

Using Mobile Learning to Optimize the Sales Team

Wireless devices have given sales teams instant communication to colleagues and customers in the form of voice and email for a number of years. The challenge across several industries is to enable the dispersed workforce to access important information whenever and wherever it is needed. Pharmaceutical representatives must know important differences between products, competitive products, and information such as drug side effects to give to doctors. An electronics salesperson on the floor of a retail establishment needs instantaneous access to product features to help customers make buying decisions.

M-learning, as some industry journalists would say, is eLearning on a mobile device. It uses tools that most professionals already have in their pocket—mobile phones, PDAs, and Smart phones.

M-learning can address sales challenges in the way of cost savings, better customer service, and better selling opportunities.

Cost savings. High employee turnover industries, such as retail, with turnover as high as 40% a year, can gain the most cost savings. It is expensive to train a new employee. Providing tools accessible at the point-of-decision empowers people, job satisfaction increases, and turnover decreases.

Better customer service. Customers get frustrated when a salesperson cannot answer product questions. Salespeople get frustrated when they don't have the knowledge and/or tools to answer customer questions. Equipping a sales person with a mobile device that provides ad hoc learning when servicing a customer is good business. If a customer needs help making a buying decision between two products, no problem, even if the salesperson doesn't have the knowledge. A salesperson scans the two product barcodes and up pops a comparison of each product's features. The salesperson now has the information to discuss with the customer.

Better selling opportunities. A salesperson can't make sales while sitting in a classroom or accessing eLearning material over the web. Bits of downtime can be used to access a 5-10 minute training module at the salesperson's convenience.

For companies already developing learning content via eLearning the next step is chunking that content into 5 minute learning nuggets to be delivered to the sales force's mobile devices. Learners could have specific profiles that deliver customized content based upon product line or industry responsibility. The possibilities are vast.

The bottom-line results of m-learning cannot be denied. Maximizing the sales force's customer time with up to date information delivered to where they are is a true competitive edge.