projected multi-year cost



Implementation checklist

- Clear onboarding timeline
- Assigned internal owner
- Defined rollout plan



About OpenSesame

OpenSesame is a global learning content marketplace and AI-enabled workforce development partner.

Organizations choose OpenSesame because:

- Broad LMS compatibility helps ensure learning stays accessible, even as systems evolve.
- Enterprise-grade security supports IT confidence.
- AI-enabled personalization helps learners find the right content faster.
- Talent insights support smarter workforce decisions.
- Global, multilingual content helps teams grow wherever they are.
- Dedicated customer success support helps ensure smoother implementation and long-term partnership.



In 2026, learning decisions shape workforce readiness.

OpenSesame exists to help organizations navigate that future with clarity and confidence.

Take the next step

Whether you're finalizing your shortlist or just beginning your evaluation, you don't have to navigate it alone.



You started with this guide for a quick overview.

Now, schedule a [Learning Strategy Conversation](#) and move forward with confidence.