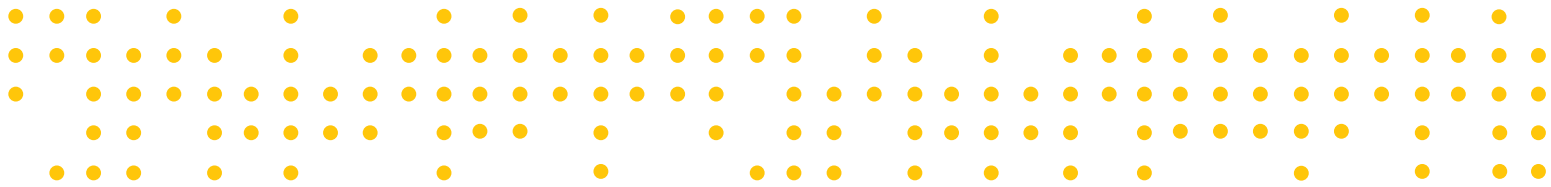




Training Simplified

Invest in your people, improve your business



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How Do You Do Training?

There are at least two angles of approach when it comes to training techniques: the content itself and employee access to that content. So, how do you do training?

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We talk with one of our clients, Erewhon Market, a food retailer, to find out what they're doing to meet the moment as an essential business making adjustments on the fly.

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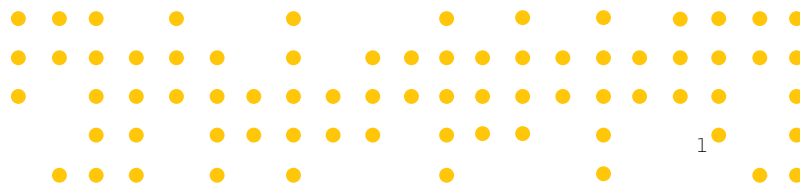
The Many Stages of LMS ROI

Learning isn't always the most important function of a Learning Management System – it's just as important that it standardizes learning processes, builds culture, and supports scale as your organization moves through different stages of growth.

INTRODUCTION

The biggest concern for food retailers at the outset of this year was labor, a wide umbrella that encompasses onboarding, product training, paths for professional development, and retention. And then the coronavirus hit and made everything extra difficult.

Here at Wisetail, we don't think you have to choose between survival and developing as a company. We believe you can do both.





Chapter One

How Do You Do Training?

Food retailers are in a bit of a pickle. More than 70% of them saw training and retention as a key concern at the beginning of the year. And, thanks to world events, they don't have the time needed to reflect on that challenge.

And it's one heck of a challenge. Retail Systems Research estimates that about two-thirds of retail workers fit in less than 10 hours of training each year. Learning and development pros need to get creative with their solutions to squeeze water from this stone.

Luckily, Wisetail is home to plenty of training professionals excited to partner with food retailers who find themselves pushing up against the limits of their current L&D model.

So, how do you make the most of limited training time? A combination of using the most effective techniques with consistent follow-up and, of course, giving yourself the right tools for the job.

TECHNIQUES

There are at least two angles of approach when it comes to training techniques: the content itself and employee access to that content.

One key element of access to keep in mind is how to build learning time into an employee's schedule. Maybe that's blocking off 15 minutes at the beginning or end of a shift. Or it could be providing them with a tablet so they can dig into service training when they have downtime or access product knowledge at the moment of need.

Content has to complement the space employees have for training. For instance, why on earth would you create a two-hour course if employees only have a quarter of an hour to learn? That'd take eight shifts to finish! And who knows how much information would even stick.

Make sure a course fits the time blocked out for learning. Microlearning makes intuitive sense here. Microlearning can be bullet points detailing a product's differentiators. Maybe a fun fact to keep a particular brand top-of-mind for employees on the floor. Or maybe a short video about the product's unique manufacturing process.

If you do end up putting videos together for employees, there are a few guidelines that are useful to follow along the way. Keep them short – a minute or less – and always use captions. Not only

do captions make the video more accessible for those with limited hearing, but employees won't have to use headphones to understand the content.

FOLLOW-UP

We all know people steadily forget information. Otherwise no parent would mix up the numerator and denominator when helping their middle schoolers with long division.

Researchers have mapped out this process – the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve, if you need a rabbit hole to go down – and shown that one of the best ways to ensure people retain information is through spaced repetition.

One fun way to follow up on training is with a trivia segment at weekly department meetings. Or you could fit refreshers into a sales contest. One of our clients, L&M Supply, uses monthly contests as a way to drive sales for specific items. Sales for the featured items jumped dramatically, one by 5,700% compared to the year prior.

Also don't forget: follow-up includes positivereinforcement, not just assessments and enforcement.

TOOLS

We know what you might be thinking. All this is well and good, but it sounds like a ton of extra tasks at a time when food retailers are working to tread water and stay afloat.

This is where the right tools come into play. A learning management system gives you a digital platform to create, distribute, and update training material. An LMS is a one-stop shop for employees to learn more about brands, products, customer service, and the culture that makes your company special.

The platform aids follow-up, too. Managers can track training progress and check in if someone plateaus or has questions. Store directors can follow department-level stats and further refine sales or service initiatives.

Of course, employees need access to the LMS. Training strategies are more effective when employees can work with it on a mobile device. Pew Research shows that more than three-quarters of adults in the U.S. have a smartphone, it's helpful if employees on the floor have access to a tablet or some other internet-enabled device.

A tablet-wielding employee can jump into content when they can, but they can also use the device to provide higher-level customer service. After all, today's shoppers often do their own research and already have a particular idea in mind before they head to the store.

SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

Making the most of limited training time is tricky. Learning and development has to be a serious priority, otherwise you might end up having to recreate the wheel with every new training initiative.

This clearly isn't an exhaustive, detailed list of how to develop your people. Reach out to our team to learn more about how a learning platform can help you transform your business to not only meet this moment but set yourself up for success in the future.

“ Sales for the featured items jumped dramatically, one by **5,700%** compared to the year prior. ”

L&M Supply Sales Challenge



Chapter Two

Q&A with Erewhon: Forging a New Path

Wisetail takes pride in partnering with innovative and clever companies like Erewhon Market. The California-based food retailer is an industry leader known for its exceptional service and knowledgeable staff, as well as its premium organic and biodynamic food selection.

Erewhon recognized the opportunity in formalizing their standards and approach to customer service. Better onboarding means that new hires reach productivity faster. Centralized communication means Erewhon can be more proactive about standards while remaining agile – necessary traits to weather the storm currently engulfing the world.

Courtney Russell, Director of Training and Development, and Jason Widener, Vice President of Store Development, spoke with us about how they've adapted to the pandemic and how they're using their Learning Management System, named GRO, to position Erewhon for success.

Wisetail: It feels like we have to start with the pandemic: How else has Erewhon adjusted operations and pivoted amid all this?

Courtney Russell, Erewhon Director of Training and Development

A huge part of our business is the community aspect because people flock to Erewhon to hang out, get a smoothie or a coffee with a friend. They go to our hot food deli, get a lunch, have a little business break. That community vibe is a huge thing for us.

So instead of us just eliminating that in-person service, we've figured out ways to pack all of the things people used to love to come in for. We created an over-the-phone ordering system for individualized deli plates and smoothies and lattes, so all of that has gone curbside. We figured out how to pack on the spot.

And now we're offering curbside pickup and Erewhon's own delivery service, so you can order directly from us, delivered by us, instead of using a third-party company. We do still have options like InstaCart available, though.

One of the ways that we've pivoted that's pretty huge is people taking on totally new roles and we're just figuring out how to be even more efficient and less dependent on outside services and be like a one-stop shop so that people can get all of the things they love and feel that like connection to Erewhon.

All that has been great for that sense of community. We're also a medicinal resource for many people, with our own naturopathic doctors and herbalists and a highly informed staff. Erewhon has the best in vitamins, supplements, tonics, and juices. Our community is looking to us for expertise in immune system support, stress reduction, and overall good health, and we're honored by that and take it seriously.

We were also one of the earliest stores to begin offering early hours (6-7am) for the elderly, immuno-compromised, and pregnant customers to shop early. We've also begun stocking a great variety of masks that people can purchase in store.

Jason Widener, Erewhon Vice President of Store Development

That pretty much nails it. And having our on-floor support, which has always been the same, knowledge and an education with our brands is just different from any other grocery store.

There's a sense of pride in us knowing these new brands and the markets, all these markets are really tough. We get all the brands that are innovating, the game changers. We're trying to bring that to our community, making sure if we don't have it we give them alternatives with our nutritionists and our doctors and trying to make sure they get the best experience.

Wisetail: Very cool. Jason, what did training at Erewhon look like this time last year and what led you to identify it as an area of growth?

JW: The first two or three stores we wanted to develop organically and empower our teams to create standard operating procedures (SOPs), and not just hand down guidelines written in

stone. We wanted to empower our team because

things are changing constantly – like, seriously, things are changing fast, especially with Erewhon, especially these last few months.

We've figured out the deli, we've figured out the Tonic & Juice Bar and the method to the madness, I think because we were loose at first. There's no secret to that sauce, right? Our recipe is complex. You just have to have all the pieces in place. Now it's getting so big and we're opening stores so fast – we've gone from 120 employees to 1,200 employees in six years.

It was time to get all the leaders together, especially all the ones who've been here a long time, who helped put this kind of ethos together to get it on paper, and that's where you guys (Wisetail) came in.

Wisetail: It sounds like the challenges were along the lines of scaling up culture and ensuring consistency with training, how did you communicate this need to leadership?

JW: At Erewhon, our face-to-face interactions are always going to be extremely strong because that's where you connect with people. You look them in the eye and say, "I'm here for you, you're here for me. We're gonna do this together and we have purpose." I think the LMS shows that we're really serious about giving our people all the tools necessary to realize that potential. We want people to be better, to grow in their own human development.

All that shines through in what we've created on the LMS, which is a learning course that takes you down the rabbit hole of "The power is within you to bring that smile," and "Why should you bring that smile? Here's some reasons we've figured out that works." And then we keep going down that rabbit hole of leadership and service and why it's so important. That's the heartbeat of who we are.

We've been around 50-some years, and our mission at Erewhon is so that you feel better. So that you make positive change and you eat better and you spread the love. That's how it works, right? We're

looking out for the community. We're looking out for the human individual. So it just made sense for us to tell that story through a course.

And then there's the follow-up, right? It takes usually six months in a place like Erewhon to where the culture kinda hits you and you're like, "You know, there is something special about this place. These guys all care."

We want them to catch that in two months, in three months. How do we fast-track those? And we felt like this was the only way.

Wisetail: One thing that really jumped out at me when looking at GRO, it seems like the CARE approach to service is central to operations, Jason, could you talk about that approach and how it works in practice?

JW: Creating A Remarkable Experience is more than just customer service. If somebody comes in looking for bananas and you start talking to them, you can develop a relationship. Trust is built from truly caring about other people. It starts with leadership and the way you guide your team. It's in every action that you do.

Courtney and I love Danny Meyer's book *Setting the Table*, so I like to frame it like I'm the host of this party and I want you to have a good time. I want you to feel comfortable, and there's trust that's being built and I want you to come back. We're more than just a grocery store, more than just a health food store. This is truly an experience like no other.

Wisetail: Courtney, you're stepping into this pioneering position of sorts as the first director of training and development. What is it about the position that really appealed to you and led you to take it on?

CR: I was a major Erewhon fan and customer for

years before starting in the position. Jason and I had built a relationship leading up to this need becoming really crucial. I think one thing Jason and I both share is that we really care about community and culture and about genuinely improving people's lives. We're very much on the same page with our mission around that.

To be able to translate our mission and our vision into a technological experience, you have to really get the Erewhon culture. And I've been learning as I go on Wisetail and having a really great time putting words and images to what we believe in, what our ethos is.

Wisetail: This is kind of a broad open-ended question: how does your team hope to use training and development to strengthen and improve that employee-customer relationship?

CR: One thing is how fast we're growing – we're opening a store in Silver Lake, which is a smaller city in Los Angeles, in the next couple months – and we want to make sure that the Erewhon culture and our standards are translated to every new person who comes on board even though we're gonna be all hands on deck, going full speed with a brand new store.

The learning platform feels like a super solid safety net. Everybody will get the same messaging and be ready to go.

JW: All the store directors and the leadership are totally behind it. Obviously it takes a lot of time to train people, and we feel like this platform is a massive support tool.

Plus, it challenges the new person. A lot of new people might look at this and go, "Man, these guys are freaking crazy!" And I want them to know, yes, we are crazy, and it's okay. You might not fit in and that's okay, too. And I think them plugging into this platform every day for the first two months for 10-15 minutes a day really shows how serious we are. And it opens up conversation, you know. It's great, I like it.

Wisetail: *That leads naturally into another question: With the scope of training that y'all are looking to do, what are some ways you ensure employees at a busy operation can fit all that into their shift?*

JW: Towards the end of the shift, we'll schedule a portion of time for them to train. We've made it so you can get through a section about every 10 or 15 minutes. We want it to be snippets every day because you can't just digest several hours in a day. You're retaining 10%, maybe. We feel like a slower rate gives us more time to address questions as they go through the learning process.

Wisetail: *Yeah, with the way I tend to take in information and training, I have to try to use it myself in real time to start to grasp it and all of that.*

JW: A big component is the follow up. Each manager will know where an employee is in the training process, so they can say, "Hey, tell me a little bit about our history," and if they don't know it's okay. It's a lot to learn, and then the manager can point out the details that really stick out for them.

CR: We're also looking to incorporate training progress into in-person reviews. So, as a new person onboards and assesses their strengths and weaknesses, we can point to a certain essay question related to customer service and let them know that we'll reference it down the road in your review.

We're really seeing it work to support the leadership in a variety of ways. For instance, with the essay question, it's actual input from employees that we can reference to get a personalized idea of who they are and how we can support their growth.

We're looking to build leaders out of our team, which is one of the reasons why we named the

platform GRO. We want to grow our people into leaders – whether it's a leader of Erewhon or leader out in the world.

Wisetail: *I love the holistic approach to employee training, has that approach led to any creative or unexpected uses for GRO?*

CR: Oh yeah, we're definitely getting new ideas every day. I get a lot of requests to add another section or report, or to create a certain communication piece

For example, one of our newer initiatives helps spotlight brands. So, certain brands that we partner with will request that they get extra attention. We train our employees on those brands, promote them in special features around the store, special features in our newsletters.

GRO is the perfect solve for how to train our employees on these brands. Without the platform, it's difficult to ensure that every employee has been trained on these brands without a layer of accountability.

JW: One problem the platform addresses is that when you're head-down, focused in a department, you start playing in your own sandbox. I think this training platform will ultimately shed light on every department and how it all works together as one team. It's important.

It's important because if you're a department manager and get someone new, you're just like, "I gotta train this person, get them up to speed, I gotta do my schedule, do my orders, check



“ We are growing fast. Our LMS feels like a super solid safety net. Everybody will get the same messaging and be ready to go. ”

COURTNEY RUSSELL
Erewhon Director of Training and Development

inventories, do my reports,” a million things to do because we’re moving so fast, you get lost.

If that goes on for a while it’s like you know nothing about grocery. You know nothing about Tonic Bar. You know nothing about the front-end and our true heart and soul, customer service. This really unites them all, breaks down the walls. Departments with no borders, you know. That’s another key element to this system.

Wisetail: With the broader initiatives, have y’all identified places you’d like to continue to push GRO?

CR: With the cutting edge work we’re doing in the industry, I think that we’re always looking to educate our employees on the bigger picture of the food industry. We have incredible partnerships, we’re working with biodynamic regenerative farmers, for example. We bring our leadership team to those farms and have them talk to the farmers and look at the soil. These are really ahead of the curve of the food industry and show our leaders what they’re a part of.

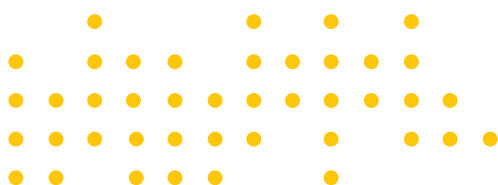
We want to translate that into our site through videos and capturing stories of our relationships with different farmers, and potentially reward employees with opportunities to do one of these field trips or do a workshop.

We’re not there yet but, in the big picture, we want to incentivize our employees to learn more and get more involved.

JW: There’s a lot of opportunity with our partners. Like Dragon Herbs teaches classes. We’ve got a lot of training that, like Courtney said, we want to incentivize. A lot of filming we want to do to create this ongoing monthly experience. Something that shows another way to look at it. We want to make sure that we’re driving home the importance of our communication and our high level of service, and education.

CR: It feels like we’re stepping into this ahead of the curve, compared to other grocery stores. It feels like we’re forging a path for a model that other grocers will want to follow. Our training is so impactful and it’s so all-encompassing that I know I feel really passionate about setting a standard and an example for other businesses to follow.

We’re going to learn as we go. It’s all a big experiment right now, and we’re excited about it.





Chapter Three

The Many Stages of LMS ROI

Would it surprise you to learn that the most important function of an LMS may not actually be learning?

Yes, a modern LMS brings incredible functionality to your learning and development and training initiatives, especially in the grocery and food retailer space. But when you consider the big picture of your organization's development, the real value in an LMS is how it enables you to navigate and thrive during each stage of business growth.

Whether you're a mom-and-pop shop with a big dream or you're navigating the twists and turns of expanding into a new region – maybe a new country – here's a look at how an LMS like Wisetail helps food retailers grow from small businesses (50 or fewer employees), medium businesses (250 or fewer employees) to large businesses (250+ employees).

SMALL BUSINESS: Formalize and Organize

When a small business implements its first LMS, it's often the first time its learning and development has been formalized and organized. It's easy to focus on training benefits, such as getting new

hires up to speed faster and reducing costs of turnover. But that's just the first step in a very important part of growing a business: systematizing how things are done and building up company culture.

Here are a few other benefits small businesses can get from implementing an LMS at early growth stages:

- Capturing company values and ensuring they're baked into future training
- Organizing and formalizing training for new employees, which makes onboarding more effective and less expensive over time
- Enhancing your team's ability to compete on service and product knowledge
- Building employee habits around using one single source of information, especially critical in industries where hourly employees may not have reliable email communication
- Collecting early data to identify opportunities for future engagement, training, and learning initiatives

MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESS: Standards and Improvement

As a food retailer expands its footprint into new stores and potentially new regions, the needs of the organization and its workforce expand, too. For starters, standardization becomes increasingly important for the medium-sized business so that employees receive the same onboarding experience and training opportunities. And capturing data becomes more important because there's pressure to capture and report on training metrics and identify opportunities for improvement.

Here are a few of the more advanced benefits medium-sized businesses can get from implementing an LMS:

- Centralizing training and communication across departments and roles
- Increasing access to learning for cross-departmental employee training
- Improving flexibility and agility in how employees and managers adapt to new developments
- Increasing access to training and course development among HR and L&D executives

LARGE BUSINESSES: Optimize and Grow

Employing more than 250 employees is an exciting milestone for any organization. For grocery and food retailers, it often triggers complex new business needs, such as cross-border logistics and marketing strategy, as well as more formal HR support, such as a People Officer or Chief Human Resources Officer.

But along with this increased complexity comes an increased risk of lost potential. That is, when the employee roster scales, it becomes more important

than ever to optimize the productivity and engagement of those employees, or else risk missing out on an employee's potential contributions.

As one executive explained in a piece for CIO.com, lost productivity at scale doesn't come from malicious employee behavior as much as it comes from outdated systems making employee's jobs more difficult. In a growing organization, the LMS works to organize critical information and make it accessible and welcoming to employees – which removes this common performance obstacle.

Here are a few of the benefits a large or enterprise organization can experience with a successful LMS implementation:

- Increasingly optimizing new hire onboarding with every wave of hiring
- Analyzing training and development data to identify successful programs and upgrade or retire unsuccessful programs
- Increasing retention among new hires by increasing access to training, development, and advancement opportunities
- Seamlessly standardizing and disseminating training for important initiatives, such as new cleanliness standards in response to COVID-19

“Learning” is the first word in Learning Management System, but it's not always the main reason a business needs one. In addition to directly supporting learning, an LMS acts as a centralizing and supporting piece of your technology stack to ensure that you're getting the most out of your training and development programs as you grow – and therefore the most out of your people.

[Find out how Wisetail can help food retailers today.](#)

About Wisetail

Wisetail is a forward thinking training and communication platform built to engage today's workforce. Based in the heart of Bozeman, Montana, we build Learning Management Systems and Learning Experience Platforms for innovators who, like us, know a people-first culture is the most important driver of success in the modern workforce.



Our software gives millions of users the chance to learn and develop in an engaging environment and our platform is crafted to meet the unique needs and challenges in today's workplace. That's why so many of today's leading brands—including Shake Shack, SoulCycle, Jamba Juice, Cheesecake Factory, Einstein Bros, and many more—use Wisetail's LMS every day.

We combine award-winning learning management with unequalled customer support for organizations to create an online community. Administrators are able to develop and share content while investing in each learner's personal and professional development, while we focus on the human side of eLearning, and encourage culture as well as growth.

We are proud to have ranked as one of the "Fastest Growing Companies in the U.S." on Inc. "5000's" list, "50 Best Small Workplaces" by Fortune Magazine, "One Of The 50 Best Small Workplaces In The U.S." by Great Places to Work Institute and Outside Magazine's "The 100 Best Places to Work."



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