YOUR CHECKLIST FOR

EVALUATING A MOBILE LEARNING SOLUTION FOR ADULT EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Adult education providers need a way to teach an increasing number of adult learners with a decreasing budget. Oh, and with better results, too.

This is where mobile learning solutions come in, enabling you to serve more learners for less.

But how many more learners? For how much less? And are the results better? It varies from solution-to-solution.

To answer these critical questions, you might need help getting up-to-speed on key aspects and features to look for when sizing up a solution. So Cell-Ed has compiled the following checklist, which covers evaluation areas from usability to tracking and reporting.

Our goal is to replace what can be a confusing and drawn out process with one that's clear and quick so you can find the mobile learning solution that's right for you and your learners.

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CHAPTER 1

ACCESS & USABILITY

You wouldn't select a solution that most of your learners couldn't or wouldn't use, right? But this could easily happen. How? Because there are shockingly few solutions your learners can and will use. The majority shut out droves of learners by not addressing their unique pain points around access and usability. As a result, it's imperative to dot the 'i's' and cross the 't's' below.

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✅ What mobile devices can learners use to access the solution?

Your learners use a range of devices - from basic, flip phones to smartphones (e.g., Androids and iPhones) to tablets - so check that the solution can work with all of them. You don't want to leave any learners behind.

✅ Does the solution require your learners to use an internet connection and data?

Not all of your learners have a consistent internet connection when they're on the go, not to mention that some of them don't have a smartphone to get such a connection in the first place. For those who do have a smartphone, they are careful about using their data, which quickly gets expensive. And some of them have never downloaded an app and feel more comfortable phoning. So make sure the solution is not limited to an app for maximum access.

✅ What do learners need to do to use the solution for the first time? Do they require training?

Your learners are likely to abandon a cumbersome, 5-step login process. Instead, ensure the process is simple and fast so they can start learning right out of the gate. No training should be required. If it is then that's a flag that the solution may be poorly designed, which will decrease usage and engagement.

✅ How many learners can use the solution?

One of the biggest benefits of mobile technology is its ability to reach an unlimited number of learners. It's worth double-checking that the solution is indeed scalable.

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☑️ **Can learners switch from one device to another seamlessly when using the solution?**

A company that truly prizes learners' convenience and flexibility enables them to move from using the solution via a web browser at the library to using it via a flip phone back at home - and pick up right where they left off. This feature, which keeps content and learner progress in sync across web and mobile devices, is known as cross-platform compatibility.

> **"***There are shockingly few solutions your learners can and will use.***"**

☑️ **What research was used in the design and development of the solution, if any?**

A solution's backbone should be an evidence-based design and development process. This is likely to result in a solution that learners like and use, as well as one that boosts results.

☑️ **Has the solution been independently tested via randomized control trials, UX/UI experience assessments and/or pilot results?**

Third party validation from research centers or reputable universities separates the companies that simply transferred (and shrunk) a textbook or online training to a phone screen, which makes for a miserable learner experience, from the companies that built a solution from the ground up for a mobile environment. The latter increases the likelihood that it will be intuitive and easy to use.

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CHAPTER 2

COURSES & CONTENT

A solution that is tech rich but content poor is a surefire way to doom your learners. Relevant and engaging courses are the absolute anchor to your learners' success.

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✅ What courses does the company offer?

A company should offer a wide breadth of off-the-shelf, basic skills courses - from GED prep to foundational math to ESL - so you can better serve more learners trying to upskill. Also check for multi-levels of content within each course -- over a dozen is a good rule of thumb -- so you're assured learners can advance through a comprehensive set of lessons, earning certificates along the way.

✅ Who wrote the curriculum? What are their qualifications?

A company's off-the-shelf courses should be developed by certified professionals who are leaders in the field of adult education.

✅ Can courses and content be stand-alone or supplemental to my instruction?

Maybe you want to add a mobile-only, reading comprehension class. Or maybe you want to use that course as a homework tool alongside the in-person class. The solution should be able to do both.

✅ Is the content specifically designed and developed from the start for working adults?

What determines learners' engagement and success is based on whether or not the course material is directly relevant to their day-to-day lives. Adult learners (obviously) differ significantly from K-12 learners, yet there are many solutions that treat them the same, with scenarios around counting ducks instead of calculating a customer's order. Companies that are solely focused on adult learners are more likely to better address their needs and secure their progress.

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☑️ What standards do the courses meet?

Every single level should be aligned with national standards. For example, pre-GED and HSE courses should be aligned with TABE, CASAS and actual HSE content. ESL courses should be aligned with NRS, BEST Plus and CASAS.

> "*Adult learners (obviously) differ significantly from K-12 learners, yet there are many solutions that treat them the same, with scenarios around counting ducks instead of calculating a customer's order.*"

☑️ How long are the lessons?

Given that research shows adults learn more effectively in short, easily digestible bursts, most lessons should only last a few minutes. Micolessons best fit the lifestyle of time-strapped learners who study on breaks, on the bus or standing in line.

☑️ Are the courses self-paced? Can learners repeat lessons?

Mobile technology enables learners to control the pace of their learning. Such individualization means learners can practice and repeat lessons, increasing their retention of the material. So it's worth checking that the solution has this self-paced feature.

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☑ Are there assessments? If yes, what are they based on?

The solution should provide pre-assessments based on national standards (e.g., BEST Plus) to measure learners' ability and to ensure they are placed in the correct class. There should also be post-assessments to measure learners' learning gains and the effectiveness of the solution.

☑ Is the content personalized to each learner?

Static, one-size-fits-all instruction should not be the case with mobile learning. Find out if the solution collects information about each learner's ability, personal priorities and goals, and how it caters to them with dynamic content.

☑ Does the solution provide a learning management system (LMS) that I can use to customize courses and content or upload my own? Do I need tech skills to do this?

Flexibility is key to meeting your needs. As such, you'll want an LMS so you can customize courses and content, as well as upload. What you probably don't want, however, is an LMS that requires any tech skills, such as knowledge of complicated authoring tools.

☑ Does the solution allow me to reinforce learning with quizzes or refreshers? If yes, how?

To boost learner retention and proficiency after a course, you may want to find a solution with push notification capabilities through an LMS. This means you can send out mass messages or tailor messages for specific learners to reiterate key concepts. Check that the company offers the option to manage the LMS for you, in case you prefer not to.

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LEARNER FIRST

It's easy to bandy 'learner first' or 'learner centered' around. So how can you differentiate between solutions built to encourage and help learners, meeting them where they are, from those just paying lip service? Start with these questions.

✅ How is the solution convenient for learners to use?

Maximum convenience means your learners should be able to use the solution whenever they want (24/7); from wherever they are; and on whatever mobile device they are holding, including a basic flip phone. Because your learners are likely budget conscious, the solution should not require internet or data to use. Learners should also be able to pick up from wherever they left off in their coursework, even if they switch devices. Lastly, they should always be able to repeat lessons, studying at their own pace.

✅ How would the company help me get learners to start using the solution?

A company should help you spread the word to learners by providing materials such as flyers and posters. It should also provide documents (e.g., teacher guides) to your staff that explain how the solution works, ways to use it and why it's beneficial.

✅ What kind of help and support can learners expect? Are coaches or tutors available?

A company committed to high rates of learner completion, engagement and proficiency will provide multiple levels of support - from FAQs to live coaches/tutors. Some learners like to text with a coach/tutor while others prefer a phone call. The solution should provide both.

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✅ **If coaches or tutors are available to help, do learners have to make an appointment in advance to talk with them?**

When learners need help, they should be able to get it immediately - without having to schedule an appointment and wait. On-demand, live coaches/ tutors should always be provided.

24/7

✅ **If a learner is struggling, can the solution tell? If yes, does anyone step in to help?**

The solution should track learners in real time to spot any issues. When a learner struggles, the coach/tutor should intervene - through text or phone calls - to help. These types of proactive interventions reduce the likelihood of a learner slipping through the cracks and not completing the course.

✅ **How are learners encouraged to keep using the solution?**

Once learners begin to use the solution, they should receive encouraging, personal communications (e.g., texts, positive emojis) to boost their confidence and motivation so they stay committed to their learning.

> *"Some learners like to text with a coach/tutor while others prefer a phone call. The solution should provide both."*

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✅ What happens when learners stop using the solution?

Learners should be texted or called so the reason why they dropped off can be identified and fixed, and learning quickly continued.

✅ Does the solution recognize learner achievement with certificates?

Learners should be celebrated with certificates after each course.

✅ Does the solution collect feedback from learners? If yes, is this feedback integrated?

A company can't be learner centered if it's not regularly asking learners about what they thought went well, what could be better, and other 'taking-their-temperature' type questions. Solutions should provide customizable surveys, as well as coaches/tutors who phone learners and ask open-ended questions. Open-ended questions often result in deeper and unexpected insights. All of this feedback should be integrated back into the solution at least once a month to make it more effective.

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CHAPTER 4

TRACKING & REPORTING

The ultimate question: Are your learners learning? Visibility into tracking learner utilization, progress and outcomes through the solution will ensure you can identify problem areas and make targeted improvements.

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✅ What types of data does the solution track?

Common types of data that the solution should track - on an individual and aggregate level - include:
- usage per week
- completion rates
- length of time to complete
- scores before and after assessments
- interactions with coaches/tutors and more

> **"***Be sure to measure what's important to you.***"**

✅ Does the solution provide real-time data?

Real-time data is critical if you want to ensure learners are receiving the help and encouragement they need when they need it. Without real-time data, instruction can't be modified on the fly.
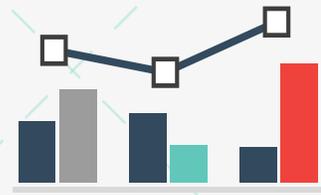
✅ How can I see this data?

A simple, digestible dashboard, which doesn't require any explaining, is the most effective way to view data.

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☑ Can I generate reports?

The solution should allow you to quickly and easily download, generate and share reports that are presentation quality. You should also be able to customize them to fit your needs.

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EXPERIENCE & TRACK RECORD

Although the field of mobile learning for adult education is only several years old, there are companies out there with proven experience.

☑️ **How many learners are currently using the company's solution?**

Thousands, if not up to ten thousand learners, should be currently using the solution. Anything smaller might not provide enough confidence in its effectiveness.

☑️ **What independent evidence is there that learners like and use the solution, as well as successfully learn?**

A company should be able to share third-party validation in the rates of user experience, completion, engagement and learning gains.

☑️ **How many customers does the company have? Are they reputable?**

Look for more than a dozen customers, including a few recognizable names.

☑️ **What percent of the company's customers have renewed their contracts?**

Not everyone will be willing to provide this information but it can point to overall customer satisfaction.

☑️ **Can I speak with one of the company's customers?**

Most companies will be happy to provide a reference.

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If you want to email the previous questions - without the back-ground sentences - to a company whose solution you're evaluating, just copy and paste the list on the following page.

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CHAPTER 1: ACCESS & USABILITY

• What mobile devices can learners use to access the solution?
• Does the solution require your learners to use an internet connection and data?
• What do learners need to do to use the solution for the first time? Do they require training?
• How many learners can use the solution?
• Can learners switch from one device to another seamlessly when using the solution?
• What research was used in the design and development of the solution, if any?
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CHAPTER 2: COURSES & CONTENT

• What courses does the company offer?
• Who wrote the curriculum? What are their qualifications?
• Can courses and content be stand-alone or supplemental to my instruction?
• Is the content specifically designed and developed from the start for working adults?
• What standards do the courses meet?
• How long are the lessons?
• Are the courses self-paced? Can learners repeat lessons?
• Are there assessments? If yes, what are they based on?
• Is the content personalized to each learner?
• Does the solution provide a learning management system (LMS) that I can use to customize courses and content or upload my own? Do I need tech skills to do this?
• Does the solution allow me to reinforce learning with quizzes or refreshers? If yes, how?

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CHAPTER 3: LEARNER FIRST

- How is the solution convenient for learners to use?
- How would the company help me get learners to start using the solution?
- What kind of help and support can learners expect? Are coaches or tutors available?
- If coaches or tutors are available to help, do learners have to make an appointment in advance to talk with them?
- If a learner is struggling, can the solution tell? If yes, does anyone step in to help?
- How are learners encouraged to keep using the solution?
- What happens when learners stop using the solution?
- Does the solution recognize learner achievement with certificates?
- Does the solution collect feedback from learners? If yes, is this feedback integrated?
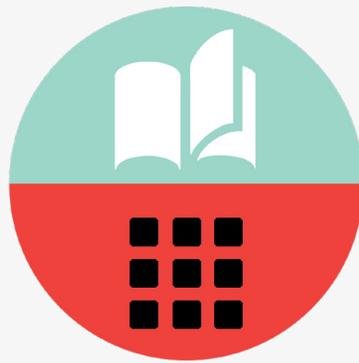
CHAPTER 4: TRACKING & REPORTING

- What types of data does the solution track?
- Does the solution provide real-time data?
- How can I see this data?
- Can I generate reports?

CHAPTER 5: EXPERIENCE & TRACK RECORD

- How many learners are currently using the company's solution?
- What independent evidence is there that learners like and use the solution, as well as successfully learn?
- How many customers does the company have? Are they reputable?
- What percent of the company's customers have renewed their contracts?
- Can I speak with one of the company's customers?

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CONCLUSION

We hope evaluating a solution for your adult learners just got easier with this checklist. If you're interested to learn about our solution here at Cell-Ed or to see our demo, please contact us at info@cell-ed.com.

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YOUR COMPLETE (AND MOST EFFECTIVE) MOBILE SOLUTION

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