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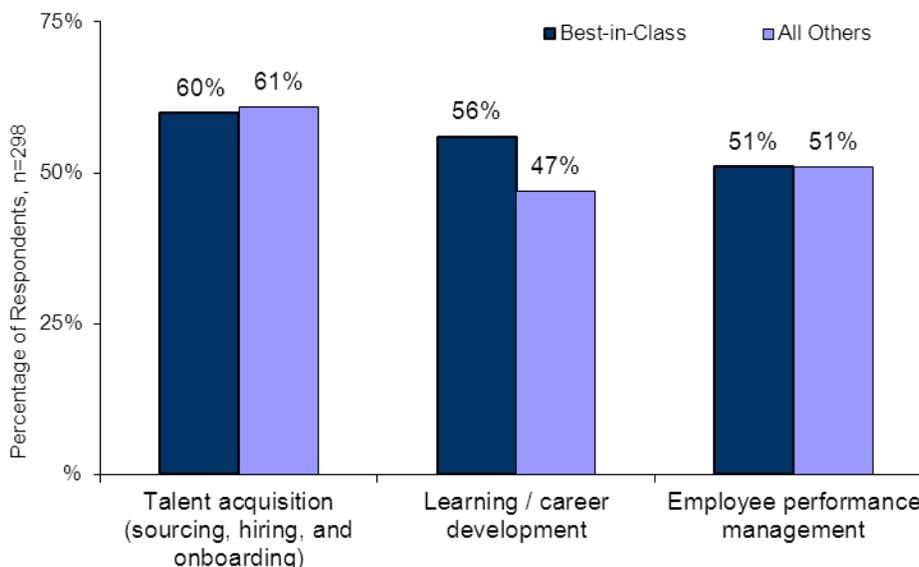
Learning on the Move

Learning is a critical element in an organization's ability to carry out its strategy and keep up with the changing demands of its customers. But employee expectations about how information and learning are delivered can change as fast as the marketplace. Consumer-driven products like mobile phones and tablets have changed how we ask questions of experts, where we go for help, and how we consume information. Internal knowledge sharing must keep up. Using data gathered between October and December 2011, this Insight will look at how organizations rely on learning to run their businesses more effectively, and how the ways they deliver that learning can keep pace with employee demand. It will also look specifically at mobile learning, and explore how top-performing companies are unleashing learning and learners.

Learning Drives Business

When asked to identify Human Capital Management (HCM) activities most critical to business execution, the Best-in-Class (see sidebar) in Aberdeen's December 2011 study on HCM Trends 2012 ranked learning second only to talent acquisition (Figure 1). Learning is also the one element of the top three significantly more valued by top performers.

Figure 1: Critical HCM Elements to Executing Business Strategy



Source: Aberdeen Group, December 2011

Analyst Insight

Aberdeen's Insights provide the analyst perspective of the research as drawn from an aggregated view of the research surveys, interviews, and data analysis

Best-in-Class Definition

In Aberdeen's December 2011 report HCM Trends 2012 the following key performance indicators were used to determine the Best-in-Class for HCM, with top performers achieving impressive results:

- ✓ 81% of employees rated themselves as "highly engaged" in their most recent engagement survey
- ✓ 71% of key positions have a ready and willing successor identified
- ✓ 13% year-over-year improvement in hiring manager satisfaction

Best-in-Class - top 20% of aggregate performance scorers

Industry Average - middle 50% of aggregate performance scorers

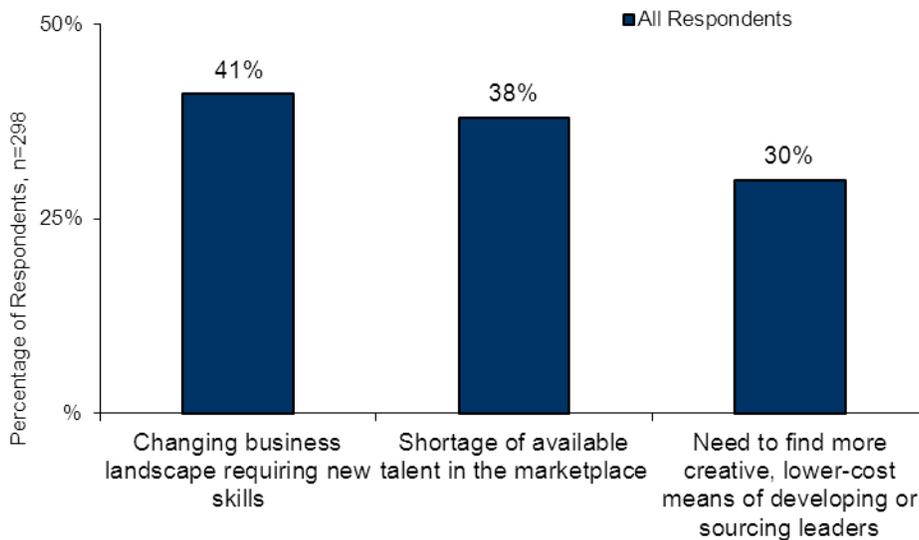
Laggards - bottom 30% of aggregate performance scorers

Best-in-Class companies achieved, on average, 79% of organizational KPIs (key performance indicators) or MBOs (management business objectives) in the last year, compared to 39% of Laggard organizations. They also saw nearly four times the year-over-year improvement in customer satisfaction (15% vs. 4%), customer retention (11% vs. 3%) and revenue per FTE (8% vs. 2%) over All Other (the combination of Industry Average and Laggard) organizations. Companies that do well by their customers and employees understand that learning is critical to their success.

The Why of Mobile Learning

Why is learning important to companies? According to Aberdeen's data, companies are looking for ways to combat looming skills shortages and find people to lead their organizations into a rapidly changing future (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Pressures Driving Learning and Development Efforts

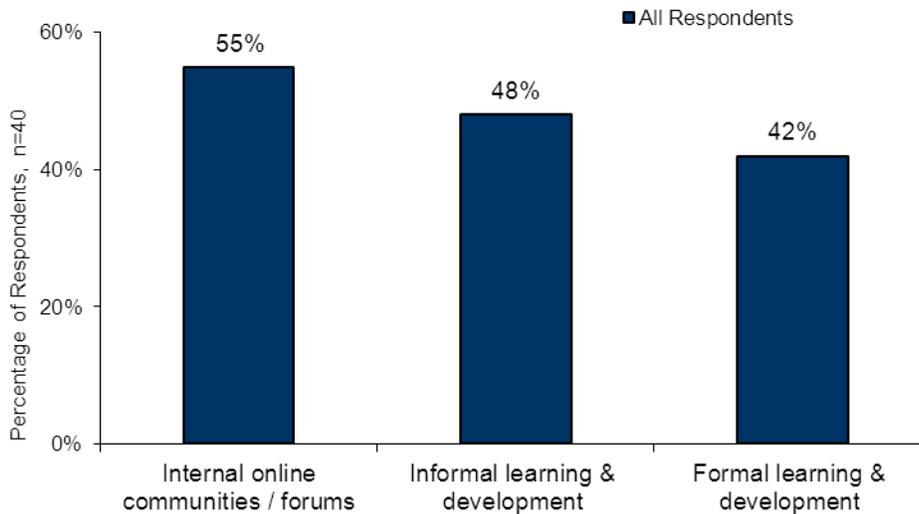


Source: Aberdeen Group, December 2011

The need to grow, finding and retaining individuals with key skills, and manage the costs of building leaders were themes throughout Aberdeen's 2011 HCM research. Learning addresses these concerns by helping organizations become more agile and adaptable, building talent from within instead of having to find it externally. Learning touches nearly everyone within the organization, which makes it doubly important. Learning is a way to spread information and keep individuals aligned with business priorities. But, because it is so far-reaching, learning must be managed efficiently and effectively.

Given this, it is not surprising that internal knowledge sharing and learning (both formal and informal) are the areas within HCM where mobile tools are most widely used (Figure 3).

Figure 3: HCM Activities Where Mobile Tools are Used



Source: Aberdeen Group, December 2011

This data is from a survey on the use of mobile tools specifically for HCM purposes. These tools are used to connect people for knowledge transfer, both formally and informally. The data reflects significant growth in the last 18 months. In Aberdeen's June 2010 study, [Mobile HCM: Workforce and Talent Management on the Move](#), 30% of respondents indicated they used mobile tools for internal online communities and forums, 43% for informal learning and development, and 21% for formal L&D. This represents a two-fold increase in the prevalence of mobile tools for formal learning in 18 months, indicating that mobile is no longer just a nice-to-have add-on for learning programs, but a strategic part of the formal learning plan.

Among the Best-in-Class organizations in the 2012 HCM Trends study, 40% indicate they use mobile technology for talent management (learning, recruiting, etc.), as compared to 11% of All Others. Thirty-seven percent (37%) indicate they use mobile technology for workforce management (scheduling, shift bidding, etc.) versus just 9% of All Others. These two enablers were adopted three to four times more often by the Best-in-Class than by lower-performing companies, making them the most differentiated enablers Aberdeen's study. Mobile tools appear to be aligned with an organization's ability to more achieve their goals efficiently and effectively.

The What and the How

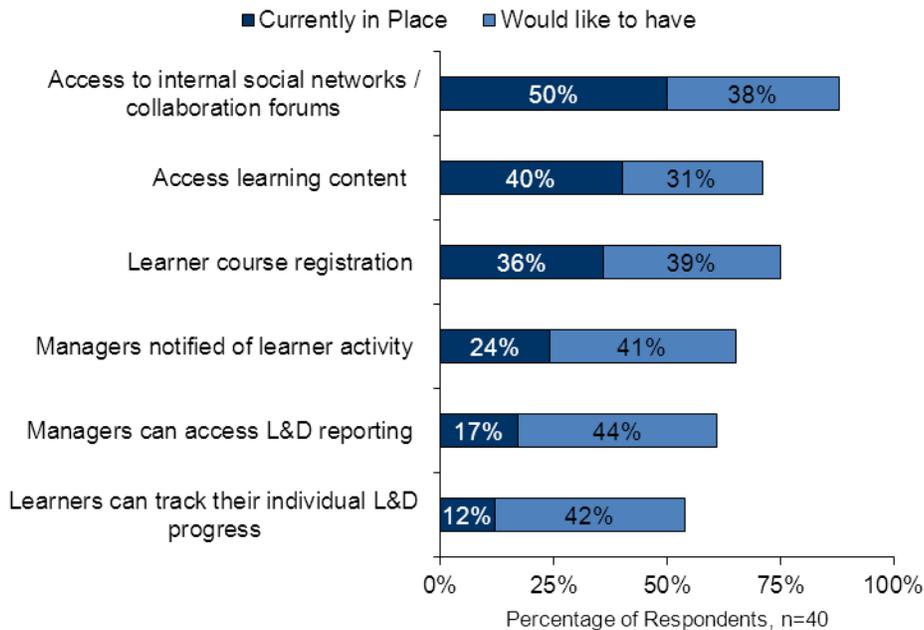
Mobile tools for learning are an area of growth, but many organizations are just beginning to explore how they can be used. As with all mobile tools in HCM, there are two sides to consider when implementing or choosing how to integrate mobile learning. The first is how these tools can improve the efficiency or effectiveness of learning administration, and the second how these tools can deliver an enhanced learning experience. As Figure 4 shows,

Fast Facts

- ✓ **40%** of Best-in-Class organizations indicate the use of mobile technology for talent management (learning, recruiting, etc.), as compared to 11% of all others, making them nearly three times more likely to do so.
- ✓ **37%** of the Best-in-Class indicate the use of mobile technology for workforce management (scheduling, shift bidding, etc.) versus just 9% of All Others

the latter consideration is most common among users of these devices today. Truly mobile devices are seen as a gateway to collaboration and knowledge dissemination.

Figure 4: L&D Activities on Mobile Devices



Source: Aberdeen Group, December 2011

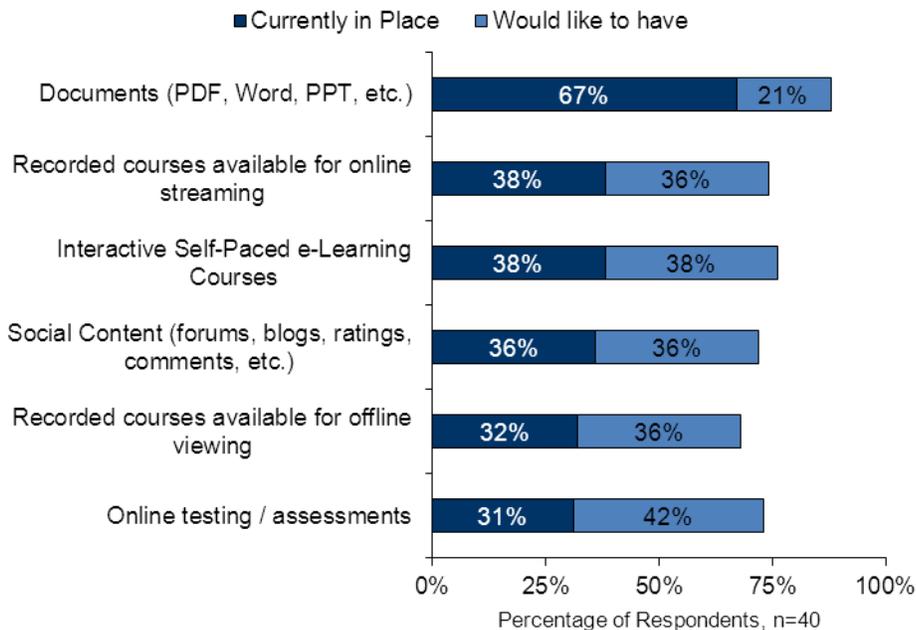
Extended enterprise learning was a key differentiator for the Best-in-Class in Aberdeen's October 2010 study on [Learning & Development](#), and mobile learning is one way organizations are keeping pace with this trend. While 96% of respondents say their mobile learning tools are aimed at employees, 39% include customers, and 35% extend mobile learning to channel partners and resellers as well. As the value chain for today's organizations widens into a network, mobile will be an important tool for reaching these external audiences.

Organizations are also exploring which content types are available for such devices. Since companies are most likely to use mobile tools to provide access to people and learning content, they must rethink how to deliver not only offline static content through document downloads, but also, interactive and streaming content that relies on a network connection, as well as supporting offline viewing or interaction combined with synching upon reconnection with a network. As we see in Figure 5, document access still reigns supreme, deployed nearly twice as often as more interactive learning modalities and tools.

Fast Facts

- ✓ **96%** of respondents say their mobile learning tools are aimed at employees;
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Figure 5: Learning Content Types on Mobile Devices



Source: Aberdeen Group, December 2011

But once organizations move beyond sharing PowerPoint slides Word documents, their strategies become mixed, including: offering online access with the mobile device as a lens, fostering interaction between employees, and allowing content to be downloaded for viewing when network access is not available--for example, on a plane or commuter train. There is no single clear use case yet for connected versus offline versus collaborative learning. When asked about the content access capabilities organizations expect from mobile learning solutions, 73% cited making learning content available for download / offline viewing, and 70% expected delivery of learning content via streaming from a network connection. This is not an either / or question for most organizations.

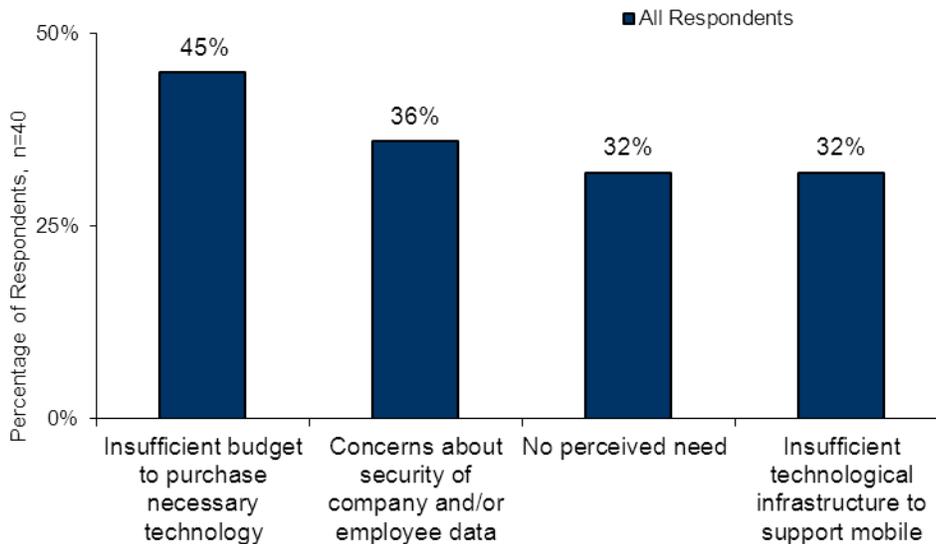
Changing device types complicate the landscape even more. While two-thirds (66%) of organizations support a mobile phone platform for mobile HCM activities, 43% support at least one or more tablet device, and an additional 39% plan to support one or more tablet in the future. In learning, where seeing, hearing and doing all combine to help ensure comprehension, the additional real estate of a tablet screen may dramatically increase a program's effectiveness. As organizations adopt these technologies, they will have to find the delivery mechanisms which have the greatest impact, and support the device types their particular audiences require.

Overcoming Barriers

Most organizations are still figuring out mobile devices. Technological innovation often occurs faster than organizations can absorb it, and sometimes one part of the company may move at a different rate than

another. As Figure 6 illustrates, budget is a top concern, but beyond that, most barriers take the form of indifference toward, or poor understanding of, mobile HCM.

Figure 6: Barriers to Implementing or Expanding Mobile HCM



Source: Aberdeen Group, December 2011

HR must work with IT to address security and infrastructure concerns, and once the business understands the value Mobile HCM can create, budget conversations become easier as well. Mobile tools can be no more than shiny objects, but with the right planning, when integrated into a formal learning strategy, these tools can become an integral part of business execution.

Case in Point

The Fugro Group of companies is an organization dedicated to collecting, analyzing and interpreting data about the earth. Headquartered in the Netherlands, they provide geotechnical, survey and geoscience services to clients worldwide and provide them with advice to power their energy, mining and construction activities. Andrew McNeill is Fugro's Global Learning & Development Manager, and runs the Fugro Academy for the organization's 13,500 employees around the world. Of these employees, more than half are based in the field – and for Fugro the "field" may literally be an oilfield, a drilling rig in the middle of the ocean, a rising global capital in a developing country, or a remote stretch of frozen tundra. Over the past 50 years they have provided their clients with whatever insights they may need about what is on or under the earth they plan to develop, mine in or build on. Throughout much of its history the organization has been highly decentralized. But in the past five years they started to realize the benefits of gaining some cross corporate consistency. Particularly in the area of

learning they realized they could support the organization centrally by offering greater scale, more capabilities and more content layered on top of the highly localized training required by their various job sites. "At the start of this journey our learning environment was very much classroom-based and highly decentralized," said McNeill. "We had to build trust not only in our centralized efforts but also in the very idea of e-learning before we could even think about mobile learning."

As Fugro began its search for a partner to support the Academy, high on their list was the ability to support distance learners in a variety of environments. These environments necessarily included parts of the world where electricity may be spotty at best, let alone broadband Internet access or 3G mobile networks. They also want to support e-learning for their office-based workers around the globe in order to take advantage of cost saving and consistency benefits. As they began to roll out the Academy and new e-learning courses, they focused first on people who would have responsibility for rolling out the training to other members of the staff. By helping these early evangelists understand the benefits of e-learning, they were able to spread the word and lead by example among their peers. One of the biggest benefits of developing the Academy was the fact that the courses brought together cross functional teams and helped them not only share ideas, but made people aware of other possible job roles and career paths within the organization.

Once the idea of e-learning began to take hold, the transition to mobile learning became more of a pull from the field than a push from corporate. Whether it be an office worker looking to access training during their commute or business travels, or a technician on a drilling platform who wanted to complete his training while at sea in order to avoid cutting into his family time while on leave, mobile learning was an obvious need. The organization first considered options like burning courses to CDs, or other forms of off-line file access, but these solutions did not allow the organization to track a learner's activity, and manage learning plans. The solution they adopted, mEKP from NetDimensions, a USB drive based solution, not only provided mobile access to content, but mobile updates on learner activity to their LMS when the employee is able to reconnect. Fugro focused on the needs of its highly skilled workers and complex working environments as the guiding principle for their mobile tool selection and rollout. They also responded to the growing consumerism trend, where workers expect the technologies they use on the job to keep up with the consumer technology they interact with in their free time.

Now, both office workers and far-flung technicians, geologists and scientists can interact with each other and learning content in order to better enable them to meet their client's needs. While the mobile rollout is still ongoing as they test the technology in various conditions, the organization has noted some key benefits realized as a result of the overall L&D strategy. In particular the organization had experiences issues with engagement among employees within their first two years of employment. Their most recent engagement survey reported that new hires (those with two years of

experience or less) were 10 percentage points higher than the average when asked if they were given sufficient training opportunities for their job or future job opportunities. This reflected the focus on developing group-wide training courses for new hire graduates and technicians during a period when the organization was hiring extensively. Said McNeill, "It's important when rolling out mobile learning to make sure your efforts are aligned with your overall learning strategy and learner needs, as well as business strategy, not just trying to roll out shiny new toys. You need to solve problems for employees, and market both the content and how it will benefit the users to help them understand the value."

Key Takeaways

The use of mobile devices for learning and development is rapidly evolving. Organization should keep the following points in mind as they explore this field.

- **Learning drives organizational adaptability.** Companies look to learning as a tool for agility, delivering information and knowledge to individuals to help them meet business goals. But to foster this adaptability, delivery methods must adapt as well, and keep pace with learner needs and expectations. Mobility is a key tool required to keep pace with these rapidly evolving needs.
- **Mobile is about formal and informal.** The use of mobile tools for learning is as much about letting someone comment on a forum as it is about attending an online course. Mobile learning strategy should focus on social interaction as well as formal content delivery.
- **Mobile is still evolving.** From phone to tablet, to mobile video chat and offline content viewing, mobility is evolving. A good mobile strategy should not revolve around having the latest bell or whistle, but around the needs of the learners. Work to support learners through the best available means.

For more information on this or other research topics, please visit www.aberdeen.com

Related Research	
<i>Human Capital Management Trends 2012: Managing Talent to Lead Organizational Growth</i> ; December 2011	<i>The 2011 HR Executives Agenda: Automation, Innovation and Growth</i> ; December 2010
<i>The Engagement / Performance Equation</i> ; July 2011	<i>Learning & Development 2010: Bridging the Gap Between Strategy and Execution</i> ; October 2010
<i>Assessments 2011: Selecting and Developing for the Future</i> ; May 2011	<i>Mobile HCM: Workforce and Talent Management on the Move</i> ; June 2010

Related Research

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