



Five Must-Haves in an LMS to Get Mobile Learning Right

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Adobe Captivate Prime
Learning Management System



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INTRODUCTION

In 2015, management consultant and author Marc Rosenberg, PhD, [defined mobile learning](#) as “the capability to seamlessly deliver a wide array of knowledge and performance improvement resources to users—anyplace, on any platform, on demand, and at the moment of need.”

Mobile learning is not a new concept; however, several factors are driving renewed interest in it. Nearly all workers today own or have access to a mobile device (usually a smartphone or tablet), and employees across all demographics are comfortable using mobile technology.

In a [study that Adobe commissioned from Forrester Consulting](#) in December 2016, human resource and learning and development leaders in the United States and Canada were asked about the benefits of mobile learning. More than half (53 percent) said that it offered flexibility of learning from any location at any time; 47 percent said it was an easy way to repurpose and share new content; and 45 percent said it makes learning more widely available and accessible.

Recognizing its value in today’s modern workplace, executives are committed to funding mobile learning initiatives. According to the [CGS 2017 Enterprise Learning Annual Report](#), 54 percent of respondents plan to increase spending on mobile learning in 2017 and beyond. The challenge for organizations is figuring out how best to incorporate mobile learning into their overall L&D strategy.

A comprehensive learning management system (LMS) can help support and optimize mobile learning. This paper will explore the issue in further depth, illuminating five must-haves in an LMS in order to get mobile learning right. The five must-haves include:

- The ability to sync with a smartphone or other mobile device
- Support for offline learning
- Job aids for just-in-time learning
- Push notifications for the mobile workforce
- QR code capabilities

The ability to sync with a smartphone or other mobile device

From your 90-year-old grandmother to your 9-year-old niece, everyone today has a smartphone or tablet. This includes most of the workforce. Today's mobile-driven environment means that people are always connected to one another and the workplace. This phenomenon is only expected to grow as smart watches, smart glasses, and other wearables become more ubiquitous.

This is good news for L&D, as [Elucidat](#) reports that 67 to 81 percent of people use mobile devices for learning. Many of today's learning management systems support always-on, agile learning. By downloading a free native app to a smartphone or mobile device, an employee can gain easy access to company content, courses, and notifications.

Many members of today's global workforce operate from their home, car, a corporate satellite location, a factory floor, or even a coffee shop. Mobile learning permits these employees to access vital material without being tethered to the home office. It also allows busy employees to effectively manage the time they devote to continuing education. Using their mobile devices, workers on the go can squeeze in learning while commuting or waiting in line at the grocery store.

Predictions on the future of mobile learning in the workplace

- Mobile learning will become the rule rather than the exception. When designing learning programs, the norm will shift from today's "good-to-have" status to a mobile-first approach.
- Within this context, there will be a shift toward search-driven learning at the moment of learning need. Most learning will transform from pushed learning to on-demand learning. This may challenge the boundaries of mobile performance support.
- As companies accept the fact that the most effective learning does not occur when an employee sits at a desk clicking "next" on a slide deck, mobile learning will expand beyond manufacturing and retail environments and infiltrate the office.
- The scope and sophistication of mobile learning will grow dramatically, leveraging augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) to provide a superior user experience. Major players like Facebook, Microsoft, and Apple are already doubling down on their AR investments, which will bring mobile learning to an entirely new level.
- Learning content will become more interactive and aligned with wearables and accessories.
- All courses will be published in HTML5.
- Mobile learning will have less to do with access to courses, and more to do with knowing how to retrieve the exact information you need to do your job.

The fact that employees today are using different types of devices for learning raises some interesting questions for developers. When creating learning content, experts recommend keeping the capabilities and limitations of the different mobile delivery systems in mind. A video that streams perfectly on a desktop computer may not translate to a smart watch, due to the small screen size or memory bandwidth. Likewise, users may find that navigation buttons that are easy to press on a laptop are difficult to access on their smartphone.

On the flip side, mobile learning also opens up some exciting opportunities for developers. For example: Portable smartphones, with their sophisticated cameras, can enable engaging VR content that would be impossible to achieve on a desktop system.

Support for offline learning

Workers today often find it difficult to complete training in one sitting. Modern learning management systems provide support for offline learning. A common scenario might find a senior-level manager beginning a course in the morning on her desktop computer at the office, continuing it on her tablet while waiting at the airport to board a plane, finishing it that evening on her phone in a hotel room, and then auto-syncing the results to the LMS upon her return.

A mobile strategy that supports offline learning is especially beneficial for sales personnel who spend much of the day on the road or plant supervisors who spend the majority of their time on factory floors. Such individuals can download the learning content they require to their mobile devices and access it later at their convenience.

Spotty internet connectivity is a real problem in many regions of the world. In certain countries, workers might find a solid connection at work but experience limited or intermittent Wi-Fi at home. Offline learning allows them to securely download a course while on a strong work network, complete the course at their leisure at home, and then seamlessly sync it back up to the learning management system when they return to the office.

Job aids for just-in-time learning

Today's technologically savvy employees routinely use their smartphones to instantly access all sorts of general information—from what time the movie they want to see is playing, to where the nearest Mexican restaurant is located. An LMS can mimic this process with work-related information. Rather than manually sorting through a reference catalog or clicking through a course, an effective mobile strategy provides employees with the exact information they need, when they need it. Consider these real-world examples:

- A retail clerk can instantly pull up data to assist a customer making a purchase decision
- A call center supervisor unpacking a new office router can watch a quick installation video

- A factory worker can review safety procedures before operating a piece of heavy equipment
- A salesman can go over the top five reasons his client should be interested in his pitch before beginning a sales presentation
- A physician can review details about side effects with a patient before prescribing a rare medication

With accurate information literally at their fingertips, employees are more confident and can provide better customer service. However, mobile delivery of just-in-time learning aids goes beyond employees and customers. When done correctly, it also benefits the business. Workplace safety, productivity, and employee retention can improve, providing a competitive business edge. Experts note that enabling workers, and ensuring they have instant access to everything they need to effectively perform their jobs, will have a positive impact on a company's growth and success.

There are certain scenarios when just-in-time mobile learning can be particularly helpful. One is when there has been a considerable time lapse from when the employee actually learned something to when they need to implement or apply it in the workplace. In such cases, the job aid is a refresher that compensates for incomplete memory. Another is when, for whatever reason, an employee was never formally trained in a procedure and suddenly needs to perform the task. Finally, there are employees who simply prefer to learn on an as-needed basis.

Organizations are also using just-in-time mobile learning to help reduce the firehose of information that new hires officially receive but are apt to forget because they don't routinely refer to it. Some examples of this might include how to submit a PTO request, or the proper procedure for securing the office at night.

Push notifications for the mobile workforce

Most large enterprises have offices in multiple states or countries. The trend toward remote work means some employees may never set foot in a physical office. Regardless of their work location, all employees should have equal access to information about courses, compliance deadlines, and certification expiration. An LMS can push notifications on a native app to keep all learners informed—whether they are in the office, out in the field, on the retail sales floor, or even at the beach on vacation.

Many workers are inundated with email and often relegate those that appear to have been automatically generated to the trash without reading them. Push notifications sent to a mobile device stand a better chance of being consumed, especially when they are engaging. Learners will take notice of a short text message informing them that they have dropped to second place on the gamification leaderboard, or that a funny five-minute compliance video is available for viewing.

Experts offer the following tips when incorporating push notifications into a mobile strategy:

- Make sure that the notifications are targeted to the correct audience and not automatically sent to everyone.
- Use mobile push notifications sparingly. Otherwise, they become part of the noise and will be ignored.
- On average, learners lose 70 percent of the information they learn within 24 hours of a learning experience. Push notifications can be a powerful microlearning reinforcement tool. Use them to help workers overcome the forgetting curve by delivering small pieces of learning on a regular schedule.
- Push notifications can amplify the benefits of gamification, offering an easy way to share relevant game information with users.
- It is frustrating for trainers when employees fail to show up for a learning experience they have registered for. Use push notifications the day before an event to have employees confirm their attendance.
- Make sure that employees have the push notification feature on their app switched to the “on” position. Many people turn it off as a default.

QR code capabilities

The mention of QR codes used to trigger groans because a separate app was required to scan them. Today that is no longer an issue, and QR codes are effectively being used in mobile learning in a variety of ways. In retail establishments, many products contain QR labels that customers can scan to enter contests or learn more about products. In a museum, a user can point his or her mobile device at a QR code on the wall to bring up more details on a particular painting or an artist.

There are many potential applications for QR codes in the workplace. Signs containing QR codes can be placed strategically throughout the campus to help orient new employees, communicate the company's core values, or share historical information about the company. On a factory floor, a worker with a mobile device could scan a QR code to pull up information about a specific machine. Sales personnel could use the codes to research details on specific products. If QR codes were printed on automotive parts, mechanics with mobile devices could scan them to learn more about the installation or removal of particular components.


In the office, QR codes can be used to track attendance at training sessions. Learners can scan a code generated by the instructor, which will automatically relay information and a record of the training back to the LMS. This eliminates the need for an L&D administrator to manually enter the information into the system.

CONCLUSION

Although technology changes rapidly, mobile is definitely here to stay. L&D can harness the power and potential of the medium by encouraging employees to take advantage of the many opportunities mobile learning offers.

Using their mobile devices, workers can easily interact with the company's learning content and with one another. Managers can use the mobile platform to send out quick surveys or capture informal feedback. Employees can leverage the camera and video capabilities on their mobile devices to solve work-related problems. For example: A novice field technician troubleshooting a tricky washing machine repair could snap a photo and forward it to a more experienced colleague for advice. He could also use his smartphone to access repair information from the company's LMS.

The information they need is out there, and most employees today have the technology to immediately retrieve it in their pocket or purse. That's the easy part. The challenge is making sure your learning management system understands how to get mobile learning right.



The advertisement banner features a yellow background on the left and a black background on the right. On the yellow background, there is the Adobe logo in the top left corner. Below it, the text "HAPPY TAPPY" is written in large, bold, black letters. Underneath, in smaller black text, it says "The jig you break into when your LMS experience is all good." Below that, "Adobe Captivate Prime" is written in bold black text, followed by "LMS experience. Redefined." in regular black text. In the center of the yellow background, there is a cartoon illustration of two white sneakers with yellow laces, appearing to be jumping or dancing. On the black background on the right, the text "Request a demo of Adobe LMS" is written in yellow, with a yellow chevron symbol pointing to the right.

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