iPad for Sales Force Effectiveness in Pharma

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Introduction

Just two years ago, Apple released the first iPad. In doing so, they revolutionized how a mobile workforce access information and learning. The slim design combined with a large display, the ease of portability compared to a laptop, the instant-on feature, and the intuitive multi-touch screen interface are just some of the key reasons why the iPad has rapidly become the mobile device of choice for a global workforce.

The audio-visual tablet phenomenon went far beyond the early adopters who would usually drive the initial sales of supposed innovative new products. The iPad went mainstream within months, and now sells across all marketing demographics, from students to "silver surfers", and from leisure to commercial users.

This white paper focuses on the corporate sector of the tablet market and specifically the pharma and medical devices industries.

More than any other commercial sector, these industries identified the potential of the iPad as an audio-visual media platform to present to doctors more effectively.

In an era where doctors are becoming increasingly reluctant to meet with pharma sales reps due to their busy work schedules and where meeting times are limited to a few minutes in some cases, it is critical that sales reps can quickly and effectively deliver their presentations and relevant information to doctors.

Before the iPad, sales reps had to rely on laptops, PowerPoint presentations, or printed brochures to try and make an impression on time-pressed doctors. Pharma companies quickly realized that well designed marketing materials presented on an iPad allowed for a more dynamic presentation, and facilitated improved sales conversation with a doctor than using a laptop or product brochures.

The physical design of laptops acted as an effective barrier between a sales rep and a doctor, apart from the time taken to boot them up, and a short battery life that necessitated the use of power cords. Even well designed printed brochures don't provide the dynamic interactive element available with an iPad presentation.

Research quickly indicated that doctors responded more positively to iPad presentations than traditional sales pitch methods. Consequently, the wheels were set in motion for what the Wall Street Journal has referred to as "an iPad arms race", with major pharma and medical device companies buying thousands of iPads for their salesforces. Two years on from the launch of the iPad, there are very few pharma companies not looking to utilize iPads as an integral tool in the delivery of sales pitches and presentations.

So, how do pharma companies harness the power of the iPad to increase sales effectiveness before, during and after sales meetings? How can organizations create a parallel "closed loop learning" strategy to complement and add value to their closed loop marketing strategy? What design considerations do companies need to be aware of when building for the iPad? What are the security and platform considerations? These are some of the key questions addressed in this white paper.

iPad Learning as part of the Sales Process – Education and Marketing, or Closed Loop Learning and Closed Loop Marketing

Pharma companies have moved quickly to position the iPad as a integral part of their doctor detailing strategy. However, this approach is driven by a purely sales and marketing focus, allied to a closed loop marketing strategy (CLM) if it exists in the organization. This approach is perfectly valid, and helps deliver a more dynamic audio-visual presentation to doctors using enhanced communications and engaging marketing materials.

However, does the iPad address the learning needs of the sales reps? To ignore this key consideration in the belief that marketing collateral alone will suffice, amounts to under developing the ideal tablet strategy for sales force excellence. Do sales reps know enough about the underlying disease state for the product they're selling?

Can they handle doctors' objections effectively? Are they aware of the specific compliance rules applicable to the product? Do they know how to stay 'on-label' while detailing?

While all these areas are usually covered in twice-yearly classroom training sessions, or through annual e-Learning programs, careful consideration should be given to developing an effective ongoing approach to learning, delivered in a just-in-time way to sales reps via their iPads. Why would this training be any more effective than existing classroom training or standard e-Learning? Here are a few reasons:

- iPads are seen as “cool” devices by the majority of users, so user uptake levels for learning activities is much higher than for standard e-Learning courses taken on desktops or laptops.
- iPads allow for much more user interactivity, and offer a more comprehensive and engaging learning experience.
- Learning as a just-in-time activity serves a purpose directly at the point of need. For example, sales reps can take relevant and timely product training just before making a sales call.
- By creating and delivery learning in short, focused sessions, ideally no more than ten minutes long, the potential for boredom to occur is minimized.
- Short courses can be delivered continually throughout the year, not limited to twice-yearly meetings, or annual e-Learning roll-outs.
- ‘Hot Topics’ can be identified on an ongoing basis

But what do we mean by ‘Closed Loop Learning’? Put simply, it’s the principle of Closed Loop Marketing applied to tablet-based learning. In Closed Loop Marketing, the flow of information never ends, hence the loop. Marketing materials are developed and pushed out to the reps who can use the materials to detail doctors and then give qualitative feedback to the analytics people within the Sales Force Excellence team. This feedback is used to develop more effective marketing materials, the new material is then pushed out to the sales reps and the loop continues.

We can apply a similar closed loop to learning. However, we need to move away from scheduling sizeable, one-off learning engagements (the annual compliance program, the twice-yearly sales skills refresher course and more) and move towards a model of continuous learning using short “chunks” of learning.

By focusing on just-in-time training requirements, delivered in short concentrated sessions, this model will develop, accelerated by the learning needs of the sales reps. Learning Managers find it easier to develop short learning initiatives, compared to lengthy courses, and the

time from initial concept to final delivery is significantly reduced. This ensures that Learning Managers can be much more responsive to addressing learning needs identified in the field.

Having delivered the appropriate training for the identified learning need, the next phase in the loop is assessment. Training is a unidirectional process unless trainers can learn from their audience and continually improve the learning they deliver.

Assessments and surveys allow trainers to gauge how effective the training is and what, if anything, needs to be done to make it more effective. In a real world scenario, this may consist of a sales rep taking a just-in-time training course, for example, objection handling, just before a sales meeting.

The sales rep assesses whether the training helped or not during the sales call. After the sales call, the rep completes a short assessment or survey on how effective they found the training, and whether it improved the sales call. This information is fed directly back to the learning team, and subsequent courses are modified to include all relevant and useful feedback. The new course is pushed out to the sales reps, and the loop continues.

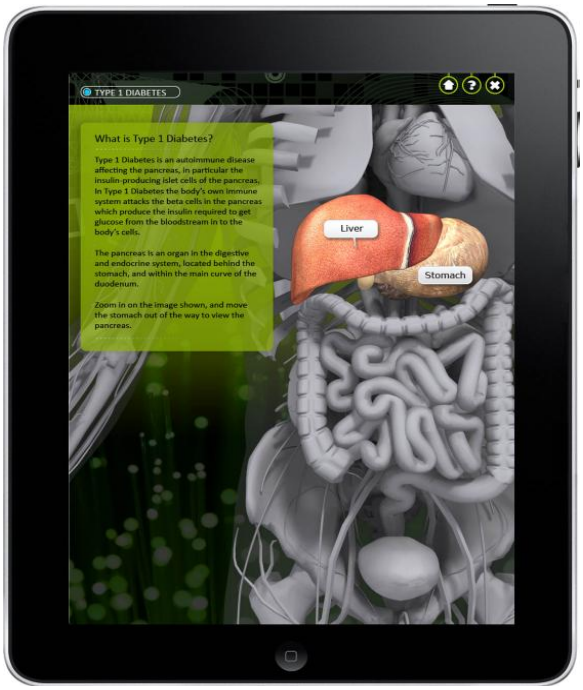

Fig. 1 Apple iPad displaying Pharma app.

Design Considerations for Tablets

Having explained the concept of the closed loop for learning, we need to review some of the design considerations that come in to play when designing and developing learning for tablets.

A common error many organizations make is to try and push existing e-Learning onto a tablet. Why is this a mistake? Because, basically, tablet users know what their devices can do, and they’re intolerant of anything on a tablet that doesn’t take full advantage of the devices’ inherent design advantages.

A simple example is course navigation. In a standard desktop-delivered e-Learning course, users click ‘Next’ to progress between screens. Tablet users automatically expect to swipe from screen to screen, so that design feature must be factored in to navigation for tablet learning.

Similarly, drag & drop actions are controlled using a mouse device in desktop e-Learning, but they can be full touch screen interactions on tablets. The user literally drags and drops objects.

The key point here is that tablet devices, and in particular, the iPad, have raised the bar considerably in terms of how learners interact with content. To overlook these possibilities when designing learning is to risk delivering a sub-par learning experience that may be ignored by learners.

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Having looked at a closed loop learning strategy, and design considerations for tablets, we must now consider the technical requirements that underpin a successful tablet learning strategy.

"Mobile Learning" is a hot topic in learning lately, and tablet-based learning is nothing if not mobile. However, the definition of "Mobile Learning" can vary considerably depending on who you're talking to. To some people, mobile learning is learning streamed to a browser on a mobile device. To others, mobile learning is learning tools delivered as native apps to a device's desktop or home screen.

In both of the above cases, the description "Mobile Learning" may be true, but these models bring us back to the unidirectional approach to learning delivery. Learning is delivered, but the level of quality feedback returned is minimal or non-existent.

This experience does not allow for the closed loop learning strategy discussed here, nor does it recognize the security factors that need to be considered when deploying potentially sensitive company information to mobile

devices. Let's consider the closed loop learning strategy first.

A successful closed loop learning strategy needs a Mobile Learning Platform (MLP) which acts as a mobile learning delivery system where Learning Managers can assign content from internal HR and Learning systems to sales reps via an app downloaded and installed on the user's mobile device, in order to track usage and completion of that content. Content can be assigned as optional or mandatory, and can be pushed by the Learning Managers or pulled by the learners.

As a result, learning content is readily accessible on the mobile device even when a network connection is unavailable. Content can be further broken down into courses, assessments or surveys, depending on the learning/feedback requirement. All content communicates directly back to the LMS, and this is how Learning Managers administer the closed learning loop.

Consideration must also be given to the method of mobile learning integration. Does the Learning Manager require forward integration? This involves setting up, enabling or disabling users and assigning mobile learning content to the target audience.

Or does the Learning Manager require backward integration? This enables the tracking records from the MLP to be made available through the parent LMS. In both cases, the integration method can be either manually or automatically implemented. However, if pilot projects are being launched, automated integration is usually reserved until a full rollout is implemented.

From a security perspective, consideration must be given to how content can be encrypted in transit to the device, and on the device. Is access to the Mobile LMS PIN coded? Can content be wiped remotely by an administrator if the device is reported lost or stolen? These are essential features to consider when deploying potentially commercially sensitive material to the field.

SUMMARY

The iPad, and tablets in general, are here to stay in pharma and medical device sales forces. The key question is how best to harness the power of these devices to drive learning in these industries.

A closed loop learning strategy, based on the principles of Closed Loop Marketing, allows Learning Managers to adapt quickly and effectively to current learning needs in the field, and manage a process of continuous learning delivery.

Design considerations for tablets are hugely important, as learners expect more from content delivered to tablets.

Finally, the security of mobile delivery is critical when developing a mobile learning strategy

Author Bio

Bill McDunphy is the General Manager of Intuition's Life Sciences Division. He has in excess of eleven years in the learning industry as a project manager, account manager, learning consultant and business developer.

Bill has successfully delivered key learning initiatives for major Life Sciences clients in the US, Europe and Asia, including eLearning, mobile learning, blended learning and social learning.

About Intuition

Intuition is a leading knowledge management company with 25 years experience in enterprise learning solutions. We continuously strive to harness the latest techniques, technologies and tools to deliver the best learning experience to users.

In the past five years we have significantly developed our mobile learning solution. As mobile devices and smartphones proliferate into people's lives, mobile learning will become one of the main ways in which people access knowledge. A survey in December 2010 showed that "The last thing that more than 70% of British adults do before they go to bed is check social network sites." The same survey also found that "84% of adults are now using their mobile phone to wake themselves up in the mornings." In 2009, more smartphones were sold in the UK than laptops for the first year ever. Google has said that they expect desktops to be irrelevant within three years and consequently they are focusing on mobile advertising as the way forward.

Intuition's Rubicon Mobile Learning solution can be deployed centrally on an organisation's mobile phone platform, or piggy-backing on the personal mobile devices of users. The system is secure and completely personalised, ensuring that:

- information is delivered via SSL
- information is encrypted while on the device and in centralized web servers
- learning is personalised to the particular user, or even particular devices using unique device serial codes
- information can't be forwarded or 'cut and pasted' to applications
- courses and information can be wiped remotely

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