



WHITE PAPER

Buying Online Safety Training

10 Questions to Ask Vendors

Selecting the right online training provider is a critical decision that can significantly impact your organization's training effectiveness, compliance, and overall productivity. It's not just about finding a vendor who offers the right courses; it's about ensuring they meet your specific needs and standards. This guide focuses on the essential questions you should ask potential online training vendors to make an informed decision.

1

How Do You Determine the Training Needs for My Organization?

Understanding the training needs specific to your organization is critical. This question ensures the vendor has industry-specific training, a broad enough catalog of courses, the ability to customize training, or functionality to allow you to build your own workplace training solution. A one-size-fits-all training program is rarely effective, as different industries and organizations have unique requirements. Customizing the training solution ensures it is relevant and impactful, leading to better compliance and performance.

Follow-Up Questions:

- What methods do you use to identify the training needs of different industries/organizations?
- Can you provide examples of how you've provided training solutions for clients in similar industries?

Industry Examples:

A construction site has many unique safety hazards and OSHA standards that must be followed. A vendor with experience in the construction industry will understand topics like excavation and trenching, fall protection, and scaffolding are crucial for these workers.

On the other hand, office workers typically face fewer strict regulations – more along the lines of electrical safety and noise exposure – but still must understand safety topics like fire preparedness, ergonomics, and first aid.

A good answer from a vendor might include:

- Assessment tools to determine what is required of your industry.
- Sample training plans.
- Data on most utilized courses by customers.



2

What Is Your Experience and Expertise In My Industry?

Experience in your specific industry can greatly influence the effectiveness of the training provided. A vendor with relevant industry experience will better understand regulatory requirements, common challenges, and best practices. This question ensures the vendor is not just offering generic training but has a deep understanding of your industry's nuances. Industry-specific experience means the vendor can anticipate potential challenges and provide more relevant, effective training solutions.

Follow-Up Questions:

- How many years have you been providing training in my industry?
- Can you share case studies or testimonials from clients in the same field?
- Do you have employees and/or work with contractors in course development that have industry experience?

Industry Examples:

In the oil and gas industry, a vendor with extensive experience will understand the importance of safety training related to hazardous materials handling and emergency response protocols. They can provide insights and solutions that a generalist vendor might overlook, ensuring your training programs are robust and comprehensive.

Consider a retail chain needing training in both general customer service and specific loss prevention techniques. A vendor with a retail background will know the importance of modules on shoplifting prevention, managing difficult customers, and efficient inventory management. They might share a case study where they helped a similar retail client.

In the context of a tech company, the vendor should be well-versed in training on data privacy laws like GDPR and cybersecurity best practices. They should provide examples of how they've helped other tech firms enhance their data protection measures and meet regulatory requirements.

A strong response from the vendor might include:

- Specific years of experience in your industry.
- Detailed case studies highlighting successful training implementations.
- Testimonials from industry clients highlighting improvements in compliance and performance.
- Examples of how they stay updated with industry regulations and incorporate these into their training courses.



3

Can You Provide a Detailed Breakdown of All Fees?

Transparency in pricing is crucial to avoid unexpected costs. Ensure the vendor provides a comprehensive breakdown of all fees, including costs for implementation, data migration, and any additional features.

This question is essential because it helps you understand the full financial commitment required. Unexpected fees can derail budgets and cause significant issues down the line. Clear, upfront pricing allows for better financial planning and ensures there are no surprises after the contract is signed.

Follow-Up Questions:

- Are there any recurring fees or charges for updates?
- How do you handle pricing for adding more users or courses?
- How is customer support provided and are there any related fees (ex. support tiers, extra services)?

Industry Example:

A manufacturing company needs to budget accurately for training expenses. A vendor that provides a detailed fee breakdown, including costs for adding new users or accessing advanced features, helps the company plan its finances better and avoid budget overruns.

Consider an organization that needs to train both full-time staff and temporary workers. The vendor should provide a clear pricing structure that includes:

- Initial setup and implementation fees.
- Costs for ongoing updates and maintenance.
- Additional fees for adding new users or accessing premium features.
- Potential costs for data migration from an existing system.

For example, a vendor might explain their base package includes training for 100 users, but each additional user incurs a fee. They might also outline the fact that updates to training modules, to stay



compliant with new regulations, have a fixed cost. This transparency helps the organization allocate its training budget more effectively.

A good answer from a vendor might include:

- A detailed list of all fees, including one-time and recurring costs.
- Examples of cost breakdowns for similar clients.
- Clear explanations of any additional charges that might arise during the contract period.
- Assurance there will be no hidden fees.



4

What Is Your Implementation Process?

A smooth implementation process is essential for the successful adoption of a new training system. This question helps you understand the steps involved and the level of support you can expect during the transition. A well-planned implementation process minimizes disruptions and ensures the training system is effectively integrated into your existing operations. Understanding the vendor's implementation process helps you prepare your team and resources accordingly.

Follow-Up Questions:

- How long does the typical implementation process take?
- What resources or personnel will be required from our side?
- How many hours per week/day is typical for a similar implementation?

Industry Examples:

In the transportation sector, timely and efficient implementation is critical. A vendor that outlines a clear implementation plan, including timelines and resource requirements, ensures the new training system is up and running with minimal disruption to operations.

For instance, a large retail chain implementing a new training system before the holiday season must ensure the process does not interfere with peak sales periods.

The vendor might provide a phased rollout plan, starting with pilot stores before expanding to all locations. They should also detail the support available, such as:

- Onsite or virtual training for administrators and key users.
- Detailed implementation manuals and checklists.
- Regular progress updates and checkpoints.

In another example, a construction company might require a rapid deployment of safety training modules to comply with new regulations. The vendor could offer a fast-track implementation plan, including dedicated support teams, to ensure compliance deadlines are met.

A good vendor response would include:

- A step-by-step implementation timeline.
- Associated costs for different levels of implementation support.
- Detailed resource requirements from the client, such as IT support or time commitments from key personnel.
- Examples of successful implementation within similar organizations.
- Ongoing support options post-implementation to address any issues promptly.

5

What Ongoing Support Do You Offer Post-Implementation?

Post-implementation support is critical to ensure the training program runs smoothly and remains effective. Ask about the types of support available, such as technical assistance, content updates, and user training. This question is vital because it addresses the long-term success and sustainability of your training program. Adequate ongoing support ensures that any issues are promptly resolved, updates are seamlessly integrated, and users continue to have a positive training experience.

Follow-Up Questions:

- How is your customer support department organized?
- What type of support is provided? Online, self-service, phone, email, chat
 - Is support 24/7?
 - Do you offer a dedicated account manager?
 - What is your response time for support requests?
 - Do you have any data on customer satisfaction with customer support?



Industry Examples:

A logistics company might require continuous support to address technical issues with employees working in varying locations. A vendor providing a dedicated account manager ensures the company receives personalized support, catering to their specific needs and enhancing the training program's overall effectiveness.

Consider an oil and gas company that chooses a certain vendor to offer online safety training to their employees, but they want to roll it out only to a few locations to start. After seeing success with the platform, the company wants to begin companywide implementation. A dedicated account manager can assist with adding users to the account, offering training sessions, or building custom training pathways.

In the case of a large retail organization, the vendor should offer scalable support to handle the high volume of users and potential issues. This could involve a 24/7 helpdesk for technical support, regular system performance checks, and periodic training sessions to ensure all employees are proficient with the system.

A good response from a vendor might include:

- Details of dedicated support personnel or account managers.
- Guaranteed response times for different levels of support requests.
- Examples of proactive support measures, such as regular system health checks and user feedback sessions.
- Access to a knowledge base or online community for additional support.



6

How Do You Ensure Your Training Content Is Compliant?

Compliance with industry standards and regulations is non-negotiable. Ensuring the vendor’s content is up to date and compliant with applicable regulations is essential. This question is crucial because non-compliance can lead to legal penalties, financial losses, and reputational damage. Training content that meets regulatory requirements protects your organization and enhances overall performance.

Follow-Up Questions:

- How often is your training content updated?
- Do you have subject matter experts involved in the development of training content?

Industry Examples:

A mining company must follow MSHA regulations. A vendor that regularly updates training content to reflect the latest regulatory changes helps the company maintain compliance and reduce the risk of fines or operational shutdowns due to non-compliance.

For a manufacturing company, the effectiveness of safety training directly impacts workplace safety. The vendor should include real-world case studies and incident data to keep the training relevant and engaging. They might use recent industry data to update training on machine guarding or chemical handling, ensuring employees are aware of the latest safety protocols.



A strong vendor response might include:

- A clear schedule for content updates, ensuring they align with regulatory changes
- Examples of past updates and their impact on compliance and performance.
- A process for incorporating industry-specific changes quickly and efficiently.

7

Do You Offer Content and an LMS? Who Creates/Owns Them?

Some vendors offer both content and a Learning Management System (LMS), some build their own content, and some license content from others. Same with the LMS; for some, their content works on many LMSs, but they don't actually own an LMS.

Choosing a vendor who creates their own content is beneficial, but there are things to keep in mind. Any company who produces training content should work with subject matter experts (SMEs) and those with industry knowledge to ensure content contains factual information.

There are also vendors considered content aggregators, who compile training content from third-party sources and offer them to clients. This can create a large variety of content but also comes with drawbacks. Training material will likely not have a consistent look and feel, creating a disconnected training experience. Also, there may be added price considerations to keep in mind because essentially you are just dealing with a middleman.

Follow-Up Questions:

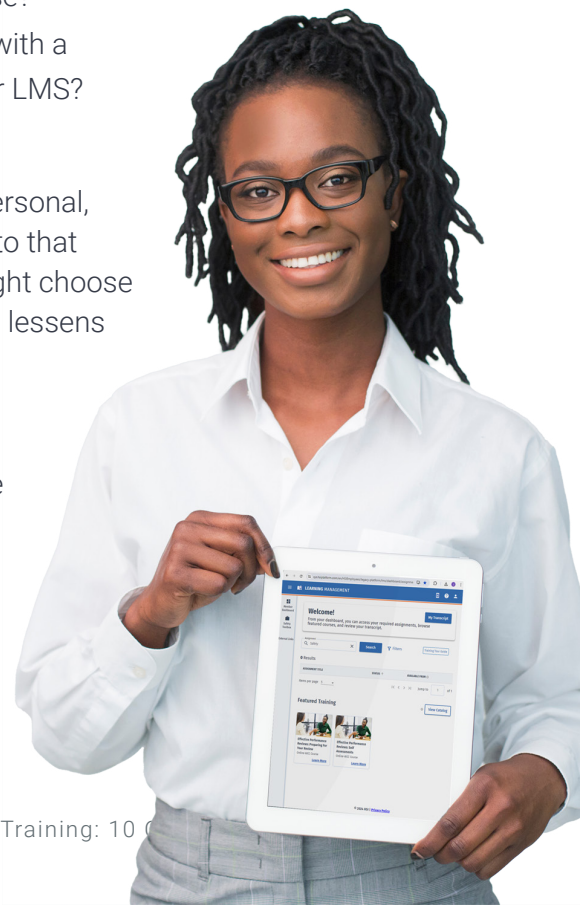
- If you create content, do you work with SMEs or industry experts to ensure examples and visuals make sense?
- If you are a content aggregator, what relationship do you have with content creators? How often do you get updated files?
- Will your content work with the LMS we already use?
- What does support, especially technical, look like with a third-party company who owns the content and/or LMS?

Industry Example:

Banking organizations deal with massive amounts of personal, confidential data. They cannot risk anything happening to that information or to their existing systems. A company might choose a vendor who offers their own LMS simply because that lessens the “touchpoints” and lowers the risk.

A strong vendor response might include:

- Information about subject matter experts they use to create content.
- Examples of third-party platforms their customers are successfully integrating content into.
- The process for addressing issues that may arise with third-party content.



8

How User Friendly Is Your Training/Training Platform?

A user-friendly platform ensures higher engagement and better retention of training material. This question helps you gauge the ease of use and accessibility of the vendor's courses and/or training platform/LMS. The success of a training program often hinges on how easily employees can navigate and use the platform. A user-friendly interface leads to better engagement and higher completion rates, ensuring training goals are met effectively.

Follow-Up Questions:

- Can employees access training on mobile devices?
- Do you offer multi-language support?
- Are there end-user help options available in courses and the LMS?

Industry Examples:

A global manufacturing firm with a diverse workforce will benefit from a training platform that supports multiple languages and is accessible on mobile devices. This ensures all employees, regardless of location or language, can engage with the training content effectively.

Consider a retail company with a large, dispersed workforce, including many part-time and seasonal employees. The training platform must be intuitive enough for new hires to quickly understand and complete their training modules. Mobile access is particularly important for this industry, as many employees may not have regular access to desktop computers.

In the case of a multinational corporation, multi-language support is critical. A vendor should offer training materials in various languages to accommodate employees across different regions. For instance, an IT company with offices in Europe, Asia, and South America will need training available in English, Spanish, French, Mandarin, and other languages to ensure all employees receive the same quality of training.

A good answer from a vendor might include:

- Demonstrations of the platform's user interface and ease of navigation.
- Examples of mobile-friendly features, such as responsive design and offline access.
- A list of languages supported and details on how content is localized.
- User feedback or case studies showing high engagement and completion rates.

9

Can You Provide References or Case Studies from Similar Clients?

Speaking directly with current or past clients can provide valuable insights into the vendor's performance and reliability. This question is essential because it allows you to verify the vendor's claims and assess their track record. References and case studies from similar clients can give practical examples of how the vendor's solutions have been implemented successfully.

Follow-Up Questions:

- Can you connect us with clients who have similar training needs?
- Do you have any case studies highlighting the impact of your training solutions?

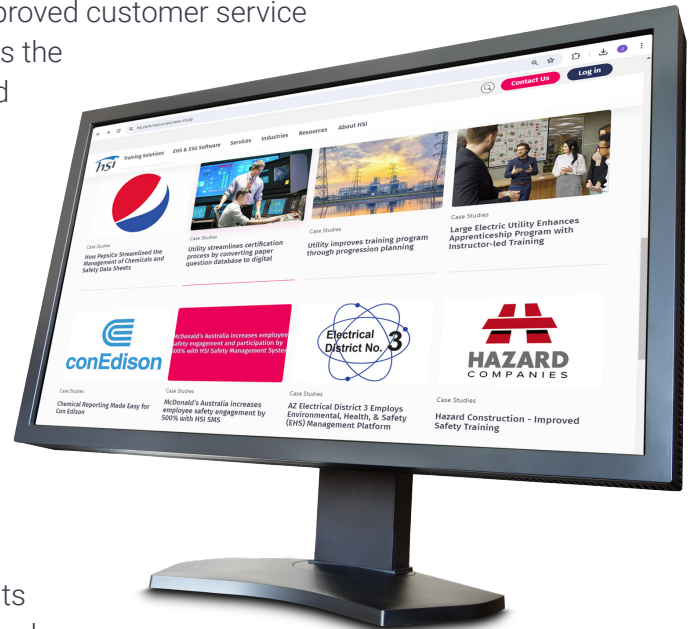
Industry Examples:

A transportation company considering a new training vendor would benefit from speaking with other logistics firms that have successfully implemented the same training solution. These references can provide practical insights into the vendor's effectiveness and reliability.

For a retail chain, a case study might illustrate how the vendor's training program helped reduce employee turnover and improved customer service ratings. This could include metrics such as the percentage decrease in turnover rates and specific examples of how the training improved employee interactions with customers.

A good answer from a vendor might include:

- Contact information for several clients with similar training needs.
- Detailed case studies outlining the problem, solution, and measurable outcomes
- Testimonials or feedback from clients highlighting the vendor's strengths and areas for improvement.
- Examples of long-term partnerships and how the vendor has adapted to meet evolving client needs.



10

What Is the Expected Return on Investment?

Understanding the potential ROI helps justify the investment to stakeholders and ensures you get the most value from your chosen training provider. This question is crucial because it helps you grasp the financial benefits the investment will bring. A clear understanding of ROI enables you to make a compelling case to stakeholders and ensures the training solution is financially sustainable.

Follow-Up Questions:

- How do you calculate ROI for your training programs?
- Can you provide examples of ROI improvements from other clients?

Industry Examples:

A construction company investing in online training needs to justify the expense to stakeholders. A vendor that provides a clear ROI calculation, demonstrating cost savings from reduced incidents and improved compliance, helps secure buy-in from management.

For a pharmaceutical company, the ROI might include reduced compliance fines, decreased training costs, and improved employee performance. The vendor should provide a detailed calculation showing how their training program leads to fewer compliance violations and faster onboarding times, resulting in significant cost savings.

An IT firm might see ROI through improved cybersecurity practices, reduced data breaches, and overall cost savings. The vendor should highlight how their training programs have led to these improvements, highlighting the tangible benefits of their solutions.

A strong vendor response might include:

- A methodology for calculating ROI that includes direct and indirect benefits.
- Examples of cost savings and performance improvements from other clients.
- Detailed calculations showing how the training programs have positively impacted clients' bottom lines.



Bonus Question:

Can We Test Drive the Product?

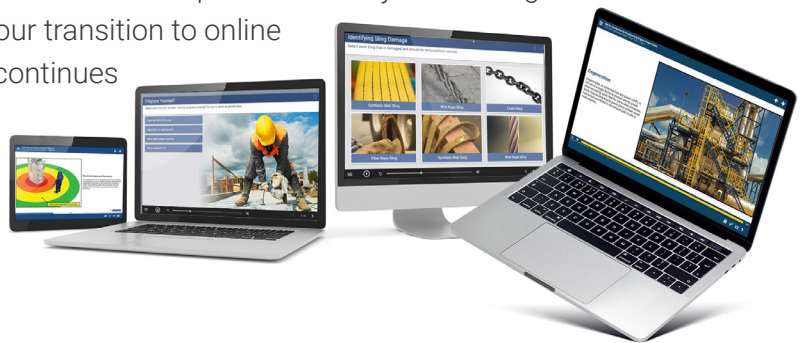
Choosing the right online training vendor involves asking detailed, specific questions to uncover the true value and capabilities of their offerings. By focusing on these essential areas, you can make a well-informed decision that supports your organization's training objectives and overall success.

However, just as we test drive a car to ensure a perfect fit, selecting training software for your business requires similar diligence. It's vital to "test drive" a training platform to confirm it has all the necessary features and is user friendly. Discovering missing features or cumbersome interfaces after implementation can lead to dissatisfaction and reduce the likelihood of renewing the service.

Once you've narrowed down your options, engage with a sales representative for a demonstration. Participate in a few training sessions to explore the software's functionality thoroughly. Involve all key decision-makers in this demo process to ensure the system meets everyone's expectations and needs.

Ultimately, choose training software that fulfills your team's requirements in a straight-forward and cost-effective manner. Pay close attention to future needs as well, not just current ones. Selecting a vendor who can grow with your company and meet future needs will save your company both time and money.

As you embark on this journey to find the ideal training software, remember that HSI is dedicated to supporting you from the initial setup to the continuous optimization of your training programs. We are committed to ensuring your transition to online training is successful and your investment continues to yield positive returns in workforce development and regulatory compliance.



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