

RED6 / PRACTICAL LMS INSIGHT

The 90/10 rule

A practical audit for separating work your LMS should automate from the work that genuinely needs a person.

LMS OPERATIONS - WORKING GUIDE

START HERE

This is a working guide, not a longer web page.

The website explains the idea. This download gives you the operating model: a task diagnostic, a four-week audit, a prioritisation method, a worked business case and reusable worksheets.

If a person does it on a schedule, or does it the same way every time, it should probably be a rule. Human judgement is for exceptions, decisions and improvement.

WHAT YOU WILL LEAVE WITH

☐	A map of the LMS work that should happen quietly without an administrator
☐	A defensible estimate of your current manual-to-automated split
☐	A ranked shortlist of automations worth fixing first
☐	A simple business case you can take into a resourcing or budget conversation

Use it once to diagnose the problem. Keep the worksheets for the next review, renewal or vendor conversation.

01 / WORKING SECTION

Map the ninety: the work that should be quiet

Automation is not the absence of ownership. It is a dependable rule, an expected result and a visible failure route.

The automation map

Area	What should happen automatically	Evidence it is healthy
People	Joiners, leavers and role changes flow from an agreed source. Accounts, access and audiences update without a spreadsheet upload.	A sample starter and leaver reach the right state on time; exceptions create an alert.
Assignment	Role, department, location or competency rules allocate learning. Refreshers trigger from the previous completion date.	A rule can be read, tested and traced to every learner it affects.
Time and chasing	Deadlines, reminders, manager escalations, waiting lists and session messages run to an agreed timetable.	Messages use current data, have an owner and stop when the condition is resolved.
Evidence	Certificates issue, completion records reconcile and standard compliance reports reach named recipients on schedule.	The report definition is documented and recipients trust what each field means.
Housekeeping	Dormant accounts, licence usage, failed jobs and expiring integrations are surfaced before they become incidents.	There is a routine exception report rather than a person remembering to look.

THE RULE TEST

Trigger + rule + expected result + exception owner

If you cannot name all four, the process is not safely automated yet. If you can name them and a person still repeats the task, you have found a strong automation candidate.

02 / WORKING SECTION

Protect the ten: the work worth paying a person to do

The human share is not leftover administration. It is the work that keeps rules trustworthy and makes the platform better.

Human work	Why judgement matters	A useful output
Maintenance checks	Silent failure is the real risk. Someone must decide whether the automation still matches the operating policy.	Exception log, reconciled totals and named follow-up actions.
Integration work	The systems either side of the LMS change. Field mappings, identities and error handling need context.	Test evidence, monitored failures and an up-to-date data map.
New reporting	A new question needs a definition before it needs a dashboard.	Agreed measure, owner, source fields and scheduled delivery.
Courses and content	Accuracy, accessibility, retirement and audience fit cannot be reduced to a repeatable rule.	Published standards, review dates and clear content ownership.
Genuine exceptions	Unusual cases need proportionate decisions, not a growing library of brittle workarounds.	Decision record and, where useful, an improved rule for next time.
Improvement	Someone must connect recurring friction to a change worth making.	Prioritised backlog tied to learner, compliance or operating outcomes.

Every hour spent doing work a rule could do is an hour not spent testing, improving or preventing the next problem.

03 / WORKING SECTION

Run the manual-work diagnostic

Start with observable work, not how automated the platform feels. Tick what happens in a normal month.

Eight repeat tasks that should make you suspicious

☐	People are enrolled because somebody noticed they joined a department or changed role.
☐	Overdue learners are chased individually by email or spreadsheet.
☐	The same compliance report is rebuilt for every monthly or quarterly meeting.
☐	Certificates are issued, corrected or reissued by hand.
☐	Leavers are deactivated late, or only when a licence count becomes a problem.
☐	User data is repeatedly exported, corrected and uploaded because systems disagree.
☐	Annual refreshers are assigned from a calendar reminder rather than the completion record.
☐	The same access, password or navigation question is answered again and again.

Read the result

0-1 ticks - Protect Your routine work is probably quiet. Document the rules, owners and failure checks so it stays that way.	2-3 ticks - Drifting A small number of missing or failed rules are consuming time. Find the common trigger behind the repeat requests.
4-5 ticks - Manual operation Configuration debt is now an operating cost. Prioritise frequent, predictable and low-judgement work.	6-8 ticks - Control risk Do not automate everything at once. Stabilise people data and compliance evidence before convenience work.

TEN-MINUTE SHORTCUT

Ask three questions

Does a role change assign the right learning? Does the compliance report arrive without being rebuilt? Does the system notice an expiring certification before a person does? Three noes are enough to justify a proper audit.

04 / WORKING SECTION

Measure your real split in four weeks

The ratio is a design principle, not a purity test. Measure minutes spent on work that could be a rule versus work that genuinely needed judgement.

- 01** Capture
For four weeks, record every LMS task: trigger, person, minutes, systems touched and what would happen if it were late.
- 02** Classify
Mark each task R if a dependable rule could do it, H if it needed human judgement, or U if you cannot yet tell.
- 03** Group
Combine tasks with the same root cause. Ten enrolment requests may be one missing audience rule, not ten separate problems.
- 04** Calculate
Human share = H minutes divided by total minutes. Treat U as investigation work rather than hiding it in either column.
- 05** Validate
Review the classification with the person doing the work. A task may look repetitive while containing an undocumented decision.

Example task log

Trigger / task	Frequency	Minutes	R/H/U	Root cause or next check
Upload weekly starters	Weekly	45	R	HR feed not configured

Trigger / task	Frequenc y	Minutes	R/H/U	Root cause or next check
Review failed user feed	Weekly	20	H	Valid exception review
Build board compliance pack	Monthly	180	R	Definitions agreed; schedule report
Resolve disputed completion	Ad hoc	30	H	Needs evidence and judgement

Your first four entries

Use this page to start the log, then move it into a shared sheet for the rest of the month.

Task 1 - trigger, minutes, R/H/U	
Task 2 - trigger, minutes, R/H/U	
Task 3 - trigger, minutes, R/H/U	
Task 4 - trigger, minutes, R/H/U	

05 / WORKING SECTION

Choose what to automate first

The best first automation is not the cleverest. It is frequent, predictable, reversible and easy to observe when it fails.

Score each candidate from 1 to 5

Criterion	1 point	3 points	5 points
Frequency	A few times a year	Monthly	Daily or weekly
Rule clarity	Decisions vary	Most cases are clear	One stable rule
Time saved	Under 30 min/month	Several hours/month	A day or more/month
Risk reduction	Convenience only	Reduces errors	Protects access or compliance
Failure visibility	Hard to detect	Periodic check	Immediate alert or reconciliation
Reversibility	Difficult to undo	Recoverable with work	Simple rollback

PRIORITY RULE

Start above 24 points - with one exception

People access and compliance evidence can move ahead of a higher-scoring convenience task because the consequence of getting them wrong is materially greater.

Automation candidate decision

Task and current owner	
Trigger and exact rule	
Expected result	
How failure becomes visible	
Score / 30 and decision	

06 / WORKING SECTION

Turn the result into a business case

A request for another administrator competes with every other headcount request. A measured operating gap is a different conversation.

Build the case in four numbers

1 - Repeat minutes Monthly minutes spent on tasks classified R: work a dependable rule should do.	2 - Loaded cost Use a realistic hourly employment or supplier cost. Precision is less important than declaring the assumption.
3 - Error exposure Count corrections, late assignments, access issues and reporting disputes caused by the current process.	4 - Fix cost Include configuration, testing, documentation, training and the first three months of monitoring.

WORKED EXAMPLE

26 hours a month × £32 loaded hourly cost = £9,984 a year

A £4,000 configuration and documentation project pays back in under five months before assigning any value to fewer errors, stronger access control or faster reporting.

A 30-day commitment that is small enough to approve

Week	Commitment	Evidence at the end
1	Confirm one high-value process, its owner and the current baseline.	Agreed rule, sample cases and baseline minutes/errors.
2	Configure in a safe test area and document expected exceptions.	Test record including awkward and negative cases.
3	Release to a bounded audience with monitoring and rollback.	Reconciled outputs and visible failure alert.
4	Review, hand over and decide whether to scale.	Owner sign-off, runbook and measured benefit.

Do not ask for capacity to repeat the work. Ask for a controlled change that removes the repeat work and protects the hours that require judgement.

MAKE IT SPECIFIC TO YOUR PLATFORM

Find the three changes that would make the biggest difference.

Use the free LMS health check at red6digitallearning.co.uk/health-check, or book a direct conversation with Marc about administration, implementation or integration support.