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Removing Geographical and Time Boundaries: Mobile Learning for Mobile Workers

Student Dissertation

How to cite:

Walker, Alison (2015). Removing Geographical and Time Boundaries: Mobile Learning for Mobile Workers. Research Summary for the Open University module H818 The Networked Practitioner

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WED: Removing Geographical and Time Boundaries: Mobile Learning for Mobile Workers (Alison Walker)

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[Alison Walker](#)

29 December 2014

Extra content

Abstract

The operational working requirements for Airline Pilots result in their being globally mobile and operating across a number of time zones in each working period. This presents barriers of access to leadership learning and development courses which is impacting on their potential for promotion to leadership command positions. Dardar et al. (2011) have linked training and job satisfaction and highlighted that in some cases employees with access to training were more satisfied than those without access. Inclusion is at the heart of this Company's values, so increasing Airline Pilots' access to relevant training will demonstrate the company values in action, should increase levels of job satisfaction and will demonstrate an inclusive approach to employee development, giving everyone equal opportunity to access relevant training.

This multi media artefact examines whether mobile learning (mlearning) has the potential to cut across spacio-temporal boundaries experienced by Airline Pilots as it 'delivers learning to the learner when and where they want it' (Traxler 2007). Thinking on mlearning is still evolving, so drawing from the literature on both mlearning and informal learning the artefact explores mobility alongside the affordances of mobile technology as a key construct denoting 'not just physical mobility but the opportunity to overcome physical constraints by having access to people and digital learning resources regardless of place and time' (Kukulka-Hulme 2010). Therefore the artefact explores why informal mlearning might be motivating, (Jones et al. 2006).

The nature of mlearning and the changes in practice, skills and attitudes required from both the learner and the organisational perspective to implement and then adopt mlearning will be reviewed through the lens of the FRAME model, (Koole 2009). The specific areas explored include the inter-dependencies of the device, learner and social context and the implications of this for the learner. This includes aspects of learners' practices, attitudes, expectations, motivations, attitudes to openness, affinity with the technology itself and digital literacy as well

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as implications for the organisation. There are implications for the organisation; learning embedded in a constantly changing environment and moving towards an inclusive learner centred approach culture rather than centrally controlled learning and development culture.

Case studies will be examined to reveal how the affordances of mobile technology; anytime, anywhere access may support the notion of inclusion and how the same affordances are potentially, a disruptive organisational force due to the 'dynamic nature of learner practices' (Mwanza-Simwami et al 2011) resulting in the need to change the way learning and development practitioners support learning.

The artefact further examines the critical factors for successful implementation of mlearning in the workplace and consider that mlearning provision may entail much more than a change in learning delivery but also involve a change in organisational learning culture as with mlearning there is the need to consider not only how learners will interact with the learning but why.

Finally recommendations are made on how to approach the successful implementation of mlearning with the Airline Pilot population which embraces open practices and delivers effective workplace learning.



[Alison Walker](#)

15:50 on 9 January 2015 (Edited 17:59 on 2 February 2015)

Link to the Conference Poster

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Link to accessible version with voice over

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[Alison Walker](#)

15:53 on 9 January 2015

Removing geographical and time boundaries: mobile learning for a mobile workforce: Supporting Script for the Presentation on Wednesday 11th February 2015


Slide 1: Removing geographical and time boundaries: mobile learning for a mobile workforce

Welcome everyone and thank you for taking the time out to come along and listen to my presentation, Removing geographical and time boundaries: mobile learning for a mobile workforce

I'm Alison and I run a small Learning and Development Consultancy specialising in Leadership development

This presentation is about an artefact which is being created in response to a very specific Learning and Development issue experienced by one of my clients. This issue affects 500 key employee's who are quite literally constantly on the move. It is my intention to use the artefact to propose a solution

Slide 2: The Journey

 OU H818 'The Networked Practitioner' Online Conference 2015

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The presentation will cover

1. the background to the issue
2. the draft artefact
3. How it's been developed so far
4. and a brief look at the next steps

Slide 3: The Challenge

The challenge is how to give access to leadership training to the 500 remote workers in this organisation. At the moment more than 50% of these employees applying for leadership positions are failing to achieve promotion. They are failing on their leadership skills assessment. - team building, coaching and commerciality. They just don't have this skill set and have never been trained.

CONTEXT: This picture shows a world map. This population are constantly moving to and from 26 locations and this how they are operating across a number of time zones and geographies. They will spend several days resting before they can fly back. This means it is very difficult to bring them to HO to attend face to face workshops and its expensive.

Slide 4: Why Inclusion?

Inclusion is at the heart of this Company's values and they talk about it as being in their DNA. So culturally - increasing employees access to relevant training is very important. It will allow the company to demonstrate it's values in action and to show an inclusive approach.

Slide 5: Why Mobile Learning?

So why might mobile learning provide a solution? The thinking on mobile learning is still evolving AND the research on mobile learning in the workplace is a little thin on the ground – where it exists strongly contextualised

Three reasons identified so far – still work in progress

1. Affordances of mobile technology well suit the needs of the mobile...and remote worker. Traxler highlights how learning through mobile devices is able to deliver learning to the learner when and where they want it. Kukulska-Hulme (2010) talks about mobile learning being able to overcome physical constraints by having access to people and digital learning resources regardless of place and time'

So learning through mobile devices seems to suit this particular set of circumstances

2. There is real potential there could be reasonable levels of motivation to engage with the learning. Hussein and Cronje highlight that mobile devices in the learning context "stimulate a learner's sense of ownership of the content as they actively participate in activities." Whilst this clearly has implications for mobile learning design.

Seems to fit the need although we cannot assume that the entire target population will be motivated to learn this way. However, there are also other extrinsic/intrinsic motivators at play if linked to promotion

3. Pragmatic reason

100% of this population own and use a mobile device at work...and use them to access

company related information – so if handled well mlearning provision could be a relevant solution

I anticipate there will be barriers to overcome too.

The mobile learning environment is very dynamic and the practices of individuals/device functionality/learner context are intertwined and interdependent - and develop alongside each other. This presents a number of organisational challenges – e.g. blurring of boundaries between personal/professional space - balance of formal/informal learning - and the question who controls the learning.

Slide 6: The Purpose

This slides speaks to the artefact design. It is a multi media Prezi and the overall purpose is to influence the adoption of mobile learning in this organisation and to help the decision makers get hands on experience of what it feels like to learn with a mobile device and try out some of the learning activities for themselves.

Slide 7: Artefact StoryBoard

Artefact is still Work in progress

It will include videos and animations to demonstrate some the affordances of mobile technology, coupled with some familiar organisational L&D concepts to anchor this proposal within current organisational thinking eg - 70:20:10 (Lombardo et al) more recently Charles Jennings

Slide 8: Artefact StoryBoard

Artefact will also include three current case studies to share organisational lessons learnt and a “Touch and feel” demonstration showing the types of learning activities

Slide 9: The Approach

1. Literature review. Already spoken to this challenge – has been fair amount of mlearning research in education contexts but little written in workplace and where it is – highly contextualised. Its been noted by Kukulska-Hulme and Traxler (2014) in a book edited by our very own Rhona Sharpe that “the direction of mlearning will no longer be guided exclusively by research”

So primary research has included both

2. Networking with practitioners – twitter, linkedIn and fellow H818

3. Employee interviews

Slide 10: Progress To Date

First area Employees

1. Looked at employees current use of mobile devices. - All 500 use mobile devices

2. Questionnaire - 262 respondents (given the timescale v pleased with) 2 weeks. By far biggest uses - email, music, then - youtube, search for information, games, social networking. They were also also asked would they be prepared to access training material via

their own devices? 92% said yes.

Initial tentative conclusions 1. Already using features 2. general willingness to use them needs further testing

The second area of progress

Case studies – all sourced through asking for input through LinkedIn groups

1. Airline: elearning not mlearning but imp as there are widely held assumptions about engagement of the target population in soft skills development a there is in the airline industry. I can use data from here to overcome this assumption– “overwhelmed” 25% pilots using elearning on a monthly basis

2. International Bank SA: train and ongoing support of bank clerks in the bush

3. UK Stock exchange

Slide 11: The Challenge of being a Networked Practitioner in a Commercial World

I acknowledge It may be the same in other worlds too - my only experience. In general great experience, very generous people: Linked In fabulous - Julian Stodd, Dave Kelly MLearnCon, Johannes Cronje, organisational practitioners across the world.

BUT ...I didn't anticipate the time it would take to achieve my plan, so I am not as far forward as I would have intended to be at this stage

Main obstacles have been

1. Time & Organisational Priorities – difficult to get into peoples diaries and not top of their priority list – xmas and now coming up to the end of the financial year

2. Legal – I have a great case study – now been with the legal dept 4 weeks to make a decision whether I can use it

3. Salesmen/women – approached by some mlearning providers to help them access my clients

4. Unions any change has to be approved.

Overall impact of slowing everything down

Slide 12: Future development

1. Continue networking with practitioners to complete the case studies 2. Developing the artefact - peer review inside/outside H818 and share with client for review 3. Publish the artefact

Slide 13: Thank You

Thank you, please join in the discussion, contact details LinkedIn.

www.uk.linkedin.com/in/alisonawalker Twitter. @alisonwalker1

Any questions?



[Alison Walker](#)

15:27 on 14 February 2015

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[M.M](#)

10:42pm 14 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

This seems really unusual and brings the issue to people's attention Alison. I had never thought about this and now it seems silly that I hadn't. It will be interesting to be presented with case studies and also recommendations.



[Stefanie Anyadi](#)

12:46pm 24 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Alison, this sounds really interesting. Your audience is much more difficult to reach than most other staff developers' audiences, but your mlearning case studies can probably highlight ideas for overcoming barriers in this area, e.g. reaching staff who don't see the need for personal/professional development.



[Rachel O'Connor](#)

9:57am 26 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

This sounds really interesting and different to any of the other presentations. Sounds like you will be covering some interesting aspects of the concept of mLearning. It will be refreshing to see the information you present in a context so different from the rest of us but maybe some of the learning will be relevant to all.



[Samantha Marks](#)

11:22am 27 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

Alison, I remember several years back that mobile learning was the trend of the future and every tech organisation selling learning solutions was doing it (some badly, so well). It's

been a while since I have engaged in the debate so I look forward to hearing the research three years on and how perception and maybe practices have changed. It is interesting how a number of presentations have picked up on the values of a company or organisation, so I will be paying close attention to this aspect when relating back to my own project. Such an approach has implications for learning especially on those departments who deliver it, as I guess they need to become more agile and make sure that for every face to face opportunity they have a mobile opportunity. Do you think that the majority of the learning development could easily be adapted for mobile? Would it include opportunities for social interaction as well as information? From my perspective my mobile access is crucial for learning. I read resources and papers on my kindle and stay up to date forums using phone. I have managed to integrate this into my working day, and I suppose that for those who want development, they will do the same. What has been the most interesting part of the research for you?



[Alison Walker](#)

10:41pm 27 January 2015 (Edited 10:41pm 27 January 2015) [Permalink](#)

Thank you everyone for your comments and questions. Marese - Thank you for your encouragement!! Stephanie - you are absolutely right about the audience being hard to reach although in this particular case it's a physical and time distance that is proving difficult rather than their seeing the need for personal development. The population are airline pilots and they are desperate for some kind of access to leadership development. They receive very little as it is so operationally difficult to take them "offline"(not flying). Getting their input due to distance has been the hardest part of my research so far and I will struggle to get anything meaningful in time to finish the module - this is going to be a much longer project than I appreciated. Rachel - I hope the presentation will resonate across our different areas. The affordances of mobile learning are the same in any context, it just seems that there is far more academic research on mlearning in education rather than the work context. There's lots of company produced information but, much of it is uncorroborated and after all they are trying to sell something! Sam - the thinking around mlearning is still evolving and certainly the progress in using mlearning in education seems to outstrip that in organisations (although this may be that this has not been analysed & recorded in the same way). There are many organisations offering mobile solutions to companies but most practitioners I'm speaking to are sceptical about using mlearning for leadership development which is the area I'm exploring, mostly because just moving existing training onto a mobile platform doesn't work. You are spot on when you discuss your use of mobile for learning and it's those solutions that use this kind of approach that will engage learners. The pace of my research has been frustrating because it covers academic papers, practitioners and organisations providing mlearning solutions. This is taking so much time as I am having to do the primary research through telephone conversations and interviews. Therefore it's still very much work in progress. The most interesting part so far has been my connecting with one of the top 4 banks in South Africa to hear how they provided mobile learning for their (really really) remote workforce - sitting under trees in villages. Fascinating and very inspirational!



[catherine wilson](#)

5:43pm 28 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Alison, a fascinating abstract- very interesting.

My setting has hard to reach employees in terms of time and learning availability. We are increasingly relying on goodwill for their own professional development, enforced by a code of conduct however this does not standardise the education. We have perceived trust issues with the use of mobile devices in the workplace also. I look forward to hearing more.



[Alison Walker](#)

2:19pm 30 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Cath

It seems that you are hitting on a key point when you highlight reliance on goodwill. I'm fascinated by the motivations of people to continue learning beyond the formal learning requirements of a profession and you highlight a particular challenge - when people feel they are already giving what they can to their profession how do you get them to engage in CPD?

When you refer to a 'code of conduct' is CPD formally part of this? and if so how is it measured/reviewed? I wonder if the Expectancy theory (Vroom 1964) is in play here? It argues that the effort we put in is related to the perceived reward we get from it - that means that for a reward to motivate a person to put in the effort to get it, then they must believe that the effort is likely to lead them to receiving the reward, in other words if CPD is not rewarded then why bother?



[Catherine Dartnall](#)

12:16pm 6 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Alison

I think that your project in relation to mobile learning would have benefit for many individuals and not just those who have restricted access in terms of time and space. My mobile devices enable me to engage with learning materials by 'drip effect' which helps when available time is limited. If learning is accessed on a personal device this begins to blur the lines between personal/professional use which could help encourage uptake of CPD activities. Mobile access would form an important part of any blended approach although I will confess to a preference for a laptop with full keyboard to fully participate in written activities.

Your comment "resulting in the need to change the way learning and development practitioners support learning" was key for me in the use of the word "**support**". Maybe previously within organisations learning was more about "**control**" as without access being granted to resources the learner had few options. I think maybe a little bit of 'disruption' has handed the control back to the learner. The onus now being on a more self-directed approach which could bring with it its own challenges in terms of motivation.

I will be really interested to find out more at your conference presentation.

Catherine



[Alison Walker](#)

9:21am 8 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Catherine

You are so right about mobile learning having benefit for many individuals and not just remote workers. This particular project has been designed to solve a specific problem hence the focus on remote workers who are excluded from development right now. In the interests of inclusion I don't expect any other employees to be excluded and the learning would be relevant to them to.

I think an organisation has to be culturally ready to **support** rather than **control** learning and this could be a key blocker. Currently organisations are struggling to establish coherent policies on Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) which would be a prerequisite for most learners to be able to take up self-driven learning. They know people bring their devices to work but some organisations expect them to then be locked in a locker for the duration. This type of mindset will be challenged by the learners themselves in the future leading to a change in policy perhaps?



[Dr Simon Ball](#)

10:29am 12 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Your questions and comments from the live conference presentation are below:

- ▶ One possible barrier might be reception if they need internet/mobile access. Might this affect pilots if they are in different parts of the world? Also, overseas data charges if a connection is available..
- ▶ Have the pilots themselves had any input to this idea?
- ▶ Useful to see how other organisations have got on with trying similar approaches
- ▶ Does the organisation have a BYOD policy?
- ▶ wow great response rate, that's positive feedback
- ▶ Having the motivation and desire to 'pull' learning via mobile is a fantastic start which bodes well for actual adoption
- ▶ Is there an opportunity for participants to talk to each other while undertaking mlearning?
- ▶ As this relates to professional development how would their mobile learning impact on their digital identities- does it enable or inhibit their learning process?
- ▶ Is there assessment built in and how?
- ▶ we use Yammer where I work - it took a while to 'take off' (pun intended. But I'd say yammer's almost essential to us now



[Jane Ballans](#)

2:03pm 13 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Alison, Sorry to have missed your live presentation, but I have managed to hear the recording. I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed your presentation and in particular the artefact storyboard. A very professional presentation and extremely confident answers to the questions.



[Alison Walker](#)

12:41pm 14 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Thank you Jane that's lovely feedback - I have to say I was very nervous but experienced a great sense of achievement afterwards



[Alison Walker](#)

1:07pm 14 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Thank you everyone for your questions and the support on Wednesday evening.

Post presentation answers to questions

- ▶ One possible barrier might be reception if they need internet/mobile access. Might this affect pilots if they are in different parts of the world? Also, overseas data charges if a connection is available..

Fortunately, the accommodation provided includes guaranteed access to wi-fi and internet services, data charges are covered as part of expenses.

- ▶ Have the pilots themselves had any input to this idea?

There have been discussions with them around provision of learning and development opportunities but not yet on this specific method. The artefact needs to be more fully developed before it can be presented

- ▶ Useful to see how other organisations have got on with trying similar approaches

Initial case study findings are very positive with reasonably high levels of engagement on a regular basis and real skills development. Unfortunately I can't discuss the details at the moment as I am still waiting for permission to use the data.

- ▶ Does the organisation have a BYOD policy?

Yes. As the workers are remote when working they are able to use their own devices

- ▶ wow great response rate, that's positive feedback

Yes. Really surprised...and delighted. I think it shows the appetite for this

- ▶ Having the motivation and desire to 'pull' learning via mobile is a fantastic start which bodes well for actual adoption

Agree. It feels as though digital literacy skills won't be an issue although this will need further checking. The watch out is probably finding the 'hook' to engagement and what would help them want to engage in learning rather than candy crush!

- ▶ Is there an opportunity for participants to talk to each other while undertaking mlearning?

This needs more thought. Social networking is a definite, however, 'physical' talking such as via Skype or using other technologies would require significant logistical input. Definitely something to consider further though

- ▶ As this relates to professional development how would their mobile learning impact on their digital identities- does it enable or inhibit their learning process?

Digital identity could very well inhibit the learning process especially around the SN discussions. However, there is no learning taking place at all now and so even if there are 'lurkers' or 'peripheral participators' this is an improvement on the current situation

- ▶ Is there assessment built in and how?

There is no formal assessment. This is not required by the organisation for any L&D activities, although a certificate of professional Development would be awarded on completion of various stages of the learning. An organisation is looking for behaviour change from this type of development and this is assessed via the appraisal process.

- ▶ we use Yammer where I work - it took a while to 'take off' (pun intended. But i'd say yammer's almost essential to us now

That's great to hear. As this process develops - the intent is that Yammer will sit at the centre of it to generate discussion and interaction



[Dr Simon Ball](#)

8:15pm 18 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Many Congratulations! Your presentation has been voted by delegates to be one of the most effective of the H818 Online Conference 2015 and you are officially one of our five H818 Presentation Star Open Badge Winners! Please see how to Apply for your Badge here: <http://cloudworks.ac.uk/badge/view/33>

Well done!

Simon

H818 Conference Organiser



[Alison Walker](#)

8:53am 20 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

That is fantastic. Thank you to everyone for all your help and support.

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