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Complex training made easy

Don’t Wait to Use Waiting Lists

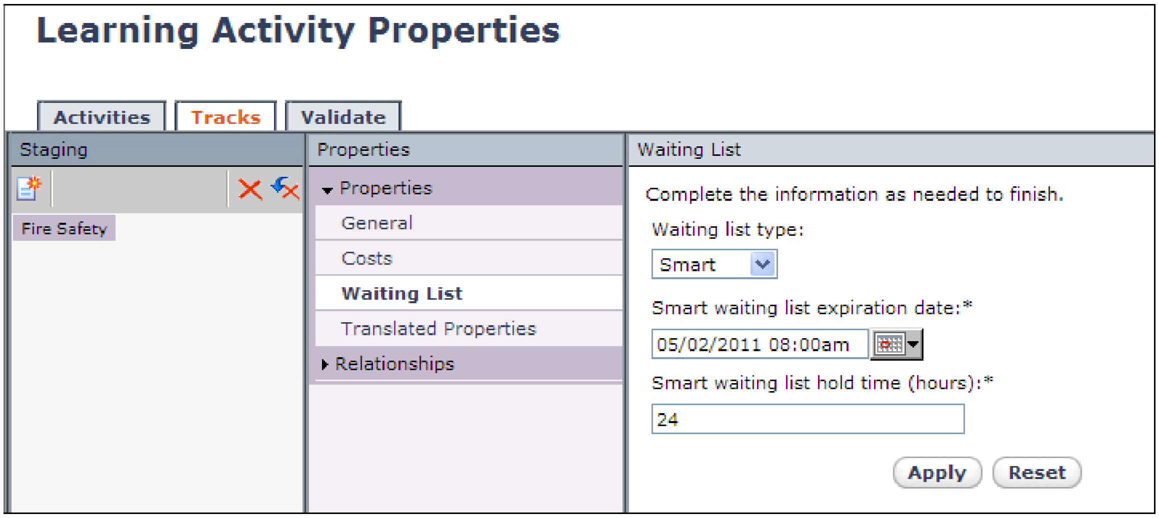
In the LMS from SumTotal, when a class hits maximum capacity, learners can go on a waiting list for that class. In the olden days--say, a couple a years ago?--this meant going on a standard waiting list – sometimes referred to as “free-for-alls.” With a standard waiting list, when a seat opened up for a learning activity, *all* learners on the waiting list would be notified via email notifications. Whoever got to the LMS and registered first got the seat, even if that learner was the last on the list.

Over time, man grew more sophisticated, mastered fire and tool-making, and wanted more complex waiting list functionality. Some even went so far as wanting to treat their learners like customers and handle waiting lists in order – giving the first person on the waitlist a shot at the seat before others. (An innovative idea, don't you think?) With this augmented feature, if the first person on the waiting list didn’t respond, then the second person would be notified, then the third... It was incorporated into the LMS and, – what with it being such a smart idea – these new waiting lists were called *smart* waiting lists. Clever, isn't it?

But what's the deal with these newfangled smart lists? Simple: for learning activities that use smart waiting lists, the learner who has been on the waiting list the longest is notified first when a seat opens. After a certain number of hours, if the seat is still available, the learner who has been on the waiting list the second longest is then notified. And so on. As a system administrator, you get to control how many hours pass before the next notification is sent, a number that can be set for each learning activity. (Well, technically, for each learning activity *track*.)

Even better, you can also set an expiration date for the smart waiting list. As the class start date approaches, you may care more about making sure the class is full than whether learners are given the opportunity to register is a prescribed order. If this is the case, you can expire the smart waiting list and it will revert back to the standard (free-for-all) waiting list. As above, the smart waiting list expiration date can also be set for each learning activity track.

To get to your smart waiting list, on the Learning Activity Properties page, click the Tracks tab, and then choose Waiting List from the center menu.



Every learning activity created in the LMS has the waiting list turned on by default, and the waiting list type defaults to standard. From the Waiting List menu on the Tracks tab, you can change that to smart, or turn it off altogether by selecting None as the waiting list type. What's nice about this is that you can change your mind at any time and turn the waiting list on and off as desired. Keep in mind that there are consequences if you do so, although that's a subject for another article. (Essentially, you have to think through how your change would affect users who are currently on the waiting list.)

And that's all there is to it. Who knew being smart was so simple? On that note, I hope this article has been enlightening, and that you now feel a bit smarter about how you use smart waiting lists.

Irene Campbell has been helping clients implement their LMS for years, during which time she has developed standard best practices and other smart things to do. As a consultant, she has helped small to large organizations – with anywhere from a few thousand to several million end users – figure out the smartest way to use their LMS.

If you have any comments, questions, or suggestions on this article – whether they are standard or smart – don't wait till they expire! Send them to articles@terrabia.com.