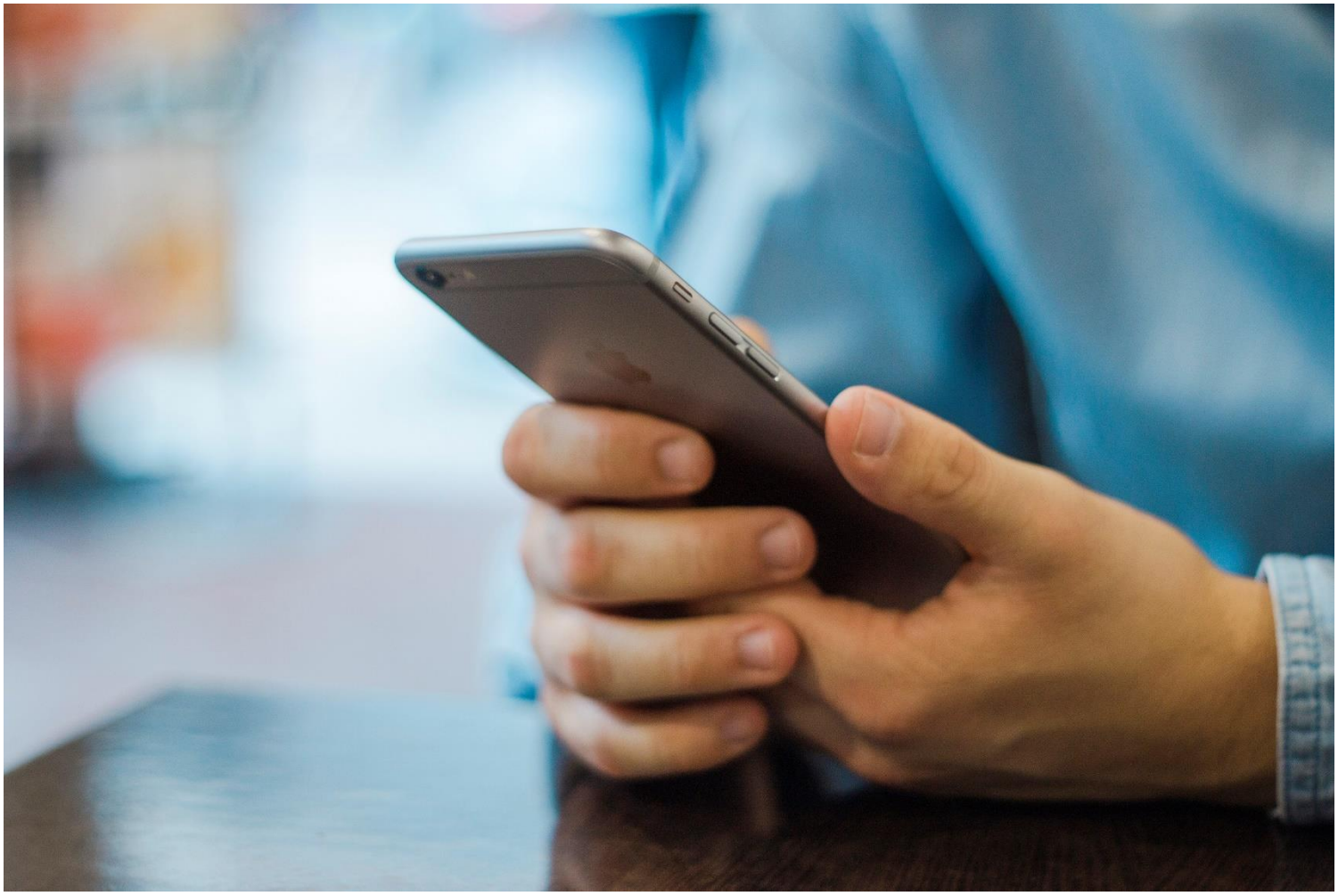


10 Ways to Improve Performance with Mobile Learning

Introduction

Mobile learning and support is hot at the moment, but is it all just hype?

In this paper we've set out some key things to think about to help guide you through the selection and implementation process.

We will look to answer the big question: How do you even start to design and implement a strategy for mobile learning delivery?

In answering these important questions, we draw out the top 10 principles that might help anyone thinking about implementing an end-to-end mobile learning solution and help get this big topic into some sort of usable framework.

1. Quality of the content

It sounds obvious, but the quality of the content will be vital to the success of any mobile programme.

Here quality means content that's accurate, relevant, just-in-time and up-to-date. This requires a strategy that ensures the content stays accurate and takes advantage of 'push' functionality within the delivery system to deliver updates and refreshed content direct to users. You can use multiple different media formats for your content, some work better than others, but remember to avoid Flash as it doesn't work well on mobiles.

Responsive content effectively re-formats itself intelligently so that it displays better on a smaller screen device, and changes format again depending on the orientation of that device. If you don't have the luxury of an authoring team equipped with a responsive authoring tool, or a relationship with a good supplier who can do it for you, then you might want to consider distributing PDFs as a low cost way of rapidly producing content.

2. User experience

Your audience will be well used to downloading slick Apps, games and information onto their tablets and smartphones. They will expect a first class user experience. This will usually mean the use of native Apps to deliver your content i.e. an App created specifically for the operating system of the device (iOS, Android or Windows), rather than generic web Apps. Clear branding and an easy and trouble free user experience are a must.

Features that enable users to manage the local storage of data within the App are also important. Users need to know how much storage is being used by the App and the downloaded content, they need to easily be able to remove specific items they no longer need. The last thing you want is a user uninstalling your entire App simply because it's taking up too much space.

Remember that the more you know about who you are trying to reach, the better you can structure your access controls, content taxonomies and user interfaces.

3. Mobile users' learning preferences

We have found that short, sharp just-in-time training pieces are ideal for phone consumption, whereas longer more formal pieces of eLearning are generally better consumed on PCs or tablets. Often mobile learning forms a part of the overall blended learning environment that you provide for your learners. So, think about how to use the advantages of each usage scenario to good educational effect.

4. Support BYOD

This is the way of the future. Many organisations still provide their staff with a company issued phone or tablet, but the numbers are reducing. With bring-your-own-device (BYOD), you don't have to buy and then manage kit for everyone. You may be faced with a few acceptance hurdles to overcome, but there are clear ways to do this and the benefits, especially for larger audiences are significant. Eliminating the need to carry both a personal and a company device is usually considered a big positive by most users.

5. Relevant content to relevant users

It might sound obvious, but don't overload users with everything that is available on the central system. Target different groups of learners with the selection of content that is relevant to them and most beneficial in their roles. This means an intelligent central system that can select multiple pieces of content, decide which are relevant to a particular individual and then send these out from the centre to the person's own App on their own device.

6. Online v offline?

The whole point of mobile is to access materials as and when you need them, not as and when you are in Wi-Fi or mobile network range. If your learners can't download content onto the App and go offline, then don't even bother!

7. Think about engagement

You can make the content itself good to use and interactive to operate. You may also want to consider using gamification to encourage learners to return to the App; competitions, achievement awards and exploration are all useful ways to keep people coming back for more.

Social features such as rating, sharing and chat rooms all help to encourage the learning community to learn together and to share what they know.

8. Consider content usage patterns

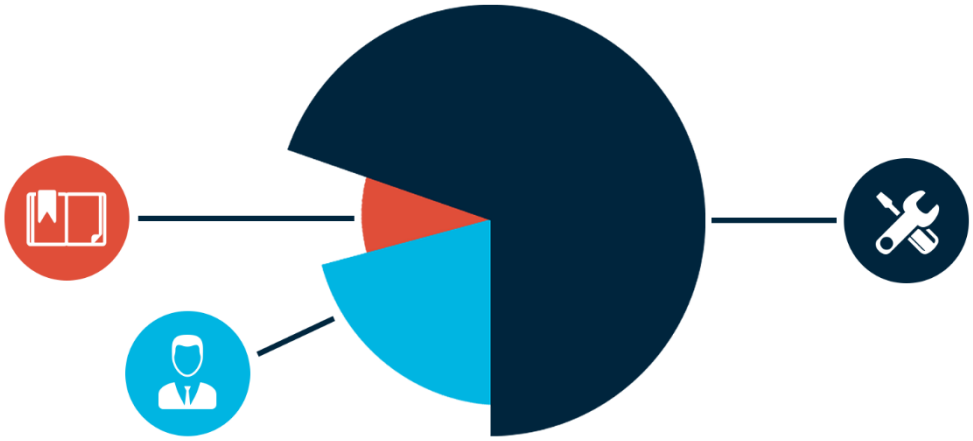
Whilst regularly used, high value materials may warrant multimedia content produced to high production values (video works particularly well for phone use), rarely used reference materials may be adequate in text form, which is cheaper to produce and takes up much less storage space.

9. Track users' activities and performance

This will not be important in some scenarios, but for most organisations it's vital to know who has downloaded and accessed which piece of content, and perhaps who has passed which assessment at the end of it. This could be to ensure compliance and regulatory requirements are met or simply to see which pieces of content are popular and most regularly used.

By comparing learner activities with performance statistics, HR Managers can suddenly achieve the dream of matching learning inputs with performance outputs.

You will want to track all the different types of learning activities in addition to your formal SCORM tracked eLearning courses, so you should consider a central system that supports the latest Experience API (Tin Can), which will track and report on everything the learner accesses.



10. Think about security

The App is probably the weakest point of the system, so depending on your security concerns, consider data encryption on the device and the use of device management software, geospatial device limitations, in-App passwords, enforced PIN protection etc.

A threat assessment should highlight the risks specific to your own business, there may be nothing to worry about, but we've recently worked on projects where sensitive information needed additional protection and we had to develop extra layers of security to ensure confidentiality and even safety.