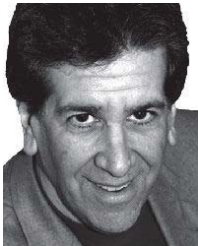


The Future of Mobile Learning

Excitement about mobile is leading to hype, not readiness • BY ELLIOTT MASIE



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The phrase “mobile learning” is popping up all across the learning field. There is excitement and innovation around the potential to put learning resources in the hands of the workforce no matter where or when. One would assume from this level of attention that workers are learning to do their jobs by accessing a smartphone or tablet. This isn't true. Scan almost any organization and you will find:

- A high level of mobile device ownership by workers.
- Varied levels of their own mobile device use to access email or the Web and perform searches.
- Very low level of mobile device use to formally access courses, assessments or learning activities.
- Very low level of development of learning assets specifically for mobile devices.
- Almost no pure learning apps designed for learning and knowledge that reside on mobile devices.
- Moderate to high levels of technology frustration in making learning assets fully viewable and optimized on devices — Flash on an iPad, for example.
- Lagging levels of mobile readiness from many learning management systems.

The first step will be to make current and new content device-ready.

Is this a thumbs down on the role or future of mobile learning? No, but it does reflect that the current excitement is leading to a level of hype where the potential for learning with mobile devices is conflicting with organizations' readiness and key gaps in the marketplace.

Here are The Masie Center's predictions for adaptation and development pathways that major organizations will take in the next 36 months as experimentation with mobile learning expands:

Device readiness: The first step will be to make current and new content device-ready. As more of our employees use corporate and personal mobile devices, the content must be better formatted for viewing, reading, scaling and optimization. For example, a video can be posted to a cloud server that will provide a format appropriate to the browser and device requesting it.

Learning mobility design: Our field needs to

develop design models that reflect our objectives for how a mobile device provides the learner or the organization with added benefits. These might include:

- **Just-in-time knowledge:** Short bursts of information and learning assets that can be consumed anywhere in just a few minutes.
- **Access to collaboration:** Easy pathways to people with expertise needed at that moment — whether they are across the hall or around the globe.

Mobile-only functions: Soon mobile learning will use the unique aspects of a device for learning design. For example:

- **Camera as learning tool:** Imagine the learner being asked to take pictures of good or risky factory floor situations and submit them for review or to do video interviews with several customers on a key process change.
- **Location aspects:** Have the mobile device use its GPS functionality to give learners content based on their location or even what is on their corporate schedule. Salespeople might get a short module based on which client they are about to visit.
- **Proximity connections:** The device could sense and provide collaboration and content handling with other learners in the same location.
- **In-the-ear prompting:** Using a Bluetooth connection, the device might provide asynchronous or real-time audio prompting or coaching for a learner on the retail floor or in the workspace.

Performance support: We believe that the largest opportunity for mobile learning will be in the performance support area, providing just-in-time knowledge in a personalized fashion at the moment of need.

E-books on steroids: Take much of our current e-learning and pour it into a dynamic e-book, which combines content, collaboration, assessment and performance support.

We will clearly see growth in new learning apps, learning platforms and mobile learning opportunities. Much of this growth will not, in fact, lead to mobile learning. Instead, it will be more about us accepting the role of mobile devices in our daily lives and leveraging the opportunities they present. **CLO**