

Do I Need to Know about HTML5? (Nov 12)

By Patti Shank

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One of the undisputed facts about working in the eLearning field is that there's a lot to learn, and what there is to learn changes constantly. That certainly causes some frustration for people in our field, as a recent eLearning survey showed. We're putting the final touches on the *What's Changing in Your (Work) World* research report, which analyzes 674 responses to a survey taken at the end of June and beginning of July 2012 that evaluated how the learning and eLearning work world has been changing in the last five years. The survey had many fascinating results, but one of the most interesting was answers to the following question:

Compared to five years ago, has the typical variety of your work tasks increased or decreased?
(Figure 1)

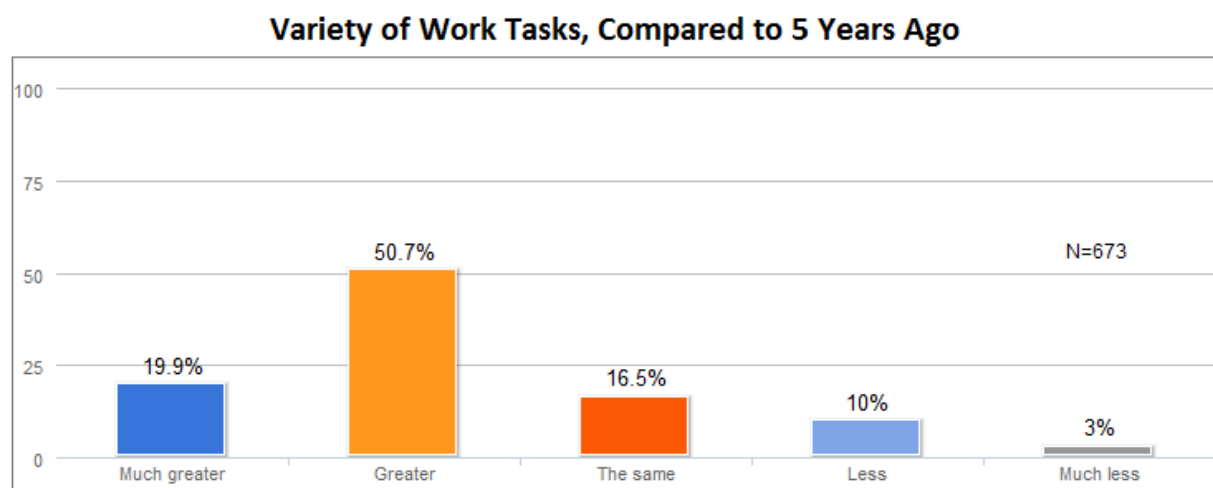


Figure 1: Variety of work tasks compared to five years ago (source: The eLearning Guild, *What's Changing in Your (Work) World* research report, in press)

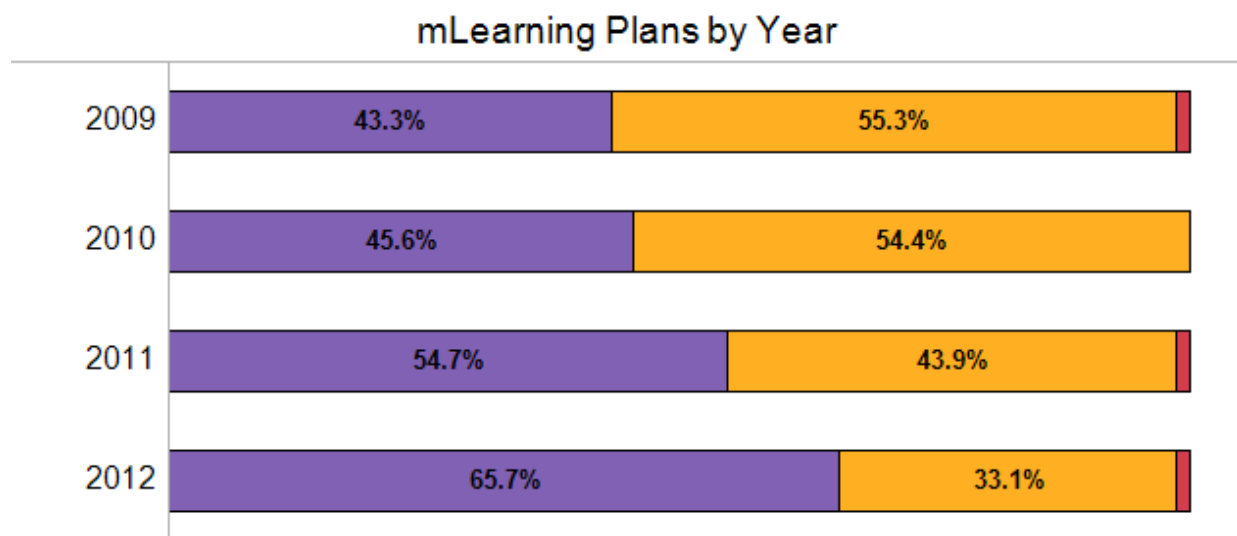
The response to this question *clearly* showed that respondents saw an increase in the variety of work tasks over the last five years. Almost 71 percent answered either "Much greater" or "Greater." Very few said "The same." Less than 15 percent said "Less" or "Much less." This means that *almost all respondents agree that our jobs have increased in variety of work tasks.*

Is this a problem? There has been a great deal of discussion on online boards and elsewhere about the increasing need to know about everything and anything when working in the eLearning world and how hard it is to meet that expectation.

So the answer to the question “Do I need to know about HTML5?” is yes. “But the good news is we’ve made it easier to understand,” says Judy Unrein, the author of our latest eLearning Guild research report, [HTML5 and eLearning: What Managers and Practitioners Must Know](#).

One of the primary reasons for knowing about HTML5 is that Flash isn’t supported on most mobile devices. And mobile learning or mLearning is becoming a very big trend indeed.

Figure 2 shows a chart from The eLearning Guild’s 2012 [Mobile Learning, The Time Is Now](#) report, showing the large rise in mLearning plans by Guild members from 2009 to 2012. Clearly, mLearning is becoming increasingly important.



Source: The eLearning Guild Research

Legend

- Do less mLearning
- No change
- Do more mLearning

Figure 2: mLearning Plans by Year, 2009 to 2012 (source: The eLearning Guild, Mobile Learning, The Time is Now research report)

As Judy explains in the HTML5 research report:

Apple has never supported Flash playback on their very popular iOS devices (at first, the iPhone and iPod Touch, both released in 2007). This was problematic for two main reasons: First, most of the video served on the Internet at that time was Flash-based video. Second, Flash powered much of the animated content, from games to banner ads to eLearning content. All of this Flash content required the use of the Flash Player plug-in, which was extremely prevalent on desktop computers but was not (and still is not) supported on iOS, Apple’s mobile operating system.

Cut to now. The iPad is still by far the most popular tablet on the market; iPads comprised about two-thirds of tablet sales in 2011 (Gartner). Dig a little deeper into mobile statistics, though, and you’ll find another interesting data point: even though iPads have “only” 66 percent of the tablet market, a greatly disproportionate amount of the web browsing done on tablets is on iPads—over 90 percent, by some measures (Albanesius). In addition, iPad users buy more apps and pay more for them per app (Elmer-DeWitt). This data seems to make it clear that while you may create for a variety of platforms,

at the very least you shouldn't ignore the portion of your audience that uses iPads, as this market actively uses its devices.

There's another fact, though, that broadens the concerns with delivering content in Flash for mobile and tablet content consumption. While Android devices have historically supported Flash content (or at least Flash Mobile, a "light" version of Flash playback that Adobe created for tablets and mobile devices), Adobe announced in November 2011 that it was halting further development of Flash Mobile (Stevens). Then they announced in June 2012 that they were no longer supporting Flash Mobile or certifying it for use on new versions of Android (Fingas). Clearly the writing is on the wall for the future of Flash playback on tablets and mobile devices.

The move from Flash to HTML5 is certainly shaking up the eLearning world in a big way, but Unrein's report shows that there are actually quite a few advantages to this shake-up. For example, she cites the following among some of the advantages:

Accessibility: "HTML content is more accessible, even when you make no special effort to develop for accessibility."

Editing: "When content resides in a plug-in, it is difficult if not impossible to open it up, make edits, and repackage it. Content delivered as HTML is far easier to edit as needed..."

Search: "In a world of increasing reliance on search and increasing focus on easily finding just-in-time content, HTML5 content has a clear advantage over content that lives within a plug-in."

Translation: "(You) can more easily translate content that exists within website code, even if you've made no effort to localize your content."

Responsive Design: "Designing with HTML5, you are able to flow content to a certain width or have it reflow wider or narrower based on the browser size. Responsive design is a new term coined to describe customizing your content delivery based on the size of the browser window... This isn't an automatic feature of HTML, but something you enable using code instead of plug-in-based content."

In the rest of her report, Unrein discusses more of HTML5's capabilities, how you can use it for eLearning, considerations for moving to HTML5, including delivery, development, and design, and whether you *should* be moving to HTML5. It also offers some case studies to help you think through what others have done.

My *What's Changing in Your (Work) World* research report will be available soon, so make sure you are a paid Guild member so you can download both it and the HTML5 report! If you have any questions or comments about Guild research reports, don't hesitate to contact me at pshank@elearningguild.com.

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