A Checklist to Essential Functionality of Fire Service Training Management Systems

With fire departments being required to do more with less, choosing the right software is more important than ever. However, when training management is tacked in other software, like an RMS to create a "one-stop-shop," it often causes usability issues, decreased performance, and inadequate reporting and data analysis for the specialized functionality a true training management system (TMS) should offer.

A dedicated training solution provides the comprehensive functionality public safety professionals need to meet their stringent training objectives most effectively. *But how do you determine which functionality is essential versus those that are just nice to have?*

This checklist outlines key areas of consideration when evaluating training management systems to help ensure the system you choose is the one that offers the most value for your money.

What Should A Training Management System Do?

What Questions To Ask	Why Is It Important?
☐ Is the user interface built for public safety?	A solution built for public safety will best meet the needs of your fire department.
☐ Does the solution auto-report to overseeing entities?	Auto-reporting to state certifying or standards and training authorities eliminates the administrative burden of reporting training and ensures every hour of training gets accounted for.
☐ Does the system offer comprehensive reporting tools?	Generate comprehensive reports to identify training gaps, in-progress and completed training, and provide detailed reporting to leadership, regulatory, or certifying authorities.
☐ Can admins get at-a-glance updates via dashboards?	At-a-glance dashboard insights allow agencies to quickly identify overdue and upcoming assignments by user.
☐ Can you use the system to manage policy updates?	Policy management tools allow agencies to deliver and route policies to ensure acknowledgement of critical updates.
☐ Does the system support records retention and allow agencies to export records as they please?	A solution that offers a secure repository for training documentation eliminates the need for paper-based processes and filing cabinets. Additionally, solutions that offer simple processes for exporting records ensure agencies will always have possession of their own data.
☐ Does the vendor offer fire and EMS online training courses?	A vendor that offers courses created by industry experts results in better and more relevant blended training options for your members.
☐ Does the vendor offer accredited online training to meet your CEU and renewal training needs?	Vendors that offer online training accredited by organizations like CAPCE help your personnel fulfill continuing education/training requirements while lowering out-of-pocket expense.

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☐ Does the system allow agencies to track state and/or national firefighting and EMS recertification requirements?	By tracking training required for recertification at either the state or national level in a TMS, agencies can easily avoid being surprised by unexpected due dates or lapsed certifications.
☐ Can the system create customized training plans or tracks?	With customizable training plans, agencies can ensure members are getting the training they need while also easily tracking progress towards credential certification/recertification requirements, compliance tasks, licenses, and more.
☐ Does the system come packaged with pre-built training trackers?	Prebuilt training templates, like an ISO tracker, EMS training tracker, or state-specific in-service training trackers, make it easy to check progress towards goals and ensure every hour of training is counted.
☐ Are course authoring tools included in the system?	The ability to create custom activities, with robust functionality that captures objectives, duration, location, instructor(s), and other critical training details, allows agencies to incorporate their own unique training content into the TMS.
☐ Is customizable testing functionality included?	With customizable testing agencies can design tests from scratch or utilize a test bank for access to a collection of exam questions and answers. These can be used to create custom tests to assess member knowledge and understanding of a subject.
☐ Does the system include access to community-created resources?	A system that allows agencies to share resources with each other streamlines initial and ongoing set up of training courses, promotes consistency among fire departments, and allows agencies to incorporate best practices from other departments more easily.
☐ Does the system allow agencies to store important documentation within the TMS?	Using a system that allows agencies to store and disseminate important agency documentation, such as handbooks, means members have 24/7 access to the most recent version of each document.

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☐ Is the system mobile-friendly?	In addition to providing a mobile-friendly TMS solution, a live skill evaluations mobile app enables users to complete training and compliance tasks and access resources anywhere, anytime.
☐ Can admins schedule in-person training events through the system?	A built-in calendar tool enables agencies to manage online and in-person training sessions through one system.
☐ Is there functionality for live skill evaluations?	A live skill evaluations mobile app with native integration to the TMS allows agencies to test hands-on skills, capture photos and videos of demonstrations, and keep all training documentation in one solution.
☐ Does the system integrate with shift scheduling software?	Integration with scheduling software allows training credit to be assigned en masse based on who was on shift that day, saving time and reducing tracking errors.
☐ Will the system communicate with the agency's SSO provider?	A system that integrates with existing software, such as a single-sign-on program, minimizes disruption to current processes and eases implementation.
☐ Is there an Enterprise version of the system?	A dynamic Enterprise solution enables individual departments to collaborate and train together more effectively. It also provides training and compliance oversight without compromising individual departments' ability to manage their own training.
☐ Does the system integrate with software from other vendors?	Utilizing a system that offers out-of-the-box integrations, or an application programming interface (API) at no added cost, allows agencies to choose the solutions that best suit their needs and avoid getting locked into a single vendor's software environment.

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☐ What sort of customer service does the vendor provide?	Choosing a vendor that provides a dedicated point of contact for the life of the contract will ensure questions and concerns about the system are addressed and resolved in a timely manner.
☐ Does the vendor offer solutions that can be deployed by cities, counties, states etc.?	A vendor whose suite of solutions also meet the needs of local or state governments allows all departments to utilize the same systems for training and operations, simplifying multi-department training efforts and governance.

Vector Solutions' suite of industry-leading software solutions for fire and EMS agencies includes training management systems, online training courses, live skill evaluations, truck checks and PPE/asset management, shift scheduling, critical incident and exposure tracking, academy automation, and auto-reporting to state standards and training systems.

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