

Is the Time Right for mLearning?

By Holly Behr

Vice President of eLearning Solutions, MindCrossings

From ATMs to do-it-yourself grocery check-out lanes to “pay-at-the-pump” gas stations, Americans are increasingly confronted with new gadgets that encourage a self-serve lifestyle. Hot new products combine functionality of older products in new ways: the office copier is becoming the office copier/scanner/fax machine and the cell phone is morphing into the cell phone/camera/PDA.

Meanwhile, everyone’s asking for increased efficiency while workers are spending more and more time out of the office. Is it any surprise then, that more and more companies are turning to mobile learning?

Mobile Learning or mLearning is learning delivered on a mobile device such as a cell phone, PDA or Pocket PC. Typical mLearning may be an email alert, a corporate communication, an audio lecture or even a short, simple version of a corresponding eLearning course. Confused about eLearning versus mLearning? Remember that eLearning refers to any learning that is delivered by electronic means such as over the Internet, and mLearning is actually just a type of eLearning that uses a mobile device.

We have found that mLearning is gaining popularity for a number of reasons:

- 1 Employees can make use of small periods of down time while traveling or waiting for meetings.
- 2 Employers can push out everything from email notices to whole courses to select audiences who are on-the-go.
- 3 Instructional designers can leverage existing content by breaking down learning into small chunks appropriate for small screens and short time-frames.
- 4 New technologies make it possible for mobile users to complete courses on their mobile devices anytime, anywhere.



mLearning can be designed for most mobile devices, like the PocketPC above. The big advantage of delivering training to mobile devices is that your remote users will be able to access training that may otherwise be out of reach. Supported devices include PocketPCs, SmartPhones, PDAs, and TabletPCs.

Think about how you might be able to use these 3 basic types of mLearning at your organization:

1. Notify – push out automatic alerts, announcements or reminders.

2. Act – give access to your LMS and allow online course enrollment and downloading of mLearning courses.
3. Interact – users complete mobile courses, listen to audio announcements, attend mobile web lectures and engage in online discussions.

Early adopters and mLearning experts have these tips for those who are getting started with mLearning:

- 1 Begin by examining the characteristics and habits of your audience groups. Ask yourself “how do they act and what do they need?” This step will help you to envision mLearning that will be more easily adopted by each group.
- 2 Don’t buy a mobile device (cell phone, PDA, Pocket PC, etc.) just for mLearning but look instead at the mobile devices your audience is already using.
- 3 Look at your existing eLearning content to see what might convert easily to mLearning. The idea is to leverage current material as much as possible. Remember mLearning is excellent for timely, quick communications and short informational courses.
- 4 Design new eLearning courses with mLearning in mind. It is highly efficient to design once and leverage twice.

Intrigued by the possibilities? During your daily commute or while you’re waiting for your next meeting, don’t be surprised if you start thinking about how you could use the time for mLearning. We think that you’ll find mLearning a great way to get smarter. Now.



Holly Behr is the Vice President of eLearning Solutions for MindCrossings, who offers custom learning solutions, outsourcing, and consulting services that drive performance and bottom-line improvements. You can reach her at holly.behr@mindcrossings.com