



How to create a mobile learning (M-learning) strategy



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Introduction: What is mobile learning (“M-learning”)?

Mobile learning refers to training content designed to run on mobile devices. Your company’s trainers (or employees) create learning content and share it with others via an online platform. The learners at your company then access the content on their mobile devices. This enables access to learning content and knowledge anytime – anywhere, without restricting the employees to the otherwise stationary ways of learning through classrooms or Learning Management Systems (LMS).

Considering how much we rely on our smartphones and tablets today, mobile learning is a must-have for any modern business. Without it, your company will be out of touch with its learners’ preferences. Even better, it allows Learning & Development (L&D) teams to reach and train their employees, no matter where they are located.

Chapter 1

Why is mobile learning the future of learning?

Mobile Era

According to a report by Statista, 80% of the world's population has now gone mobile. With 7.9 billion people inhabiting the planet, this means that 6.4 million people rely on their phones daily. In a world that is growingly favoring remote work, phones are becoming an important means of communication and connection.

Millennials are mobile users

Millennials make up much of the workforce in today's world. More importantly, 87% of this group does not let their phone leave their side. With this whopping number, it is important to then cater to the needs and habits of this generation, giving them the option to do their work "on the go." Many commercial businesses have already started going mobile, allowing them to shop, play games, read, and more all from their phones.

The rise of smartphone usage and the importance of going mobile in the workplace go hand in hand. L&D teams must latch on to this opportunity to make learning more accessible for the younger generation of the workforce. As a result, mobile learning has become a must-have for any modern business. Without it, companies will be out of touch with their learners' preferences. With its inherent nature of immediate access and agility, mobile learning meets the everyday behaviors and needs of employees, thereby becoming a crucial element in the future of learning.

Chapter 2

What are the benefits of mobile learning? (For employer and employee)

Mobile learning has its benefits for both employers and employees. We have highlighted a few of those benefits below:

For employers:

Mobile learning allows L&D to deliver training to employees when and where it is needed. As a highly accessible medium, employees can access important information in a time of need to solve any problem on the spot. With classroom training, this would not be possible. Additionally, we find that mobile learning has the following benefits for employers:

- **High engagement**
When employees can take training at a time that suits them best, they are more likely to engage with the content. Furthermore, the medium may be more appealing as it is a format that is quite familiar.
- **Better use of time**
Mobile learning allows employees to take training anytime, anywhere. As a result, you do not need to take them away from their jobs to perform classroom training. So, their time during the day can be maximized.
- **Lower costs**
Modern cloud-based mobile learning platforms are more cost-effective than conventional e-learning platforms for both creating and maintaining content. This is because they do not need local hosting or extensive IT (Information Technology) infrastructure.

For employees:

“Shorter and quicker” is the success mantra in the commercial and common world of smartphone users. It is estimated that employees spend a minimum of 20 minutes on e-learning courses. Mobile learning, however, requires employees to spend a maximum of 5-7 minutes in training. This time saved can make a big impact in the long term, alongside the following benefits:

- **Easy access**

The main benefit of mobile learning is the ease of access. Employees can get the necessary training materials on the move. If they have an internet connection, they can simply log in to their learning platform and access the training.

- **Microlearning**

Mobile learning is compatible with the new trend of “Microlearning“. This format provides employees with training content in small, bite-sized portions. With busy schedules, modern learners often prefer this to lengthy training sessions.

- **Immediate impact**

Short and focused mobile content enables the immediate application of knowledge in the context of work. This contextual support helps employees solve problems on the job, instead of having to attend classroom training or take them off the job.

Chapter 3

What are the limitations of mobile learning?

Mobile learning comes with both advantages and disadvantages. While it opens lots of new possibilities, there are also potential setbacks. Here are a few limitations of mobile learning to take note of:

- **Connectivity issues**

Mobile learning requires an internet connection. This can be a problem if your employees work in remote locations where connections may be patchy and are unable to access the learning content created for mobile access.

Pro Tip: L&D can make room for offline access to content or hybrid models of mobile app delivery.

- **Distraction**

As much as mobile learning promises to tackle low attention spans with its short-duration content, it can also become an avenue for distractions because any mobile device has apps that compete for the user's attention.

Pro Tip: L&D can take a cue from digital marketing and data analytics and leverage some tricks to increase learner engagement.

- **Retrofitting to mobile**

Oftentimes, L&D teams retrofit topics suited for classroom training into a mobile learning solution leading to information overload.

Mobile learning is a strong enabler of knowledge agility but cannot replace the power of detailed didactic practices that are meant to train the employees on core fundamentals. Hence, organizations are bound to fail if they inadvertently use the mobile medium for in-depth conceptual training.

Pro Tip: Mobile learning works perfectly for performance support scenarios, and it might help L&D to identify the sweet spots of mobile learning applications.

Chapter 4

Mobile learning vs. E-learning

We know that mobile learning occurs on mobile devices. But besides that, how is it different from e-learning? In short, there are a few key differences distinguishing one from the other. Here are the main ones:

Context

When talking about mobile learning, it is important to note that this learning often takes place on the job. Therefore, the content should give only specific information rather than set the context. For example, e-learning often begins with orienting the learner with context, while mobile learning is about learning directly in the context itself.

In a mobile learning environment, employees are in informal real-time settings where they may not be able to access their colleagues or Learning Management System (LMS) for any clarifications or insights. Unlike e-learning which happens in a formal and structured environment to go through detailed courses, mobile learning calls for the consumption of information for quick application.

Different devices

Mobile learning is intended for mobile devices like smartphones and tablets. This not only affects the size of the screen content but also how accessible it is. A mobile learning user could be leaning back on a couch or scrolling through their phone. An e-learning user, on the other hand, is most likely sitting at a desk, where their laptop or desktop computer is located.

Further, we do not use a tablet or smartphone the same way we do a computer. For instance, we pinch and zoom instead of the scroll and click as on a computer. The user interaction and purpose differ significantly for mobile devices. This difference in devices and usage behaviors is important to note when designing mobile learning.

Amount of information

For the same reason, the amount of information a learner gets from mobile learning vs. e-learning varies. Mobile learning content is usually delivered in bite-sized chunks, making it easier for someone using a small screen to process key takeaways quickly. E-learning content can also be delivered concisely, but it is more suitable for full courses that provide a more thorough overview of a subject, divided into multiple chapters or sections.

Taking the learner into account, the mobile learner is on-the-go and surrounded by several disruptions, unlike the e-learning learner who stays focused and stable in course environments. Thus, learners would refer to just the necessary information, which satisfies the need of the moment.

Chapter 5

How to develop a mobile learning strategy

Now that you know what mobile learning entails and the benefits it can bring to your business, there are a few steps to take to get started with the strategy:

Step Zero

L&D teams often face blatant resistance from management to invest in mobile learning. Getting their buy-in is everything, so it is important to involve them from the beginning and highlight the benefits. While addressing a specific learning need, L&D must analyze the mobile opportunity. This analysis will lay the foundation of your mobile solution that complements and blends with the e-learning component.

Here is an example of how L&D team can solve a learning need with mobile learning

Learning Need: L&D is asked to train the sales staff on legal basics so that they make the right decisions during client visits (Foreign Corrupt Practices Act). Easy wins here could be to plan short learning content that is consumed and applied by the employee on the job and in the context.

Examples:

Glossary finder app

Scenario Checker app

1 min law videos

1.

Define your business goals

Mobile learning can be used to achieve a variety of goals. That is why it is important to first identify what your business wants to achieve and how mobile learning can help. From there, you will have a clearer sense of what types of mobile learning content to create. As advised in the earlier sections, L&D must make a judicious choice of topics that can be used for mobile learning.

By running stakeholder interviews to understand the learners and context, it can become clear which areas can be better served through mobile learning. Take stock of the existing

L&D strategy and your current learning provision, and then start mapping how and where mobile can fit.

Example

How-to ensure maximum relevance with a tight strategic alignment to business needs.

Business Objective	L&D Objective	Mobile Learning Solution
Expand the range of products to address growth in multiple global market opportunities, high end to low tier.	Provide customized content to ensure relevant skill sets.	Software engineers rely on the latest research and, by providing mobile learning solutions, you can customize access to research libraries and resources for convenient and fast access.

2.

Know your learners

While the usage of smartphones is increasing, it is still important to do your research on who your target audience is and why mobile learning is the best way to communicate with them. Once you have identified your audience, gather information on their habits such as whether they use smartphones or tablets more, what they use their devices for, and how often. Get an understanding of their current processes and pain points before jumping into devising a solution around mobile learning. This will help you decide on the format, optimize the design, and appropriate the content accordingly in the later stages.

Example

A learning design that is the result of taking different parameters into account.

Learning Need	Learner context	Pedagogy	Format
Technical Engineering Development	Technical Engineers on site	Learning-on-the-go	Video & Audio based learning
Compliance Training	Business Development professionals meeting clients	Performance Support	Scenario based learning, checklists

3.

Review Technology

Once you know who you are creating content for and why, you can start figuring out what tools you will need to deliver your strategy. Here are a few pointers to consider while researching the technology for delivery options:

- Do employees carry work devices or personal devices?
- Do they use tablets or smartphones more?

- Do the users have a strong internet connection?
- Do they access the content from the cloud, an app, mobile LMS, etc.?

The questions can help you decide on the right tool. Be sure to also check with the IT department on any potential security and privacy issues.

Example: You might want to use an LMS's built-in authoring tool. You could also use a separate authoring tool like Easygenerator that automatically optimizes content for mobile viewing. At this stage, you would have to review the build vs buy vs both strategies. Depending on the skills and time of your internal staff, you can build or buy the mobile content but be sure to support the range of mobile devices that were identified. Also, be sure to validate the content designs with the learners as mobile learners will access content differently to e-learning users.

4. Promote Mobile Learning

Just because you offer mobile learning provision, learners may not take it. Oftentimes, L&D must promote its initiatives so that employees are aware of what is out there and how it could help them. Be sure to embed a few mobile elements into classroom or e-learning interventions to garner initial interests and expand your reach through employee engagement sessions.

Example

You can provide a mobile learning app or site that complements classroom or e-learning courses and can be a handy companion on the go:

Training	Mobile element
5-day Compliance Training	Provide a mobile app with basic concepts that can be revised for the scheduled quiz on the following day. Talk about this app during the course so that learners can use it for offline revisions.
Employee Onboarding	Provide a mobile compatible site that provides a quick finder on key contacts and key resources useful for new employees. You can provide this as a pre-onboarding tool to get the new employees to use the mobile element early on.

5. Track the usage

Due to its inherent technological advantage, it is a lot easier to plan data analytics in a mobile environment. As with any learning intervention, L&D must identify the key measuring metrics and then work on data points that can indicate the learner engagement and impact. Based on the data, the content or design can be iterated for better results.

Chapter 6

Best practices for developing mobile learning content

Next, it is time to create effective content. Here are some mobile learning best practices you can apply:

- **Think about mobile screen sizes**

It is easy to get lost in the creative process of designing a course on a desktop or laptop screen. But be mindful of how much smaller mobile screens are and how that affects a learner's experience. Previewing your content in mobile view regularly will help you keep it in check.

- **Create user-friendly content**

Creating user-friendly content seems intuitive when it comes to digital content in general. Still, remember that user experience varies greatly between desktops, tablets, and smartphones. Consider testing your content across these different devices by scrolling through them and even rotating mobile devices for landscape previews.

- **Keep course content short**

Mobile users have a much shorter attention span than those scrolling through a laptop or desktop screen. Keep your courses short with concise copy and bite-sized information. Similarly, keeping your graphics simple can make for an easier scrolling experience too. This does not mean you should rush the content design process. Instead, it is about creating short content that still makes for a meaningful experience.

- **Enable offline viewing**

As mentioned previously, mobile learning requires an internet connection. At the same time, one of the major conveniences of mobile learning is the ability to access content anywhere. Enabling offline access to your content will allow mobile users to continue benefiting from the m-learning experience even if they are disconnected from the internet. One way you can do this is by making your content downloadable in a PDF.

- **Learn from your learners**

The content optimization process does not necessarily end as soon as it is published. You will likely continue gaining insights on how your learners experience your mobile content, and it is important to be ready to tweak it as needed. Leveraging data on your learners' activity—like through an LMS or an authoring tool's learner report features—can help paint a clearer picture of your user experience. For example, activities like whether a learner completed a course and, if not, where they clicked out can shed light on how easy it is to interact with your content on a mobile device.

Chapter 7

Mobile learning with Easygenerator

Easygenerator is an easy-to-use, SCORM (Shareable Content Object Reference Model) compatible, cloud-based authoring tool. It allows for simple and efficient mobile content creation without the need to take extensive time to master the tool. As a result, you can empower anyone in your organization, particularly your Subject-matter experts (SMEs), to create mobile learning, heavily aligning with the bottom-up learning trend of today's L&D strategy.

Easygenerator offers exclusive features and functionalities to give your SMEs a head-start in creating and sharing their knowledge and transforming it into performance support tools such as job aids, how-to guides, checklists, and more. With ready-to-use structures and templates, employees are fully supported in creating mobile learning content.

To adapt to the new world of mobile learning, Easygenerator allows anyone to be able to create short content which can be automatically optimized and previewed for any device before publishing. With this automatic optimization and customization for every device, authors can focus on sharing their knowledge without needing to worry about the design or the layout of the content.

Further, with features such as resources and course templates, anyone can create performance support content that is mobile friendly for a jumpstart in mobile learning.

With multiple publishing options available, L&D teams can distribute content even if the LMS is not mobile compatible. Direct links can be opened directly via mobile browsers which can solve the problem of a non-mobile compatible LMS.

After publishing the content, learners can access the content through any mobile device. Easygenerator also supports features like Voice-over when learners might prefer to listen instead of reading on a mobile device. So, while driving or looking away from the screen, they can play the audio and complete training on the go.

Finally, Easygenerator allows learners to take a break and continue a course later, picking up exactly where they left off. This is possible on any device with an Internet connection. For example, if an employee has started a course on a laptop and had to leave half the way through, they can continue the course on their mobile device.

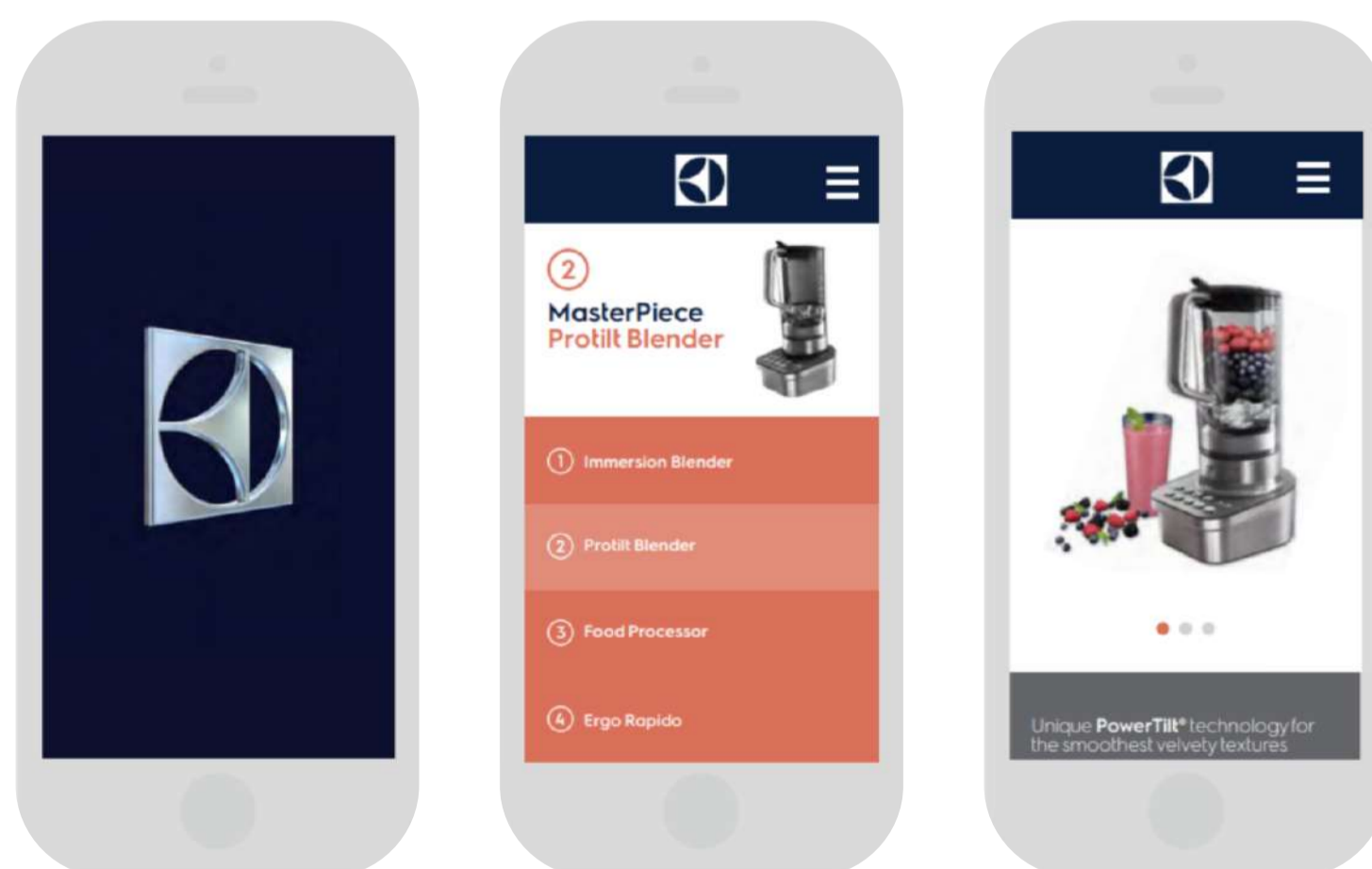
Chapter 8

Mobile learning at Electrolux with Easygenerator

Electrolux, the world's second largest manufacturer of home and commercial appliances, uses Easygenerator as a blended learning solution where mobile learning is an integral part of their success.

Challenge: To remain competitive in the high-stakes appliances market, Electrolux must continually develop and release innovative new products and service concepts. This requires in-store training for the tens of thousands of store personnel across Europe. The store personnel are often the end-consumers' main point of contact with the brand. Electrolux relied almost entirely on the outsourcing of e-learning development and face-to-face training methods to keep everyone up to date. This process was both expensive and time-consuming. The cost of translating courses into multiple languages to accommodate regional needs was often prohibitive. In addition, due to the slow development process and finite resources, it was difficult to scale learning content to reach ever-increasing audiences for both online and in-person training. To cut costs and keep up with growing demands, Electrolux knew they needed to scale their training output and move away from only face-to-face learning toward a blended learning approach.

Solution: Faced with these mounting challenges, Electrolux turned to Easygenerator to introduce the cost-effective, highly agile and scalable blended learning strategy that it uses today. As part of their blended learning solution. In addition to easy content creation and maintenance, their L&D could manage to craft content that is mobile compatible which could be used by the store assistants who can quickly review the material on their mobile devices. With the help of Easygenerator, they have built a body of knowledge this year and now offer what they call 'playlists' of learning," referring to custom-made packages of learning materials that cater to the individual partner's needs.



Conclusion: The future is mobile

Considering the overwhelming popularity of mobile technologies, it is no surprise that the world's leading organizations are embracing mobile learning. By adopting a mobile learning strategy, you prepare your L&D operation for the future while also giving your learners what they need to succeed. It is integral to e-learning success, but not the only solution. As advised before, do not try to migrate full-on classroom material or everything online to mobile learning, for it can fail miserably. Start with mobile sweet spots and expand based on the learner progress and adoption.

So, if you are tired of trying to corral all your field reps into a training room at once, the answer is simple: go mobile! And with best practices, you and your learners will be glad you did.