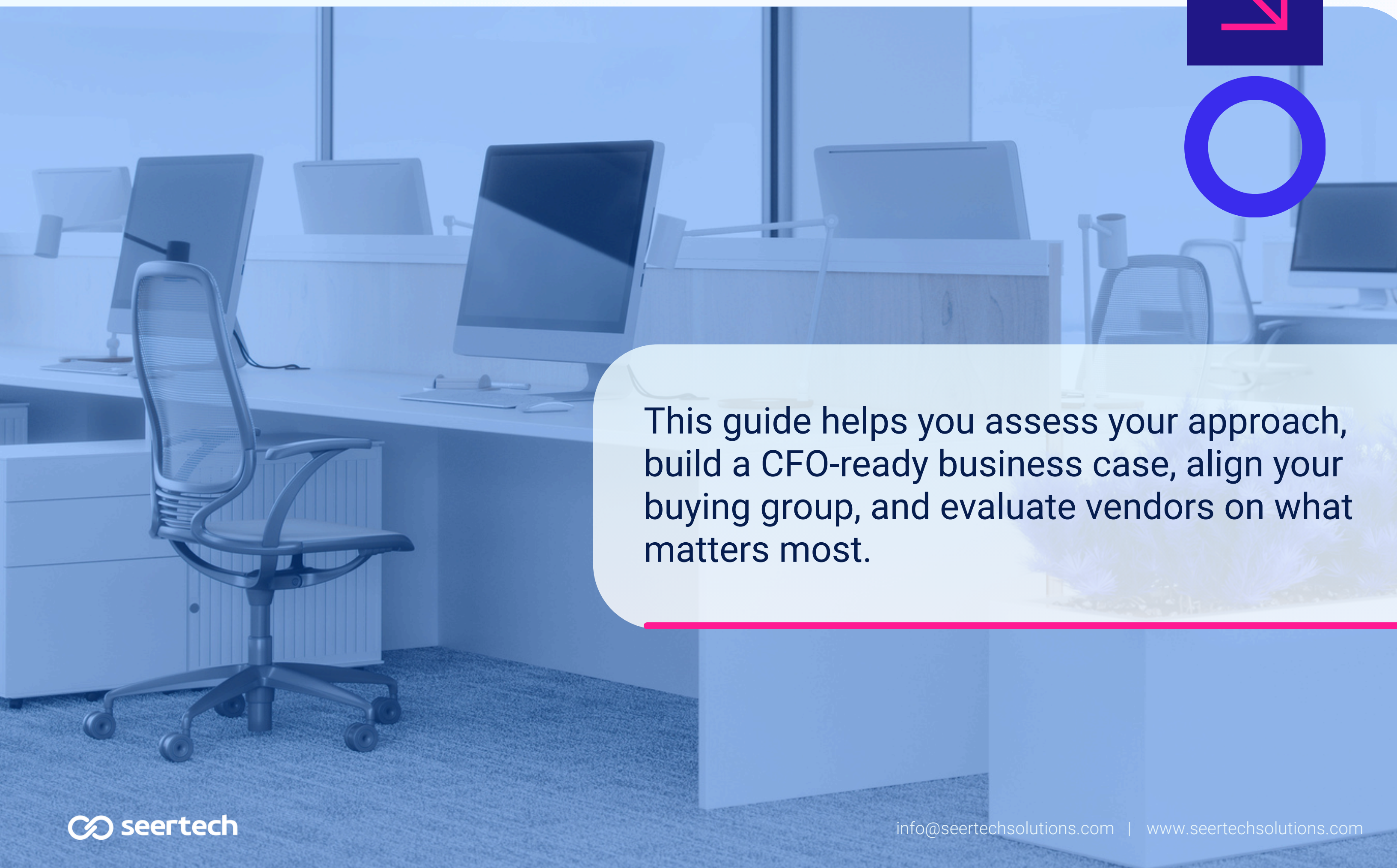
The Enterprise Buyer’s Guide to Learning and Performance Systems

How to evaluate the market, build the business case, and bring your organization with you.



This guide helps you assess your approach, build a CFO-ready business case, align your buying group, and evaluate vendors on what matters most.

What's Inside

Introduction: The purchase has changed

The average organization spends roughly **$1,283 per employee per year on learning.**[1] In a 5,000-person company, that is a $6.4 million line item. Very few organizations can say what that money changed.

That gap is the reason this purchase looks different than it did five years ago. You are no longer buying a place to store courses and track completions. Most platforms solved that a decade ago. You are buying visibility into whether the capability your organization pays for ever reaches the work, and whether it holds once it gets there.

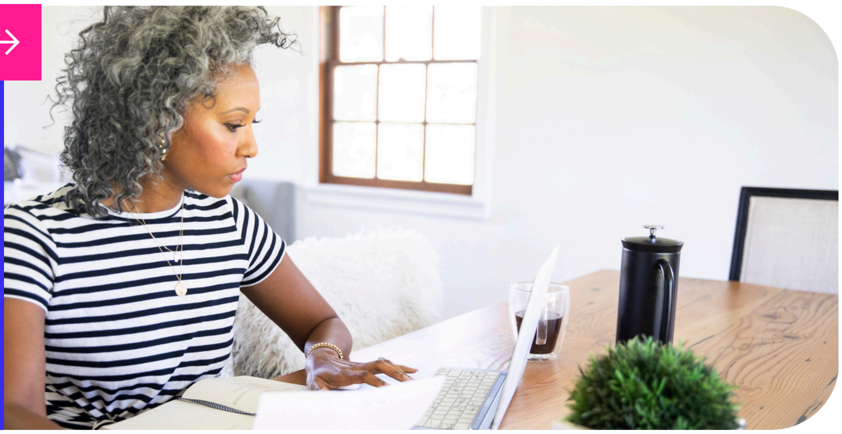
Learning does not create value on its own. People do, when they apply what they know to work that matters.

The systems that support that chain are being evaluated on a different standard now, and buyers are being asked harder questions by their own leadership. "How many people completed the training" is an administrative answer. "What changed in the business because of it" is the question being asked in the budget meeting.

This guide is built to help you answer that question. It covers how to diagnose whether your current approach is holding you back, how to build a business case your CFO will respect, how to assemble and align a buying group that typically runs six to ten people deep, and how to evaluate vendors on the things that actually determine whether this works.

[1] Association for Talent Development, 2024 State of the Industry (2024)

The Missing Middle



Most organizations measure two things well: what they spent, and what people completed. Spend sits in finance. Completions sit in the learning system. Both numbers are accurate, and neither tells you anything about performance.

Between those two points sits a chain that determines whether the investment returns anything at all:

Capability → Confidence → Application → Behavior → Sustained Performance

- **Capability** is whether someone can do the work. Assessments and certifications measure this reasonably well.
- **Confidence** is whether they believe they can do it in a live situation, with consequences attached. Almost nobody measures this.
- **Application** is whether they get the opportunity to do it. Capability without opportunity decays quickly.
- **Behavior** is whether the new way of working becomes the default rather than the exception.
- **Sustained performance** is whether the business result holds after the program ends and the attention moves on.

This is the missing middle. The value of a learning investment is created or lost in these steps, and most organizations have no visibility into any of them.

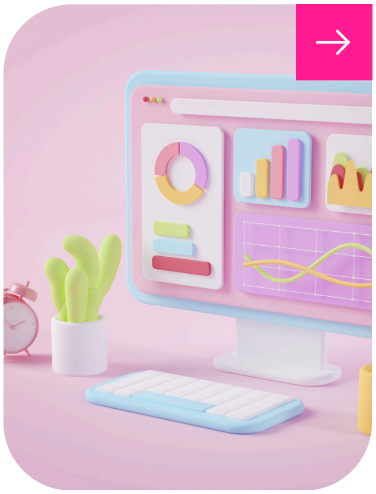
Confidence is the step everyone skips

Consider a common scenario. Your organization **invests $2,000 per person to upskill a team on a new process**. They pass the assessment. Capability is confirmed. Then they return to roles where they have no early opportunity to use it, no coaching when they hesitate, and no signal to their manager that they are unsure. Six weeks later the skill is theoretically present and practically absent.

Nothing in that story shows up in a completion report. The program looks like a success.
The investment quietly erodes, and the erosion compounds across every program you run.

Confidence is measurable. A short pulse at the point of application tells you whether people believe they can use what they learned, and where they hesitate. That single data point turns a completion report into a performance signal, because it tells you which populations need practice, which need coaching, and which are ready to go.

You have the data, but you're missing visibility



Here is the part that surprises most buyers: the data already exists inside your organization. Completion records live in the learning system. Performance data lives in operational systems. Quality scores, safety incidents, service metrics, sales attainment, error rates, cycle times, and certification lapses are all being captured somewhere by someone.

What is missing is the connective layer that puts them in the same frame and shows the relationship between them. Your problem is rarely a data collection problem. It is an orchestration and visibility problem, and it should shape how you evaluate every vendor you talk to.

The question worth putting to your leadership

Given the pressure your business is under, **can you afford to keep spending seven figures a year on capability development without knowing which parts of it reach the work?**

That framing tends to travel further inside an organization than any feature comparison.

Do You Need a New System?

If your organization already has a platform, the honest question is whether it is helping or holding you back. These are the signals that most often indicate a real gap rather than a preference.

01. You can report completion, and you cannot report change

Your reporting answers questions about activity. It cannot answer questions about outcome. When leadership asks what improved, the response depends on anecdote, a survey score, or a correlation nobody fully trusts.

02. Your data sits in systems that never meet

Learning records live in one place. Performance, quality, safety, and revenue data live in others. Connecting them is a manual exercise that someone builds in a spreadsheet once a quarter and abandons by the next one.

03. Programs are judged by satisfaction

Your primary quality signal is whether people enjoyed the session. That number tells you something about the experience and almost nothing about the result.

04. Your administrators maintain the system instead of improving the program

The people who know your learners best spend their week on enrollments, assignments, user records, and report requests. Their expertise is consumed by upkeep. This is one of the clearest indicators that the platform is working against the team rather than for it.

05. Your operating model has outgrown the platform

You now support multiple business units, regions, languages, job families, or external audiences such as customers, partners, franchisees, and contractors. The system was designed for one audience and one governance model, and every new group requires a workaround.

06. Regulated work is tracked for evidence rather than managed for risk

You can produce an audit trail. You cannot identify which sites, teams, or individuals are trending toward a failure before it happens. Compliance is being satisfied rather than used.

07. Your renewal conversation is about license count

When the vendor conversation is dominated by seats, storage, and support tiers rather than outcomes and roadmap, the relationship has settled into a utility. That is a reasonable thing to buy, provided it is what you intended to buy.

How to use this section: score each signal from 1 (this is not us) to 5 (this is exactly us). A total above 25 usually means the gap is structural rather than something a better process can close.

What the Market Looks Like Now

Buyers walk into this market and find four categories of product using overlapping language.

Understanding the differences will save you months.

The four shapes on the market

1. **The system of record.** Administers, assigns, tracks, and proves. Strong on compliance and audit, oriented toward activity. The right choice when your primary obligation is evidence.

2. **The experience layer.** Built for discovery, curation, and engagement. Strong on learner-facing design and content breadth. Usually sits on top of a system of record rather than replacing it.

3. **The suite module.** Learning inside a broader HR platform. Strong on employee data continuity and single-vendor commercials. Depth and pace typically trail specialists, and external audiences are hard.

4. **The performance system.** An emerging category built around the chain described in section two. Connects capability development to operational data, measures the middle steps, and orients reporting toward business result rather than activity. This category is young, and claims run well ahead of proof, which makes verification essential.

Five shifts reshaping the category

1. Performance became the product. Budget holders are approving spend against business outcomes rather than learning outputs. The request that gets funded is "improve performance in this part of the business," not "increase learning."

2. Intelligence matters more than feature count. Feature lists have converged. What separates platforms now is what the system does with what it knows: what it surfaces, what it recommends, and what it flags before someone asks.

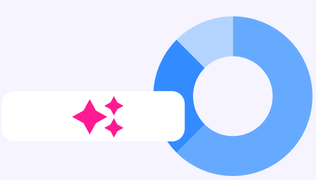
3. Almost nobody orchestrates. Skills, roles, content, assessment, operational data, and compliance obligations rarely operate as one model. Orchestration is the hardest thing to build and the easiest thing to claim, so test it directly.

4. Proof is scarce. Very few organizations can demonstrate impact, and very few vendors can show a customer doing it. When a vendor claims measurable outcomes, ask to speak with the customer who produced them.

5. Buyers want capability rather than components. Enterprise teams are consolidating platform, services, and AI into fewer relationships, because assembling five tools and an integration budget has proven more expensive than it looked.

On AI, specifically

The useful application of AI in this category is guidance: surfacing patterns, recommending interventions, and pointing attention at the right population at the right moment. The risky application is anything that manipulates or generates the underlying performance data, because that is where inaccuracy enters and trust leaves.



When you evaluate AI capability, ask which of those two things the system does, and ask to see the audit trail behind a recommendation.

Building the Business Case

A learning system business case fails for a predictable reason: it is written in the language of learning and read by people who fund business outcomes. The fix is to translate before you present.

Work through these four steps.

1. Step 1: Name the problem in operational terms
2. Step 2: Quantify what it costs today
3. Step 3: Model the value transfer chain
4. Step 4: Attach it to outcomes leadership already owns

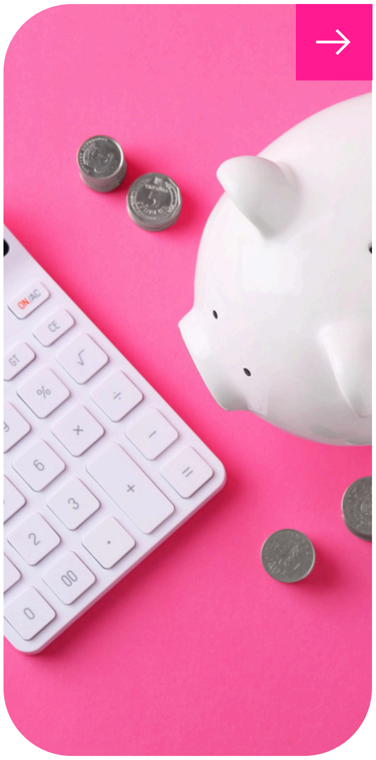
Step 1: Name the problem in operational terms

Start from something the business already agrees is a problem, and one that someone outside your function is accountable for. Strong candidates include:

- Time to full productivity for new hires in a critical role
- Error, rework, defect, or safety incident rates at specific sites
- Certification lapses that take people off the schedule or off the contract
- Service or sales performance variance between top and bottom quartile teams
- Turnover in the first year, concentrated in populations you can name

Weak candidates include **low engagement with the platform, outdated content, and administrative burden**.

These are real problems, and they are yours rather than the organization's. They belong in the plan, not the headline.



Step 2: Quantify what it costs today

Put a number on the problem before you put a number on the solution. Useful questions to ask your own team and your operational partners:

- How long does it take someone in this role to reach full productivity, and what does the ramp cost?
- What is the cost of a single incident, defect, escalation, or failed audit in this part of the business?
- How many hours per week do administrators spend on maintenance that produces no improvement?
- What percentage of the population completes training and never gets a structured opportunity to apply it?
- How much are you spending on programs whose effect nobody can describe?

Step 3: Model the value transfer chain

This is the part that earns credibility with finance, because it shows where money goes rather than asserting that it works.

Start with total learning investment. Follow it through the chain, applying an honest estimate of loss at each step:[2]

Stage	What you are asking	Illustrative
Investment	What do we spend annually on capability development?	$6.4M (5,000 people at $1,283)
Capability	What share produces demonstrated capability	80% ($5.1M)
Confidence	What share of that reaches people who believe they can apply it?	70% ($3.6M)
Application	What share reaches people who get a live opportunity within 30 days?	60% ($2.2M)
Behavior	What share becomes the standing way of working?	70% ($1.5M)
Result	What share connects to a measurable business outcome?	Unknown today

The percentages above are illustrative. The point of the exercise is not the precision of the model, it is what happens in the room when you show it. You are demonstrating that roughly three-quarters of a seven-figure investment dissipates in steps nobody currently measures, and that a ten-point improvement at any stage is worth more than any efficiency argument you could make.

Run the model with your own numbers, mark your assumptions clearly, and invite finance to challenge them. A business case that survives challenge is stronger than one that avoids it.

[2] Framework developed by Seertech. Use it with any vendor on your list.

Step 4: Attach it to outcomes leadership already owns

Close by connecting the improvement to a target that exists in someone else's plan:

- Faster ramp means revenue or capacity arrives earlier in the year.
- Lower variance between teams means the same headcount produces more.
- Fewer incidents means lower direct cost and lower insurance and regulatory exposure.
- Earlier visibility into capability risk means fewer surprises in front of a customer or an auditor.

When your case is framed this way, you stop asking for a learning budget and start asking for an investment in a business result. Those requests are evaluated differently, and by different people.

Two things to include before you present

Quantify the cost of doing nothing.

Every business case is a comparison, and when the alternative is left undefined, the alternative wins by default because it appears to cost nothing. Put a number on another year of the status quo: the ramp time you keep paying for, the incidents you keep absorbing, the variance you keep tolerating.

Name the risk yourself.

Executives assume unmentioned risk is hidden risk. State the implementation effort, the migration scope, and the change management requirement openly, along with your plan for each. A case that names its own difficulties is trusted more than one that arrives frictionless.

Assembling Your Buying Group

Enterprise purchases in this category typically involve six to ten people, and most of the decision takes shape before vendors are seriously engaged. That means the internal work matters more than the demo schedule.

Build the group early, and be deliberate about who owns what.

The core group

These roles appear in nearly every evaluation.

Executive Sponsor
Owns the business vision, the budget, and the final decision. Represents the initiative to peers and protects it when priorities shift.

Economic Buyer (Finance)
Approves the investment and tests the model. Often distinct from the sponsor in organizations above a few thousand people.

Business Owner (Operations or Line of Business)
Owns the performance outcome the initiative is meant to improve. This person is frequently missing from learning evaluations, and their absence is the single most common reason a business case fails to land.

System Owner or Administrator
Will own the platform day to day, define governance, and support the organization after launch. Their judgment on usability and administrative effort should carry real weight.

IT and Security
Evaluates architecture, identity and single sign-on, data residency and privacy, integration approach, and security posture. Engage them early rather than at contract stage.

Procurement or Vendor Management
Owns commercial terms, risk, and the comparison process. Bringing them in at the start gives you an ally rather than a gate.

The extended group

Include these based on your scope and the complexity of the change.

Program or Project Manager. Keeps the evaluation and implementation on schedule, tracks decisions, and coordinates internal resources.

Content and Data Owner. Understands the library, publication types, modalities, and audiences. Owns migration scope, which is almost always larger than the first estimate.

Learning Experience Designer. Owns what the experience feels like for the people who use it, and represents learner populations that the core team may not know well.

Data and Analytics Partner. Confirms that the reporting model can integrate with operational data and reach existing business intelligence tooling.

Risk, Compliance, Quality, or Safety Leader. Essential in regulated environments, and often the strongest ally you have, because their problems are the easiest to quantify in financial terms.

Customer Education or Partner Enablement Leader. Required when the scope extends beyond employees to customers, partners, franchisees, resellers, or contractors. Their commercial requirements differ substantially from internal training.

Define responsibility before the first demo

Use a simple RACI and publish it to the group:

- **Responsible:** who runs the evaluation and manages the vendor relationship
- **Accountable:** who makes the final call and owns the budget
- **Consulted:** who weighs in on capability, integration, and usability
- **Informed:** who needs visibility into progress and decisions

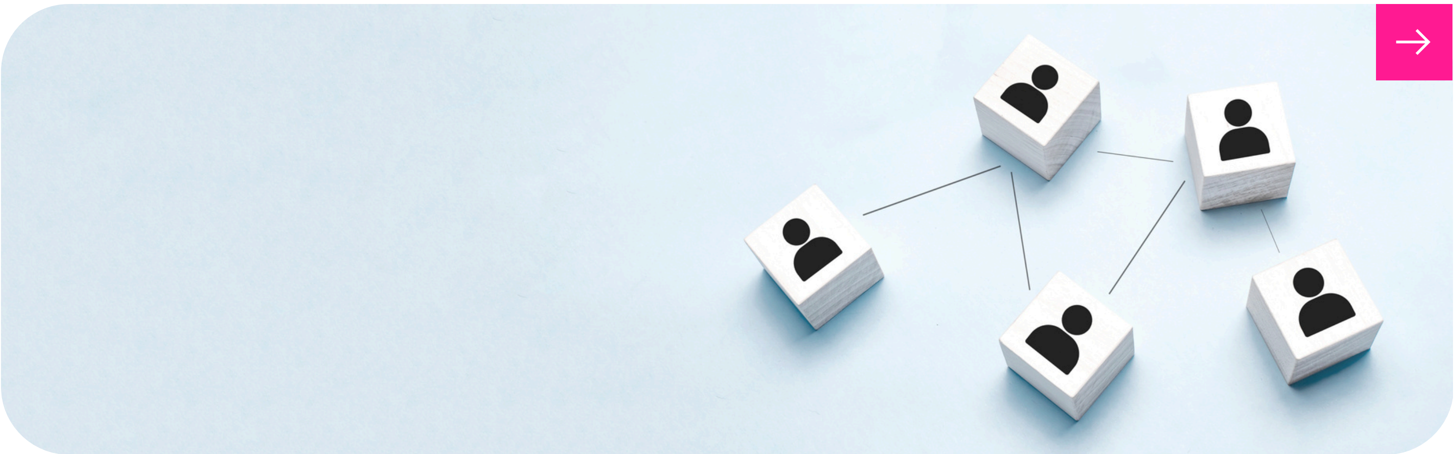
Doing this in week one prevents the most common failure in the final stage, which is a late stakeholder with an unanswered concern and enough standing to stop the decision.

Selling It Internally: A Map of Your Stakeholders

Each person in the buying group is solving for something different. The strongest champions translate one business case into each stakeholder's language, and acknowledge that person's own concerns before asking them to look past them.

Stakeholder	What they are measured on	What earns their support	The line that lands
Executive Sponsor CLO, VP Learning, CHRO	Whether the function is seen as driving business results	A case that gives them something defensible to say to their peers	"This gives you an answer when the CEO asks what our capability investment changed."
Economic Buyer CFO, VP Finance	Capital allocation and forecast accuracy	Transparent assumptions, an honest downside case, full-term cost	"We spend seven figures a year on capability and can account for a fraction of it."
Business Owner COO, VP Ops, VP Sales, Site Leader	Productivity, quality, safety, cost, attainment	Evidence this narrows variance between teams without adding to manager workload	"Your top and bottom quartile teams differ by a measurable amount. This tells us why."
System Owner Administrator, Learning Ops	Uptime, responsiveness, trust in the system	Administrative effort that goes down, and a seat in the decision	"You would spend your week improving programs instead of maintaining records."
IT and Security CIO, CISO, Enterprise Architect	Risk, reliability, total support burden	Standards-based integration, documented posture, a realistic ask	"Fewer systems to integrate and support, and here is exactly what we need from you."
Procurement Category Manager, Sourcing	Value achieved and exposure avoided	Early involvement, a real comparison set, a published framework	"Here is the framework, the comparison set, and the criteria we scored against."
Program Manager PMO, Transformation Lead	Delivery against commitments	A realistic plan with named resources and honest effort	"The vendor gave us a phased plan with the resource commitment named up front."

Stakeholder	What they are measured on	What earns their support	The line that lands
Content and Data Owner Curriculum, Knowledge Mgmt	Accuracy, currency, findability	A serious migration approach and a taxonomy that survives	"Migration was scoped honestly, and our taxonomy survives the move."
Learning Experience Designer	Engagement and quality of completion	Design control and testing against the hardest population	"We tested this with our frontline population, not just the corporate one."
Data and Analytics Partner People Analytics, BI	Trust in the numbers	Access to underlying data, clear lineage, BI integration	"We can audit every figure back to the source."
Risk, Compliance, Quality, Safety	Incidents, findings, audit outcomes	The shift from proving training happened to seeing risk build	"This shows us which sites are trending toward a finding before the auditor does."
Customer Education or Partner Enablement	Adoption, certification volume, partner performance	Real external-audience capability, not an internal platform adapted	"The same system supports our customers without a second platform and budget."



What to Evaluate, and What to Ask

Feature lists have converged, which means the differences that matter now sit underneath them. Organize your evaluation around these areas, and use the questions directly in vendor conversations.

Measurement and impact

- What does the system capture between completion and business outcome, specifically around confidence and application?
- Do you have a working model that quantifies where value is lost at each stage of the chain, and can you run it against our numbers?
- Can you name a customer at our scale who connects capability data to an operational metric, and can I speak with them?

Orchestration and intelligence

- How do skills, roles, content, assessment, and compliance obligations relate to one another in your data model?
- What does the system recommend without being asked, and what evidence sits behind each recommendation?
- Where is AI applied to guidance, and where does it touch the underlying data?
- How does the model survive a reorganization or a change to our job architecture?

Administration and governance

- How much routine change can our team make without your services team?
- What does a typical administrator spend their week doing at the twelve-month mark?
- How do permissions, branding, and governance work across business units, regions, and external audiences?

Experience

- What does this look like for a frontline worker on a shared device with limited connectivity?
- What does a people manager see, and what action can they take from it?

Integration and architecture

- Which integrations are standard, and which require development on our side?
- Where does our data reside, and what happens to our data and configuration if we leave?

Extended enterprise

- How are external audiences separated, branded, and governed?
- Is commerce native, and how does pricing work when audience size fluctuates?

Partnership

- What does implementation actually involve, and what resources do we supply?
- What is on the roadmap for the next twelve months, and how do customers influence it?
- Can you show us an implementation that went badly and what you changed as a result?

Prioritize and Score

Before demos begin, sort every capability into three buckets with your buying group in the room. Doing this early prevents the most common evaluation failure, which is being impressed by something you did not need.

Must-have. Core capability without which the initiative cannot deliver its business case. If a vendor fails here, the evaluation ends.

High-value. Materially improves the outcome and justifies a higher price, though the initiative survives without it.

Future-ready. Capability you will need in eighteen to thirty-six months. Score it, and avoid paying a premium for it today.

Publish the sorted list. It becomes the scoring framework, the procurement justification, and the record of why you chose what you chose.

Then score **each vendor from 1 to 5 against your weighting.** Have every member of the buying group score independently before you discuss, because a group that scores together converges on whoever speaks first.

Time to Score: Compare What Matters Most

Category	What you are scoring	Priority	Score (1-5)	Notes
Impact measurement	Visibility into confidence, application, behavior, and business result			
Data orchestration	Skills, roles, content, and operational data in one model			
Reporting and analytics	Depth, traceability, and integration with existing tooling			
Intelligence and AI	Quality of guidance and evidence behind recommendations			
Administrative effort	Time to make routine change without vendor involvement			
Governance	Multi-unit, multi-region, and multi-audience control			
Learner experience	Performance in your hardest use case, not your easiest			
Manager experience	Visibility and action available to people leaders			
Integration	Standard connectivity, identity, and architecture fit			
Extended enterprise	External audience support, branding, and commerce			
Compliance and security	Audit readiness, data protection, and residency			
Implementation	Realism of the plan and clarity of the resource ask			
Support and partnership	Post-launch model, escalation, and continuity			
Proof	Named customers achieving comparable outcomes			
Total cost of ownership	Full-term cost including services and internal effort			

Proof, References, and the Pilot

This is the stage where evaluations most often go soft, because everyone is tired and the shortlist feels settled.

Hold the line here.

Ask for proof rather than claims.
A vendor that says customers achieve measurable outcomes should be able to name one, describe the metric, and connect you to the person who owns it.

Design the pilot around a decision.
A pilot should test the thing you are least sure about, with a defined population, a defined metric, and a defined date. A pilot without a hypothesis becomes an extended demo.

Choose your own reference.
Vendors offer their happiest customers. Ask instead for a customer with your industry profile, your scale, and your complexity, and ask for one who had a difficult first year.

Ask references the useful questions.
What did the vendor get wrong? What did you underestimate? What would you scope differently? Who from your team did this actually consume, and for how long?

Test the hard case.
Evaluate against your most complex audience, your worst connectivity, your messiest data, and your most regulated population. Every platform performs in the ideal scenario.

What Happens After Signature

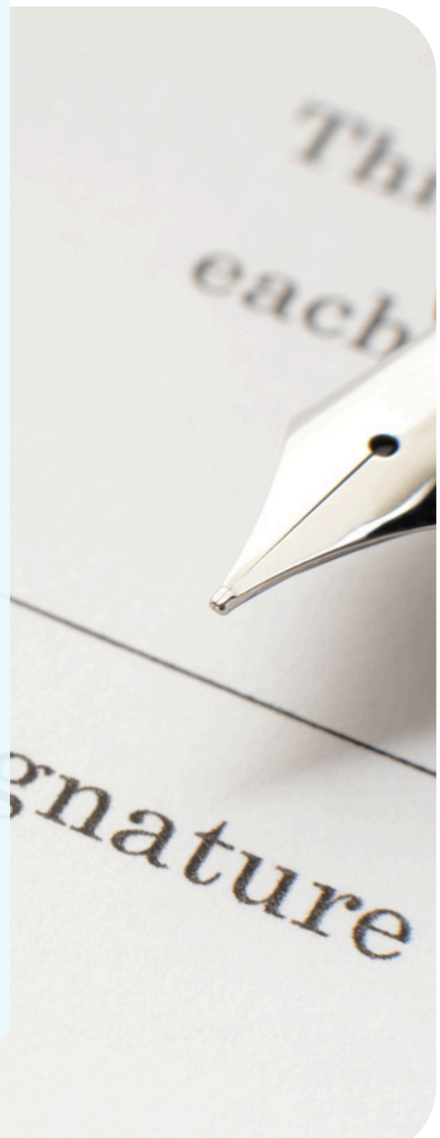
The evaluation is the shorter half of this. Organizations that get value quickly tend to prepare for these realities before they sign.

Readiness is the real constraint, and decision speed sets the schedule. Timelines slip because of internal capacity and unresolved decisions far more often than because of platform capability. Establish who decides what, and how quickly, before work begins.

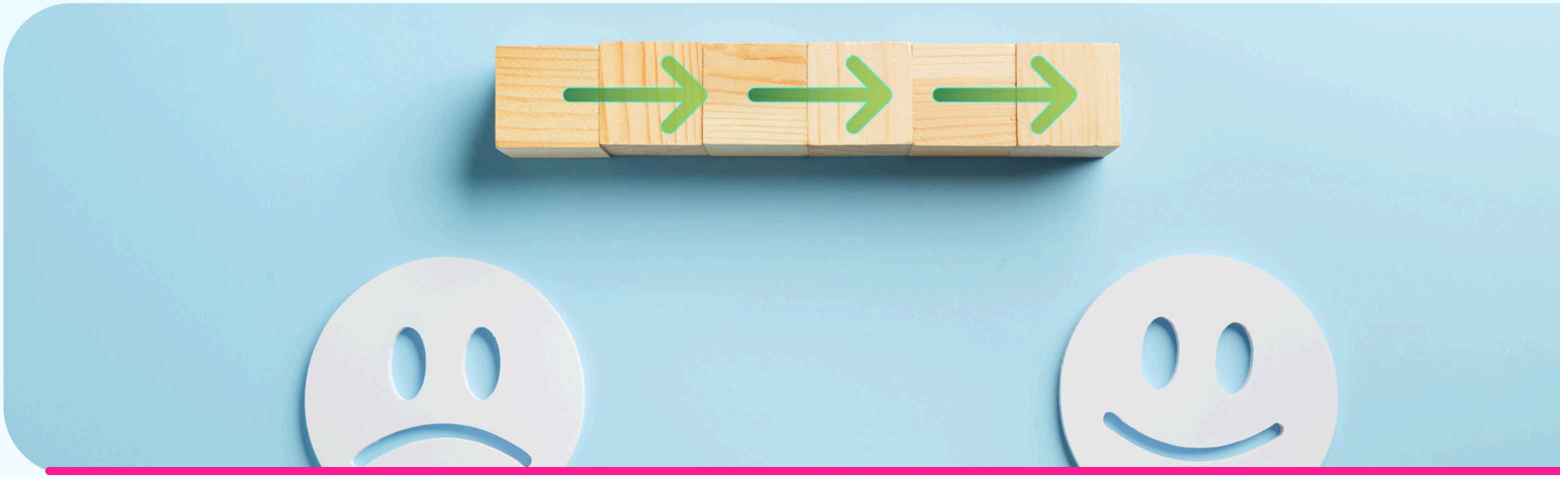
Name your core team and protect their time. Two to eight people is typical, covering executive sponsorship, project management, technical resource, content and data ownership, system administration, and learner experience. One person can hold more than one role. Nobody can hold a role they have no time for.

Migration takes longer than the estimate. Review your library early, decide what will not move, and treat this as the chance to retire content you have been carrying for years.

Define success before you start. Agree the metrics you will report at ninety days, six months, and twelve months, and instrument for them from day one. Adoption depends on managers understanding what the system does for them, so plan that as change work rather than communications. Retrofitting measurement onto a live system is far harder than building it in.



The Final Checklist



- [ ] The business case is written in the language of a business outcome someone outside your function owns.
- [ ] The value transfer model uses your own numbers, with assumptions marked and reviewed by finance.
- [ ] The cost of doing nothing is quantified and included.
- [ ] Every member of the buying group has been consulted, and each one has heard the case in their own terms.
- [ ] At least two people other than you will defend this initiative in a room you are not in.
- [ ] The evaluation framework was published before demos began.
- [ ] Each vendor was scored independently by the group before discussion.
- [ ] You spoke with a reference you selected, including one with a difficult first year.
- [ ] The hard use case was tested, not just the ideal one.
- [ ] Security, data residency, and exit terms are documented and reviewed.
- [ ] Total cost of ownership covers the full term, including services and internal effort.
- [ ] Implementation resourcing is named, scheduled, and agreed by the people whose time it consumes.
- [ ] Success metrics for ninety days, six months, and twelve months are agreed and instrumented.

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The organizations that get the most from this category share one habit.

They stop asking how much learning they delivered and start asking what changed because of it, and they build the visibility to answer honestly.

That shift is available to you regardless of which platform you select. The system matters, and the framing matters more.

Schedule a strategy session.

Let's connect

About Seertech

Seertech works with enterprise organizations that need capability development to show up in performance data rather than completion reports. We published this guide because the evaluation process in this category is harder than it should be, and better buyers make for better outcomes on both sides of the table.

The value transfer chain in section five is ours. We built it because our customers needed a way to show finance where a seven-figure investment goes, and we have made it available here for you to use with any vendor on your list.

Talk with our team to see where you stand against your peers on the Learning Effectiveness Maturity Assessment, or run the real model on your own numbers and leave with a business case you can defend in front of finance. Both conversations are worth having whether or not we end up working together.