

Monarch Landscape Companies Gain New Levels of L&D Visibility

The Client

Monarch Landscape Companies has delivered aesthetic excellence to commercial property owners and managers, general contractors, homeowner associations and municipal customers up and down the West Coast, Colorado, and Texas. After combining several smaller organizations in 2016, the company has become a regional powerhouse in the landscaping industry.

The workforce consists of approximately 3,000+ workers, split between two distinct groups:

- 1 Approximately 500 office and support staff in the corporate and branch offices.** Training consists of a mixture of in-person sessions and eLearning modules.
- 2 Approximately 2,500 field employees, many of whom are seasonal.** These workers report to vehicles and crews instead of desks, as their work is carried out on job sites. The training they need, largely on subjects like compliance and safety, is often administered in person.

In 2019, the company prioritized learning and development operations. There was an immediate need to make learning and development efforts more visible in both the execution and results. They set broad goals including creating sea change within the organization to focus on custom learning content for specific roles.



The learning track for Gardeners involves skills training and a series of skills survey check-ins at regular intervals including 5 days, 1 month, and 90 days.

The Challenge

Building a more effective and advanced L&D infrastructure at Monarch was a complex challenge for a variety of reasons. Many of the company's traits, from its size to its routine of seasonal turnover, are barriers to employee training efforts.

Specific challenges to overcome with L&D technologies and strategic approaches included:

- ✓ Field and office employees have inherently different needs for L&D, often with little crossover, including where they find training content.
- ✓ The organization is several companies with different teams, job roles, and structures, in various states of integration into Monarch's brand and operations.
- ✓ Employee turnover is high for seasonal employees, though not unique to the organization, but common to the industry. Each spring is a sprint for the HR team to rapidly onboard thousands of new employees.
- ✓ Some employees only speak Spanish, requiring learning programs to be bilingual to reach the full possible audience.

- ✓ Inconsistencies across HR-related requirements can cause internal management issues for the company.
- ✓ Demand for custom learning content related to essential learning tasks incentivized the team to create new materials faster.



Though field employees experience in-person, instructor-led training for their onboarding phase, their progress is tracked in the LMS with easy access to learning analytics.

The legacy learning management strategy was proving to be unsustainable and required far too much administrative effort to be effective for the growing business. The highly manual approach required the learning administrator to call supervisors and record which employees had completed a specific training module, updating a central spreadsheet to track progress.

Creating a multifaceted parent company with expanded service offerings out of several smaller organizations presented a small but growing issue. Each HR and management team had differing and sometimes conflicting practices in how they perform operational steps in the HR process. And, lacking a centralized system to galvanize the process, the complexity and manual nature of the process only worsened the issue. Building Monarch from multiple acquired companies had led to these multiple systems existing together.

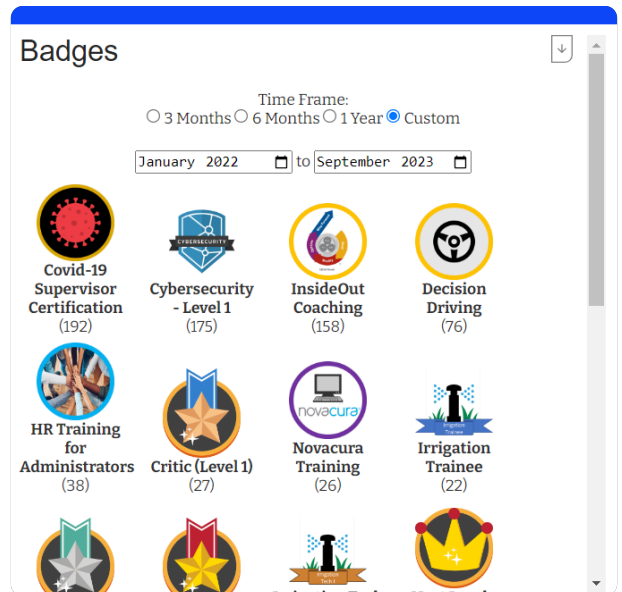
To replace this system with a more streamlined and powerful L&D experience, it was time to seek out a technological solution. This need for digitization is what brought Monarch and ClearCompany Learning together.

The Solution

The learning administrator at Monarch had used ClearCompany Learning in a previous role and was the first name on his list when Monarch went looking for learning tech. The LMS platform would become the linchpin of the company's new approach to L&D management.

A key capability of ClearCompany Learning for Monarch is its ability to track training completion in a newly centralized and automated way. This was a primary challenge and proved to be an immediate win for the L&D program. The automation of tracking learner progress in the system was sorely needed as the entirely manual process of spreadsheets and check-ins for validation was fraught with administrative busywork and replete with potential errors.

Another benefit instantly realized was fewer required touchpoints to local managers to attain and validate learning data. Each employee had an individual profile in the LMS, regardless of their employment type or the devices available. No hands-on action is required to create their profiles as the data is automatically delivered from the company's Human Resources Information System (HRIS), ensuring there's a record in the system for everyone.

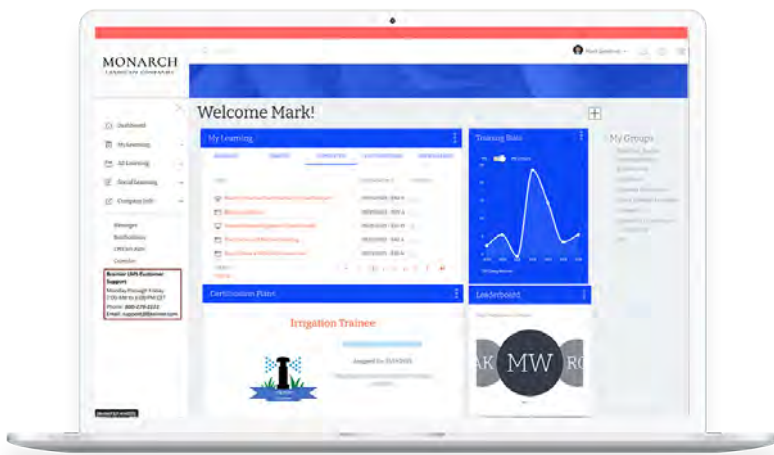


A sample of the custom and included badges available for learners to achieve in the LMS. Some are awarded by completing specific learning tracks, others are attributed to activity in the system.

For the field employees that may never actually log-in to the LMS, their learning activities are still an essential function for the process. As they attend in-person, instructor-led training events as part of their onboarding or on-going skills development learning objectives, the instructor can log this learning event in the LMS and provide instant reporting data on their learning journey with the organization. Though the LMS may be largely invisible to them, the value it brings to track their progress for their manager and learning leaders is invaluable when assessing learning programs and compliance data.

Though the L&D team was small, implementation went exceptionally well, technically and strategically. Because of the previous experience with the LMS, they were familiar with the system's capabilities. The implementation expert tailored his approach to work with the team's strengths with the tech, allowing them both to get up and running more quickly and smoothly with the platform, streamlining the process.

The LMS quickly became the central hub for all learning across the organization. The ability to pull employee data from the HRIS solution streamlined the process despite using multiple data sources. With Implementation complete, it was time to start reaping the benefits.



An example of the learner's homepage. Their dashboard is completely customizable to include the relevant learning data to their needs.

The Results

Monarch's approach to L&D has changed completely with the addition of the new LMS. Now, it's possible for all groups of employees to get the training they need — and have the results tracked accurately, saved to their individual, auto-generated profiles.

Perhaps the most exciting part of making such a major change is that the LMS can serve as a base for expansion of employee education, rather than just a more efficient 1:1 replacement of the old manual system. There is room for further growth and a deeper integration of learning into the fabric of the company.



Learning opportunities can stretch to include wellness opportunities like the importance of physical readiness and stretching for the task.

Direct results of this transformation have reached every area of the business, and include the following advancements:

- ✔ Task Automation, including onboarding, learning tracks, compliance training management, and recurring reporting.
- ✔ Additional learning opportunities beyond compliance, certification, and orientation requirements. Learners are using the system to find more content and in-person learning events.
- ✔ Access to learning data for HR and leadership teams. At a glance reporting is informing strategy on resources planning.
- ✔ Process alignment for the HR team. Monarch offers the HR teams training to ease the onboarding process for over 1,000 new employees every year.

With employees consistently requesting new options to build their skills, the team has worked with internal experts to produce between 50 and 60 new courses in the past few years.

Learning admins worked with other leaders in the organization to develop role-specific learning tracks that help set up employees for success. This ranges from a one-day “basic gardener” course for new field workers, to more robust tracks for managers and directors, and even a 14-module eLearning track for new administrators. The status earned and the title achieved by completing these learning tracks is being credited as a potential cause for the decrease in turnover and a higher return rate for seasonal employees.

The automated, centralized, and highly visible approach to learning administration has allowed the Monarch team to rethink the way they deal with training. With leaders now able to see progress toward specific objectives, it’s possible to become more strategic overall, making long-term plans for organizational progress and increasingly ambitious completion goals.

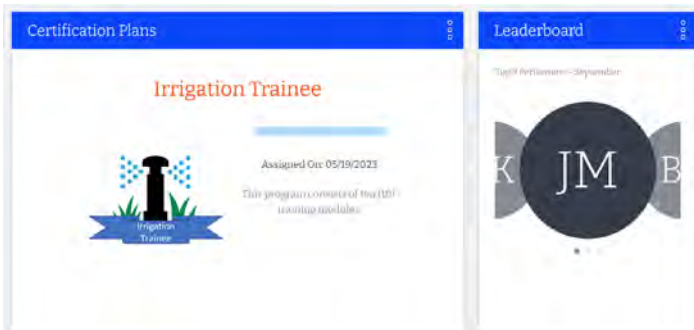


What Comes Next

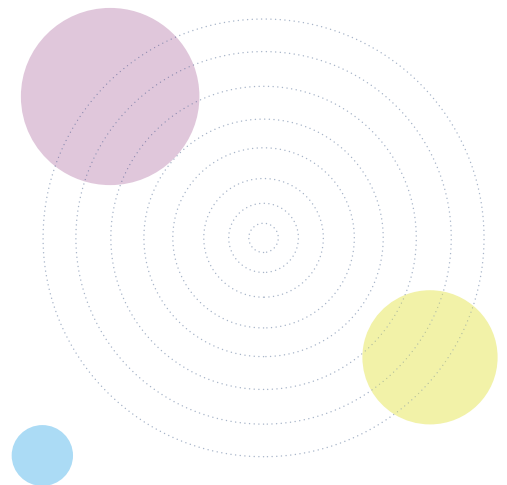
There are two key factors that have kept the collaboration between Monarch and ClearCompany Learning strong and point the way to the future: First, Monarch’s dedication to the idea that learning should be more than a box-checking exercise and second, the LMS team’s ability to enable this objective through technology.

The interest in new and custom learning content is steadily growing among Monarch employees especially as they continue to find value in the LMS. There are 1,000+ courses on all topics in the LMS at present, with 60% of those focusing on necessary skills. Others include the required courses for compliance requirements and broader, thought provoking, introspective content such as TED Talks.

Turning in-person sessions into video courses, working directly with in-house subject matter experts on niche skills such as irrigation, arbor care, and best practices has proven to be a valuable and inexpensive way to build out the library. Now, these leaders’ skills can reach the whole employee base, providing learners with a unique perspective.



Monarch has learning success tracks and Certification Plans built into the system that can be easily assigned to employees pursuing specific roles within the organization.



Monarch leadership has begun to study the connection between learning content and employee retention, to see how this expanded suite of L&D offerings can help the company keep top performing workers. Access to meaningful reporting is empowering leaders to make informed decisions that influence strategy.

With the LMS and the vantage point it offers on learning progress, the day-to-day issues with learning and development are less chronic and have afforded leaders to be more strategic. The learning tracks are helping existing employees and new hires alike to standardize their processes and institute consistent policies — no small feat for an organization that encompasses several legacy brands.

Now, with this solution as a baseline, the organization can set more ambitious goals for organizational learning and development in the years ahead.

For more success stories like Monarch Landscape Companies and to see how ClearCompany Learning can help your organization achieve its broader business goals through learning, contact ClearCompany to find out more.

