

Mobile Learning for Talent Development - Critical Questions for Learning Leaders (May 14)



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“Your learners are already mobile learners. Whether they’re listening to podcasts at the gym or accessing a Lynda.com tutorial about HTML tags while in line for coffee, they are using mobile technologies to learn. In general, giving your learners access to content on-demand allows them to learn when it is most convenient for their schedules. And in terms of effective performance support, mobile technologies are a natural way to provide our learners what they need, when they need it.”

Attention learning leaders: Pause for a quick moment to think about your organization. Are you thriving or are you merely surviving? If you’re thriving, well done! You’ve probably realized that having the right people in the right positions, performing consistently day in and day out, is part of the secret sauce of success. But don’t rest on your laurels—today’s complex learning ecosystem requires that you stay ahead of the curve to manage organizational talent. And if you find your organization on the other side of the curve, merely surviving and doing your best just to stay afloat, take heart in knowing you’re not alone.

Although there are many elements involved in fostering ongoing employee development, we cannot ignore the potential that lies beyond the traditional classroom and outside of a structured eLearning curriculum. And although we know that mobile learning is just one element of the learning ecosystem, it does hold promise for learners to access what they need when they need it. So then, for those times when mobile learning is the perfect complement to your existing learning and talent-development strategies, how can you take full advantage of its possibilities?

Where is mobile learning making an impact?

First, let’s consider where mobile technologies are making a real impact. Natural examples include outside sales teams and field-service technicians who need access to just-in-time information when they’re on the go. Similarly, healthcare workers who must stay abreast of changes in a turbulent industry, but who rarely have dedicated time for focused learning, would be a natural fit. And over the past few years, even [commercial airline pilots](#) and [the NFL](#) have realized the benefits of using tablets. For learning leaders, consider the following questions:

- What are the critical positions in your organization? What competencies do they require?
- What talent is available to meet your needs—internal and external?
- What learning and development opportunities exist to prepare individuals to move into those critical positions?

- How would mobile learning improve the status quo and add value to your organization?

What do the numbers say?

According to the [Pew Internet Project](#) (January 2014), 90 percent of American adults have a cell phone, 58 percent have a smartphone, and 42 percent own a tablet computer. The same research shows that nearly 90 percent of the smartphone users have used their devices to access some sort of just-in-time information, be it to solve a problem, settle an argument, or get help in an emergency. Globally, [Cisco reports](#) that mobile devices and connections increased from 6.5 billion in 2012 to 7 billion in 2013; and this number will easily surpass the global *human* population in the next year or two. More often than not, these same individuals are bringing these same devices into the workplace. But, perhaps surprisingly, only about 30 percent of respondents to a [recent eLearning Guild survey](#) reported using mobile phones or smartphones for learning in their organizations. So what does all of this really mean for learning leaders tasked with developing a learning and talent management strategy?

- Begin with yourself—how do you use your own mobile device(s)?
- Now, looking to the enterprise—where would mobile learning or mobile support increase capacity, address problems, or create new opportunities for learning?
- How are you using LMSs and other learning-related data within your organization?
- What is your organization's BYOD (bring your own device) policy? How does this impact the way forward?

What's culture got to do with it?

As businesses and organizations become more interconnected, more social, and more global, it becomes increasingly important to know how your organizational culture might adapt to changes within your learning architecture. Is your learning culture evolutionary in nature, where changes happen gradually over time? Or are you able to withstand revolutionary change, with a 180 degree shift in perspective? As a learning leader, you must know to what extent you can leverage your existing culture when the time comes to chart a new path forward. In the meantime, think about the following:

- What is your organization's learning culture?
- How can your culture support continuous learning and development as part of your overall talent-management strategy?
- What level of responsibility do individual employees have for their own development within your learning culture?
- If you want to give mobile learning a go, where can your learning culture support a low-risk trial? (Think post-training checklists, new-hire orientation messages, ePubs for regulatory details, short instructional videos, etc.)
- What other stakeholders would you need to involve? How willing, or not, are others to make a change?
- How will you ensure mobile learning or mobile support initiatives align with and support your organizational culture?

Now what? What's next for you?

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to work (and yes, those policies do exist for some), then mobile learning is probably not the most realistic solution.

As you explore opportunities to provide continuous development to your employees across multiple platforms, remember that your primary challenge is to attract and develop the best mix of talent to support your organization's goals. And then, even with the inevitable budget, security, or integration constraints, know that mobile technologies give your organization the opportunity to provide the exact information to your employees at the exact moment they need it.

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