

Courseware Distribution Platform: The New Solution Disrupting the Training Services Technology Ecosystem

What is a CDP and how is it changing the landscape of LMS and DRM solutions for training service providers?

Course materials like workbooks and job aids are a key part of any training. Whether they are provided as part of a boutique leadership class, a standard offering for an online skills certification, or supplemental to a channel partner sales training, this courseware has long been a key part of services offered by training providers. However, as learners increasingly expect more flexible training environments, their expectations around content have changed, too. Now most learners expect a digital option in addition to printed handouts.

Like music publishers at the turn of the millennium and book publishers at the outset of ebooks, training services teams have spent the last few years trying to find a good way to answer the market demand for digital content without risking the security of their intellectual property. Some training firms have relied on Digital Rights Management (DRM) platforms to send PDFs through firewalls to authorized users. Others have prioritized the learner experience with Learning Management Systems (LMS) that leave content open to unauthorized downloads, shares, or printing.

These patchwork solutions either make the experience complicated for the learner but secure for the provider, or simple for the learner but insecure for the provider. That's because these options were designed to solve other challenges - like high-security file sharing or corporate training learner journeys - instead of the core issue for training service providers: simple, secure courseware delivery.

Enter the Courseware Distribution Platform (CDP): a new solution designed for training teams to easily put their content in front of learners outside of their organization.

In this report, find out:

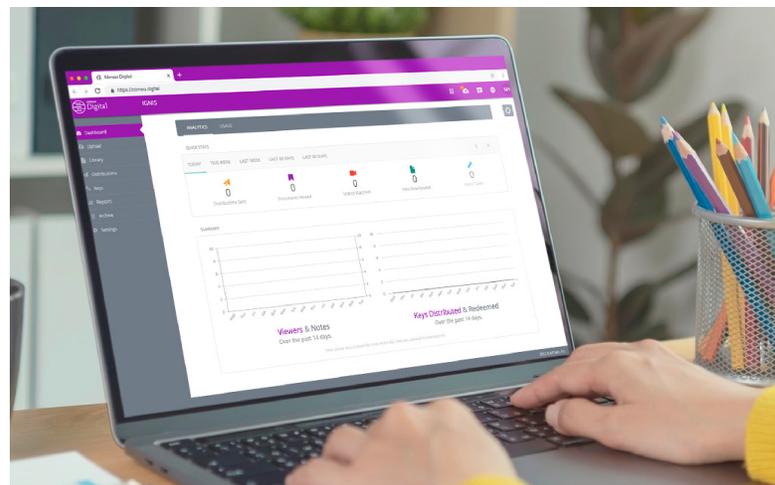
- What a CDP is
- 3 specific problems CDPs solve
- How CDPs are disrupting DRM and LMS technology

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The New Kid on the Block: What is a Courseware Distribution Platform?

The CDP is a new solution to an old problem: how to put content in front of learners, without making it vulnerable to unauthorized sharing.

To solve the first challenge, a CDP makes it easy for learners to access digital content in a branded environment. Instead of requiring IT installations or complex security protocols, learners only have to log into an online or mobile-app library to find the content for their course.



To solve the second challenge, a CDP also keeps that content secure. Relying on technology similar to Spotify or Kindle, the CDP shares content to authorized learners with security safeguards set in place by admins. There are dozens of security options, including:

- assigning content based on user email addresses
- adding watermarks to prevent screenshots
- setting expiration dates on specific files.

Added up, these security safeguards mean that learners cannot download, print, or share content without permission from the content's owner.

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Three Problems the CDP Solves



By focusing on the specific mission of simplifying digital content for training service providers, CDPs solve three problems that the traditional LMS or DRM solution could not. Let's dig into what those challenges are and how a CDP addresses them.

Digital Content for the New Normal

Following the global pandemic of 2020, learners everywhere suddenly had to get comfortable with a new hybrid world. By "hybrid," we mean hybrid everything: including workforces that are both remote and in-person and experiences that are both simultaneous and on-demand. With this massive shift, learners expect their needs to be met flexibly. In terms of training content, learners now take for granted that course materials are available in whichever format works for them, including digital.

DRM Solution:

DRM platforms tackle this problem from a security standpoint. Designed as locked file sharing environments, the DRM allows training service providers to upload documents and send them to approved learners.

The learner, however, then has to jump through hoops to access the content. Often, those hoops include getting around corporate firewalls and complex password gates. On top of that, the content isn't optimized for browsers or mobile apps, so whatever the file looks like when it is uploaded is what the learner will see.



LMS Solution:

LMS's view courseware as one of many components of a learning journey. While keeping track of registration and attendance, these platforms deliver course materials like workbooks, videos, or custom podcasts. Yet the LMS does not always offer content distribution for instructor-led training, either in-person or virtual. Instead, training teams add content distribution separately, as another layer in their tech stack.



CDP Solution:

CDPs focus on making it easy for your learners to access digital content wherever they are. That includes serving up content in a library that works on browsers or in a mobile app on any device. In some cases, learners can save that content for offline use, similar to downloading a Netflix show to watch on an airplane.



CDPs keep that content within the designated library to ensure learners can't share it with unauthorized users.

On top of that, some CDPs also plug into on-demand print ecosystems so that training service providers can offer both print and digital options to their learners.

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Secure Access to Protect Intellectual Property

While training service providers must cater to their learners with digital content offerings, they must also protect their own assets from piracy. The training content offered in these environments come from specific product or intellectual expertise that should only be accessed by those who have properly licensed it.

DRM Solution:



DRM platforms are focused on keeping files secure. However, that security is not always flexible enough to meet learners' or providers' needs. For example, while a DRM may stop unauthorized learners from downloading files, it requires authorized learners to install a new program in order to access course materials. This extra step ends up adding headache for learners, facilitators, and training admins.

LMS Solution:



LMS's prioritize fitting courseware into existing learning journey paths. For example, they may offer workbooks to download alongside an elearning module. While the content is only available to authorized learners, once the workbook is downloaded, there are rarely any safeguards to stop that workbook from being forwarded, printed, or shared.

CDP Solution:



CDPs put security options squarely in the hands of the training administrators. All content is shared with learners in a secure library — either on a browser or mobile app — so that only authorized learners can access it. From there, admins can add more layers onto each piece of content. That includes watermarking files, adding expiration dates correlated with when courses begin or end, revoking content from learners who drop out of a course, and blocking content from being downloaded or printed.



An Improved Learner Experience

Training service providers stand apart from internal corporate learning and development teams because their training courseware is part of a brand they serve to customers. Even when it is a simple job aid helping a channel sales partner remember key product features, the training content is part of an overall training brand. For savvy training service providers, it is not simply a question of how to distribute digital content but how to improve the learner experience while going digital.

DRM Solution:

DRM platforms are not focused on the user experience. While they do keep content secure by only allowing authorized learners to access it, they are not optimized for mobile devices and often require IT involvement to install. They solve the problem of securely distributing content, but many training service providers report that the DRM worsens the learner experience instead of improving it.



LMS Solution:

An LMS strives to embed training course materials within the overall learner journey. While this makes sense for large internal employee populations or extensive asynchronous courses, it ends up making the learner experience a little circuitous when the only objective is to access content for instructor-led training.



CDP Solution:

CDPs are designed to make your content easy to access and elegant. That starts with custom-branded libraries to ensure your learners engage with content reflecting your logo and colors. On top of that, CDPs optimize your files so that they work just as well on mobile devices as they do on laptop browsers. The result is a library that showcases your course materials for the leading-edge pieces of content they are.



Quick Look: CDP vs DRM vs LMS

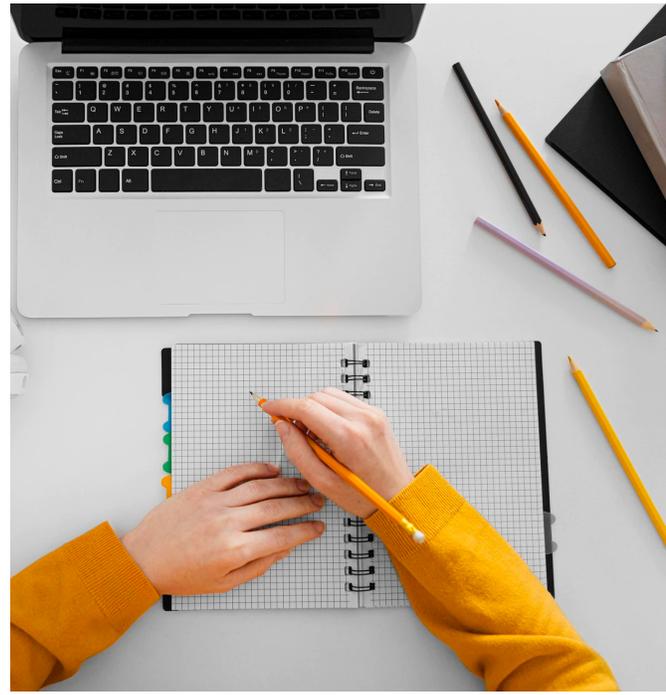
This breakdown helps make it clear why CDPs solve a specific problem that neither DRM, unlocked file sharing, or LMS technologies address.

ATTRIBUTE	CDP	DRM	LMS
Secures Content as a Core Objective	YES	YES	NO
Distributes content securely and prevents unauthorized sharing	YES	YES	MAYBE
Requires software install and/or MIS/IT assistance to get started	NO	MAYBE	MAYBE
Specifically designed for use in instructor-led training	YES	NO	YES
Online assessments / Quizzes / Testing / Grading	NO	NO	YES
Class Registration / Scheduling / Attendance Tracking	NO	NO	YES
Content Usage Tracking & Analytics	YES	YES	YES
Complexity / Time Required To Get Started	Low	Medium	High
Typical cost	\$	\$\$	\$\$\$

How CDPs Fit Into The Training Tech Ecosystem

It is clear that courseware distribution platforms are changing the training tech ecosystem by solving a very specific problem for training providers. While CDPs are disrupting the ecosystem, they also fit in as a crucial piece of the larger puzzle.

For example, many training service providers rely on an LMS or class management system to enroll and track learners. On top of that, they need to distribute and protect their courseware. To provide the best experience for their paying customers, they integrate a CDP into their LMS.



For other training providers, the CDP eases the administrative burden of updating, distributing, and tracking files. To take that a step further, they integrate the CDP into their customer relationship management software so that they can assign content to learners' email addresses without even logging into a separate platform.

Get Started with the Award-Winning Mimeo Digital CDP

Switch over to a CDP with Mimeo Digital, the first easy-to-use CDP on the market. Launched in 2015, Mimeo Digital was recognized by Brandon Hall Group with a Best Advance in Unique Learning Technology award.

Get started at [mimeo.com/lp/mimeo-digital/](https://www.mimeo.com/lp/mimeo-digital/)