

M-Learning

How to maximize experience

 By Craig Weiss

I am a huge fan of Columbo (detective show starring the late Peter Falk). As such, a recent (okay from the early 70s) episode had a psychologist (murderer) on talking about control of words and how they control you.

I think that the control of words is more than just a part of a TV script, rather in some instances it can be true.

This to me is evident, when we talk about mobile learning, specifically the word “mobile”.

Talk to some vendors and they fail to realize what is possible, what is required and also fail to grasp the nuances.

Talk to consumers in higher education and K-12 and for the most part, they have missed the opportunities, failed at fully grasping the potential and unable or more often, unwilling to push it to its limits.

Chat with business consumers and mobile is just a device. They fail for the most part to understand the possibilities of now and tomorrow. Mobile is a medium through which courses, assessments, and others can be utilized.

For consumers it is more about being educated and learning about all those angles. For vendors, well that is another story.

What Many are doing now

Part of understanding the failed influence at this point (i.e. reaching its potential) of mobile learning is based on what constitutes mobile learning.

I have seen vendors offer on/off synch applications for a laptop, but not the now standards of mobile “tablets, smartphones, phablets”. Equally, I have seen vendors jump into the native applications but hold on on/off synch, or include Blackberry native applications but not Android, even though on the smartphone side, Android OS had 86% of the market (2014).

On the consumer side it depends on the market.

K-12 has embraced tablets, higher education has to a degree, but it is more along the lines of students having the tablets and other devices and less so about the universities/colleges offering them or in most instances utilizing them (more on this in a while).

On the business side, it is all over the place, some companies give their employees tablets, others ask their employees to bring in their own tablets. One thing though is consistent – the use of mobile learning in some form on the corporate side of the house (inc., associations, non-profits, etc.)

In the e-learning world, m-learning is equally all over the place. LMS vendors as a whole go forward first with responsive, then native applications, xAPI and on/off synch OR they go in an entire different order but eventually all four features are in play.

Sure there are early adopters (ExpertusOne for on/off synch, Net-Dimensions with mobile LMS on jump drive) but as with anything else – it is lemmings.

Authoring tool vendors, for the most part, have been slacking when it comes to mobile learning.

Rapid Intake, three years ago, were the first ones to push output to HTML5, dominKnow Claro offers on/off synch native application besides push to HTML5 content too. Yeah, there are others in step,

but no one has done anything that would constitute “WOW” with devices such as phablets and tablets. Oh, responsive is a standard now.

Web Conferencing hit early with native applications for mobile devices, but the “wow” factor is still missing. Assessment tools, please let’s not go there, unless you want to doze off early with their lack of oomph capabilities for mobile. It is the usual boring affair.

Content providers? Ugh, they make the web conferencing vendors look like innovators for mobile learning. How many content providers offer courses specifically designed for mobile, that if seen on a laptop or desktop would look crummy? I’ll let you guess.

M-Learning vendors, who tout the whole “mobile” piece, have been slow to push the envelope. Why did it take until 2015 – to have one authoring tool vendor offer the ability to create courses geared specifically for mobile?

Why haven’t they added Kindle Fire as a native app (when some LMS vendors have)? Why haven’t they seen or realized the power of phablets (the next big thing I see as it relates to mobile devices)?

Responsive should be a standard and yet there were plenty “m-learning” vendors who didn’t have it until late 2014. And, why the constant showing of smartphones with your product? A smartphone is good for many things and can do some cool things (more in a sec.) but not for a course. I’d rather hang out with the pigeon I saw eating a French fry (he seemed to enjoy it).

And why for freak’s sake are vendors, who say they are “m-learning” vendors, not pushing the envelope? I mean hello – augmented reality (AR)?

Time to Change

Enough on the vendor side of the house. More are getting it, but not enough have got it. Let’s now talk about what you (as the consumer) can do NOW. Not a month from now or a year from now or down in the “future”, but NOW.

Keys to Maximizing YOUR M-Learning Experience

There are different experiences and capabilities that you can be offering your learners right now. If you are in K-12/HE it will be unique for you, just as if you were on the corporate side. There are some items that can/do crossover, but in the entire landscape, unique for each market.

Higher Education and to a lesser K-12

Two weeks ago while presenting in Saudi Arabia, I made a note of the top three worldwide social networking applications for mobile -- #1 was Facebook, #2 Instagram, and #3 Snapchat.

Eighteen-twenty five year olds are leaving in droves from Facebook and they are going to Snapchat and Instagram. What do these two applications have in common?

- Capture images, photos and video
- Used on mobile devices, most cases smartphones
- Can text (SMS) to one another (end users) or post in a group or album for example
- Can add captions (Snapchat)
- Can share with others (you know, social collaboration)
- FREE



• Available right now for anyone to use
Let's see if I have this right:

There are applications out there that my students are using, is free so it won't cost me or them a dime, they are able to shoot video and take photos (both of which they are already doing on their own), they can share it with others and others can respond back, and they can post it in other places too.

Now, think how as a professor/instructor/teacher you could use these two applications right now in your classroom whether you go the blended approach, F2F with mobile added, or purely 100% online?

Here's a few Right now

• For an assignment have your students shoot videos (no more than 2 minutes) on their smartphones on whatever you are discussing and then upload them into your learning management system (LMS) (if it can be done), if not into another site.

• Students share the videos, and provide feedback on each video – using their smartphones.

• Want to have a student to experience more than just shooting a video of a field? Toss in some AR capabilities – there are plenty of AR applications out there.

• Let's say you have an accounting class and students are learning how to balance the books; have them create their own two-minute how-to video on balancing the books and post it for others to view.

• Add a gamification component to any video, image, photo and then here's the kicker branch it out – go beyond just your class – maybe the entire school on some project.

• Incorporate social into that mobile, you can do it quickly with Snapchat or with Twitter (another top app).

• Instead of focusing on assessments, have them complete projects with those smartphones and the applications available for you and them (there are hundreds of thousands of free mobile applications on so many subjects – trust me – you will find what you are looking for).

• Push the power of tablets for your courses by incorporating capabilities within your courses that have learners wanting to use their tablet or phablet, rather than their laptop.

• I see some companies using e-books as options, but beyond the “dictionary, highlight, leave note and it can be shared angle”, it scream boredom. Have the students add some photos to a key area/concept, incorporate a mini video, include yourself – video components, maybe that AR thing – or add some gamification capabilities to it.

• Create mobile games for your students. You do not have to build the next *World of Warcraft*, but you could create some other simple mobile games (the tools are out there for you to do so). Tie in the subject – specifically one or two key points to hit upon and make it work.

• Minecraft is huge, so why not tie that in, some-how, with a subject learning area.

It's all about getting them involved, getting them excited and getting them to learn in a way that makes the most sense. When you are creating your subject areas (focus on one or two key points per area). Thus, one video is focused on only one or two key points to get across – you will see higher comprehension, retention and synthesis.

Corporate/Business Side

I'm still a non-believer in the use of smartphones for taking courses, but those smartphones do offer a few capabilities that you could be doing NOW.

If your learning management system (LMS) vendor offers a native

application with on/off synch and manager/instructor features – you have no excuse for not using it in your workplace or locations.

Those who love the on-the-job (OJT) experience – add the ability for the mentor to do a checklist on the smartphone OR have the manager watch the employee go about and complete their tasks using the smartphone. When it is all completed, have the employee digitally sign.

Next you hit send and *whalla* – proof that this task or tasks or requirements have been met. There isn't a better way to validate compliance, especially safety/regulatory compliance than this when it comes to mobile. Need video validation? Hello – capture video with that smartphone.

Similar to above with the following – add gamification capabilities when your learners use their mobile devices for taking courses or for shooting some videos (2 min max.) or photos tied to a specific learning focus.

If I want to have my learners know the best sales techniques, I would have them shoot some video (after permission is granted) of what sales techniques they think work the best (based on fellow salespeople at the workplace) and then upload and compare. Right away, you can see if they hit the mark or missed. Another plus BTW for those OJT folks.

Instead of having a new employee watch a video (which they ignore) or do some other boring task/s, bring mobile into it and add a new level of engagement. Have them shoot some quick video of various employees responding to questions or completing tasks - think of it as a game learning experience with real people rather than some avatars. When they are done, you provide feedback within the mobile component and they have something they can refer back to.

Tie in the applications of social, video, audio etc. that are out there are quite likely being used by many of your employees, members, etc. today.

If you have an LMS vendor who allows you to brand your own native application (i.e. it is their application, but instead of their name it is yours) – do it! If they don't offer it, tell them you want it.

Create your own AR applications or mobile applications (there are sites that you can do it for nearly nothing).

Incorporate AR into your mobile learning experience – some AR applications include text too.

Bottom Line

The key to utilizing mobile learning is to change the way you think about mobile learning. A smartphone is a mobile tool to enhance learning. A tablet is a mobile tool to enhance taking courses. A phablet can be both – a tool to enhance learning and a tool to enhance course taking.

And for the learners/students, these mobile tools can be taken to new heights, new exploration but they need something from you to make it work. **TEL**

This article first appeared [here](#). Published with author's permission.



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