



Introducing the “L-Pod”

Paul von Wittgenstein (Da Xiong)
General Manager
CanadAsia Management Development Ltd.

Introduction

Greetings and welcome back. Most people know what Podcasting is, but have you ever thought about how it might be used in corporate learning programs? In this article, I want to get you to think outside of the music box for a while and to imagine the possibilities of using one of the most common electronic devices in China to help in training delivery.



Podcasting is the modern word derived by combining the name *iPod* (the popular digital music player from Apple), and *broadcasting*. But podcasts, which are digital audio programs that can be subscribed to and downloaded by listeners via RSS (Really Simple Syndication), are not limited to the iPod device. Podcasts can be played on several different digital audio devices, including computers and mobile phones.

Training by Podcasting

Podcasts are essentially MP3 files, which are fairly easy and inexpensive to make. In addition, podcasts can be listened to on a computer or transmitted to a portable digital audio player, Pocket PC, or mobile phone that can play audio files.



The portable nature and convenience of on-demand podcasting enable listeners to learn via audio content while completing other tasks. Podcasting is becoming an important element of mobile learning. Vodcasting, the video equivalent of podcasting, currently has fewer followers than podcasting, but shows a lot of promise for the future of mobile learning. As the relative cost of this technology decreases while its utility increases, corporate learning through vodcasting is sure to become more popular in the future.

Podcast Learning

Listening to digital audio content won't replace reading, listening to live presentations, or the multitude of other ways learners take in information, but it can certainly play an important role in a blended learning program. The following are some of the ways that podcasting can be used in a corporate learning program:

A) Assist auditory learners. People learn differently. Some are visual, some learn by memorizing, others by doing. Some people learn best by listening. These people are called auditory learners. Podcasting is a very good method for auditory learners who prefer to listen and learn.



B) Help non-native speakers. Chinese staff who aren't yet proficient in English may struggle to keep up with presentations or lectures. Podcasts enable learners to review recordings of lessons as many times as necessary for better understanding. Podcasting can also be used for improving English language skills. Podcasts can be used to improve listening, pronunciation and, in combination with a microphone, for capturing a learner's own speech for review by themselves or a trainer.

C) Provide a back-up of lectures. When material is delivered orally, as in lectures, classroom-based training, or in-person presentations, podcasting can ensure that learners can still access key information that they may have missed. The audio files can also be reviewed in preparation for taking exams.



D) Provide learners with feedback. Trainers can provide feedback to learners via recorded podcast commentary. For example, a trainer could be watching a learner make a presentation and then be recording comments that the learner could listen to after their presentation.

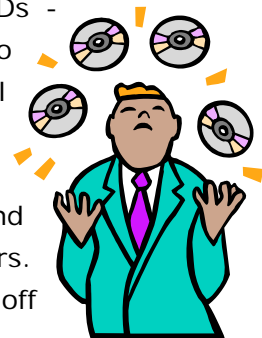
E) Enable trainers' self-review. Another benefit of recording lectures is that trainers can "critique themselves as a method of improving their training style." Archived online learning events already provide this benefit to instructors. Now podcasting can offer the same advantages for classroom-based training. In addition, managers who want to review a training program their staff are enrolled in could subscribe to the podcasts as well.

F) Reduce learner and trainer travel. Most of the time, learning requires active participation, asking questions, practice exercises and simulations, in-person coaching etc. But if what is needed is basically presenting information, then a podcast can often do the job without requiring the trouble of traveling to and from the learning. Trainers can alert learners that there is a new lesson available for download and then learners can access it whenever, wherever they want.

Why include podcasting in audio training?

1) Podcasting reduces the costs of burning and delivering audio CDs - especially for a multinational company with employees worldwide. Audio programs can now become part of ongoing training by allowing personal computers to send them to portable MP3 players.

2) Podcasting is asynchronous and portable — you reach people when and where they are. It is an inexpensive and direct route to employees' ears. Managers can reach the ears of all employees without taking them time off from productive work. It's a sensible mobile learning option.





But it should not be the only method for delivering most training programs. Podcasts are one-way, which is why it needs to be integrated with other more participative learning activities.

Considerations before getting into podcast training:

Trainers will need to develop a delivery format that is conversational, entertaining, and interesting. That will take some time and practice. So you could start by just posting MP3 files on your intranet or learning portal that employees can download and listen to on their computers. While simply posting downloadable audio files doesn't really qualify as a podcast, you may find this to be the best way to get started.

It's been estimated that more than 22 million American adults own iPods or MP3 players, and 29 percent of them have downloaded podcasts. BUT the potential for podcasts and other mobile training is even greater in China. In China, as in other parts of Asia and Europe, MP3 players are increasingly built into cell phones. China has a strong cell phone culture. The mobile learning device is already in the palm of their hands ... or better still, right where you want it ... next to their ears.



So the next time you see your staff using their mobile phone at work ... maybe it's not a personal call, maybe they are attending training. Maybe it's not a mobile phone at all, maybe it's an LPod. Beware the Podpeople ... you're next!
Until next time ... good business to you.

Paul von Wittgenstein (Da Xiong), P. Ent.
General Manager
CanadAsia Management Development Ltd. (CAMD)

www.camdltd.com

The German Centre, Shanghai
Room 659, Tower 3, No. 88 Ke yuan Rd.
Pudong, Shanghai
China 201203

phone: 86 21 2898 6658 or 2898 6659

fax: 86 21 2898 6670