

ASTD hosted the largest gathering of over 9000 professionals from across the globe (over 90 countries participated). The largest gathering ever seen of Leaders in HRD and Training. Tony Bingham, President and CEO opened the ASTD International conference and Exhibition 2011, with his commitment to make a difference to the Thinking of Learning professionals across the world. The who's who gathered at Orlando in Florida.

Tony said "at the conference last year, we spent quite a bit of time talking about social learning and informal learning, and these continue to be among the hottest topics in the learning profession today. Social learning has become the trend." Tony predicted Mobile Learning will be the future in Learning and Development arena.

Questions related to mLearning:

1. What exactly is mobile learning or mLearning... ?
2. Why mobile and why now.. ?
3. Where is mLearning having the biggest impact?
4. How can we get started with mLearning



"Do you feel like you need to be a technologist to work in the learning field? Not only do we need to keep pace with the continual evolution of technology – but, more importantly, we have to know how to apply it to drive performance. "... "We intuitively understand that with each introduction of new technology, the way that people connect with the world and obtain information and skills evolves. Mobile learning is the latest emerging trend along this technology and learning evolutionary timeline."

Tony said



When we asked about definitions of mLearning, Rebecca Clark from DAU talked about the relationship between the device and the individual. Dottie Brienza from Hilton described it as learning on the go and learning everywhere—anything that allows you to move and learn at the same time. Clark Quinn calls it "augmented performance." He says that it accessorizes your brain, and that it's something you have with you all the time.

So, what makes mLearning so compelling?

Tony's brilliance in communication came through the way in which he involved the audience. Here's an example -

"How many of you own a smart phone? How many of you own a tablet? Let's try this. How many of you own a basic cell phone? Please keep your hands up. Those with your hands up, please drop them if you own a tablet or iPod Touch? Do we have this on film? If you're one of their neighbors, please help them!

Any idea how many mobile devices were sold in 2010? According to Gartner, mobile device sales to end-users reached 1.6 billion units in 2010. Of those, 297 million were smart phones—so you're not alone in case you were wondering. Smart phone sales grew from 172 million in 2009, which is 73% year over year growth.

Tablets, driven by the iPad, have changed the landscape. We keep hearing from the technology company CEOs blaming the iPad for cannibalizing their computer sales. According to Gartner, worldwide sales of tablets will jump from 19.5 million units in 2010 to 208 million units in 2014.

And, it's not all Apple's IOS. Google's Android, according to Gartner, grew 888.8% in 2010. What's the global population? As of May 18th a few days ago, it was 6.9 billion people. Guess how many are mobile subscribers (per Gartner)? 5.3 billion. Of those, 23% are smart phones, and they're clearly growing. "

Some fun statistics – from Wikipedia:

- The country with the most mobile phones is China with 879 million. Impressive, but that's only 64% of the country's population.
- A classic example is Russia? The number of mobile phones in Russia – 221 million; The population of Russia – roughly 143 million. For every person in Russia, 1.5 phones have been sold. Now that's commitment!
- ASTD invited four of the profession's best thought leaders to speak viz;

Clark Quinn. What do a K-12 homeschooling organization, Amway, Boeing, and Oracle have in common? They are all clients of Clark Quinn – author, researcher, and scholar ... and one of the most knowledgeable people around when it comes to the new frontiers of learning. Be sure to check out his blog called Learnlets.

Dottie Brienza at Hilton. What would it take to have a hands-on approach to talent management for a global workforce? It means embracing technology and tools that can help you get the job done. For Dottie, leveraging technology to achieve the organization's learning and development objectives is a strategic imperative.

Chris Hardy & Rebecca Clark, Defense Acquisition University (DAU). Let's talk scale: in fiscal year 2010 DAU delivered 7.9 million hours of training. Last fiscal year DAU had almost 46,000 classroom graduates and nearly 193,000 online graduates. The scope of the learning that is delivered by DAU is truly amazing. Tony's speech contained a positive message and it was clear when he said ..."What makes a company better than its peers – is it technology, marketing, finance, legal – no way. What makes a company better is its people. And, each of you in this room is entrusted with the most important and the most valuable organizational resource – its people. If you're new to mobile learning, as the data tells us, you're not alone: while only 10 percent of respondents in ASTD's research said that they were developing mLearning applications in their organizations, 41 percent said that they were considering it. It's still early and you are ahead of the curve, but it's moving fast. ASTD and others are focused on helping you succeed. All you need is the courage to begin. "

The ASTD annual conference was worth its size and effort with a super objective of Learning with fun; networking and benchmarking the best of the best . Dr R L Bhatia attended the ASTD conference as a media invitee . He has come back impressed with the line-up of authors; thinkers and senior leaders who were present at the ASTD annual conference in Orlando