

Delivering Training to the Point of Need

By LTC James T. McGhee

During the past few years there has been a worldwide explosion in the sale and use of mobile electronic devices such as “smart” phones and tablets. An entire generation of learners is becoming as familiar with the iPad as they are with a television.

Leaders at academic institutions throughout the world are touting the value of these devices in enhancing student learning experiences. However, educators will most likely not be able to assess the full value of these new technologies for many years. The speed at which industry is able to develop and manufacture increasingly powerful devices makes it difficult to keep up with the educational

benefits of the latest mobile capabilities.

Army leaders, through the Connecting Soldiers with Digital Applications initiative, are exploring the value of these devices in order to support the visions outlined in the Army Learning Model and Doctrine 2015 to provide Soldiers with Army information, doctrine, and training and leader development content at the point of need. Two years of continuous concept exploration through various pilot programs at Army Centers of Excellence have clearly demonstrated value in delivering Army information, along with training and leader development content, to Soldiers through mobile electronic devices.

Far too often, the discussion

about the military use of mobile electronic devices turns to Information Assurance and the inability to connect commercial mobile devices to the Department of Defense Networks. The security risks associated with mobile devices are real. According to a Global Study on Mobility Risks, 51% of businesses surveyed lost data last year due to employee use of mobile devices. The Department of Army Chief Information Officer takes these threats very seriously, but is also looking for a solution that will provide the Army with a “secure” mobile device(s) similar to its current use of the RIM Blackberry. Whether a solution is announced this year or next, it is unlikely that the Army, given current resource constraints, will be able to purchase enough devices to issue an approved device in great quantities to the field.

There is no need for the Army or its institutions of learning to wait for a secure mobile solution. According to recent Army study conducted by the TRADOC Analysis Center at select Army Centers of Excellence, the number of Soldiers attending Army schools who own a personal mobile device exceeds 75%. It’s the “Bring Your Own Device” solution that will enable the Army to move forward with the development and delivery of unclassified Army publications, doctrine, and training content at the point of need. It’s all about the content. The truth is the majority of the Army’s doctrine and training content is unclassified and approved for public release. While the Army waits for a secure solution that will allow a secure mobile device solution to access DoD net



(Photo courtesy of General Dynamics)

A student uses a Smartphone to learn about the capabilities of the Satellite Transportable Trailer.



(Photo courtesy of General Dynamics)

An instructor uses a tablet device to facilitate discussion in his class.

works, it has enough unclassified material available to convert to mobile formats to keep doctrine writers and training developers employed for months if not years.

What Army learning institutions can do today is train its personnel to format doctrine and training content for mobile devices. For example, outdated PDF files continue as the Army standard for mobile delivery of publications but their use on most mobile devices does not provide a user friendly experience. The industry standard format for most mobile devices is the ePUB. The ePUB and Apple's new revolutionary iBook are both outstanding formats that can deliver a positive user experience that enhances and sustains learning at the point of need. Along with outdated formats, the Army continues to follow outdated publishing directives tied to traditional paper printing requirements. Through mobile delivery, the content developer is no longer constrained by archaic rules, such as the requirement for all photos, maps, and charts to be delivered in grey scale to avoid the excessive costs associated with color printing. Content and training developers should be moving forward to develop their skills, learn the process and

begin formatting all of their unclassified material as ePUBs. TRADOC is moving forward to establish an ePUB policy along with a public accessible Central Army Registry and supporting Apple and Google Apps to distribute ePUB files to personally owned mobile devices. The mobile revolution of content delivery is upon us and those who choose not to move forward rapidly are doomed to fall behind. For more information on CSDA, formatting content for use on mobile devices, or delivery of content through mobile apps, contact the Mission Command Center of Excellence's CSDA point of contact, LTC James T. McGhee at 913-684-6356, or james.mcghee1@us.army.mil.

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ACRONYM QuickScan

CIO/G6 - Department of the Army Communications Officer
CSDA - Connecting Soldiers with Digital Applications

DoD - Department of Defense
IA - Information Assurance
TRAC - U. S. Army Training and

Doctrine Command Analysis Center
TRADOC - U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command