

It must be magic!

Mobile technology - opportunities at our fingertips: mobile learning, m-learning through wireless, messenger, blogs, podcasts, webcasts, WAP and so on...

- Out with the old
- In with the new

I am awestruck by some of the things that unfold before my eyes. Like Michael, our head alchemist, sorry I mean technologist. He sits opposite me one day, taps into his laptop, waits a second or two then holds up his mobile phone crying triumphantly: "Look at this!" As if by magic he's made a multiple choice question appear on his mobile phone. More tapping on his laptop and seconds later he's transferred our logo through the air into the same mobile.

No big deal for a technologist perhaps. But for instructional designers it's a wake-up call to the opportunities at our fingertips: mobile learning, m-learning through wireless, messenger, blogs, podcasts, webcasts, WAP and so on.

Out with the old

So what's the best use of this wonderful connectivity and variety of new media? It helps us to break out of arcane thinking about e-learning as having to be about courses, modules, topics etc. We can challenge assumptions about the efficacy of simply converting subject matter into hours of equivalent online page-turning content.

Or as Lars Hyland, Brightwave's Director of Learning Services, puts it in his recent article 'The changing face of work based learning': "Out go the endless clipart PowerPoint presentations and page-turning e-learning. In come highly interactive models and simulations that target core concepts and capture virtual scenarios that allow learners to explore and discover a more realistic rendition of the complexity they must deal with in the real world."

In with the new

For the instructional designer, each of these media channels has its own magic. To make that magic work for us, we need to take the business and learning objectives we're given, take a good look at the content, the expectations of our audience and, with learning in mind, design according to the strengths of what's available.

Computers are good for games, graphics, scoring and tracking - not for reading from. So let's design multimedia games, simulations and quizzes that complement and illustrate the content, rather than repeat it. Give the existing content a tweak and make the most of web and intranet links. But invest the bulk of the time, money and creativity in exploiting the other channels available to our increasingly savvy target audience such as:

- **podcasts** - primarily an audio experience - great for developing high quality radio style stories, dramas or documentaries
- **mobile phones** - ubiquitous and portable - great for interactive questionnaires and quizzes
- **Flash software** - exceptional for developing animations and audio visual sequences - great for entertaining cartoons and animated communication pieces
- **broadband and intranets** can increasingly handle audio and video - so we should produce more short video clips, real-life interviews and/or acted mini-dramas and scenarios
- **DVD players** are commonplace and affordable - now an alternative to CDs
- **chatrooms** with avatars - great for online role plays
- **game 'engines'** - why not repurpose game formats into learning experiences.

With such an exciting palate of new media channels to choose from, instructional designers no longer have any excuse for delivering non-immersive or boring e-learning programmes. Let's get started - let's create some magic!

Call us on 01273 827676 or email us at enquiries@brightwave.co.uk to find out more about our corporate learning solutions and how we can help your business.