Empower Your Workforce

Get Hands-On Experience and Valuable Education Resources in a New Mobile Format

by Dr. Stephen Hirsch, SAP

In 1968, when I was a college sophomore researching an assignment in the university library, I noticed two odd-looking devices bolted to the reference desk nearby. They were calculators, the first I had ever seen. For the rest of the evening, I stood transfixed, aimlessly dividing and adding and finding square roots, totally delighted by the amazing new machines.

It took another 40 years for me to discover that same delight in a device, and it was the iPad that did it. Steve Jobs was right when he said that using it was an "incredible experience."

A scant three years later, I wonder how we ever lived without these kinds of mobile devices. The analysts at IDC report that, in 2012, there were 122.3 million iPads and other tablet computers in use worldwide — and by 2016, that number will have more than doubled to 282.7 million.[1] Thanks to tablets and their smartphone cousins, we've made the magic of the internet mobile. We can access information anywhere, almost as quickly as we can type — or speak — a query. We've almost eliminated distance and phone bills as business barriers. And we've provided ourselves with almost endless opportunities to *learn.*

Think about it: The power of yesterday's supercomputer is available in a device you can take anywhere. In fact, these powerful, portable devices are causing some in the industry to wonder if we'll be seeing the end of the laptop. With features such as HD video, brilliant images, text as sharp and clear as a textbook's, a battery that will last the time it takes to get from New York to Paris, and the ability to interact with the world in

[1] IDC, *Worldwide Quarterly Tablet Tracker* (December 2012).

real time, it is clear that these kinds of devices are meant for education.

It was with this idea in mind that SAP Education began designing its new mobile learning application, SAP Learn Now.

Providing More Than Digitized Books

When we set out to design SAP Learn Now in October 2011, we wanted to achieve the holy grail of mobility: to develop an application that would empower and engage users. In the world of mobile development, nothing is more important than the user experience you provide (that's one reason why SAP introduced a mobility class with a complete unit on interface design).

Equally important, however, was our goal of providing a first-rate training experience. We didn't want to exactly replicate the experience of attending class in a training center, but we did want to create an environment that would equal a traditional classroom's effectiveness. That meant there were a few elements we absolutely needed to include.

First, we wanted to include the same comprehensive class materials that a learner would obtain in an SAP classroom — but we didn't want to just digitize the text and create an e-book. We also needed something that would provide the extra information that an experienced instructor would offer, so we decided to include brief videos featuring SAP subject matter experts specially recorded on topics that needed enhanced explanation (see **Figure 1** on the next page).

For example, in our first mobile class, Introduction to SAP (SAP01M), we worked with Maria Karas, a veteran SAP01 instructor. Maria's

Dr. Stephen Hirsch (stephen. hirsch@sap.com) joined SAP in 1997 and has served in a variety of roles. Most recently, as a Product Manager for SAP Education, he has chaired the team designing and developing SAP Learn Now, a mobile application for delivering SAP education. Prior to joining SAP, Steve was Chairman of Humanities at the college of Saint Rose in Albany, NY.

experience proved invaluable — she pointed out areas of the class in which students customarily needed extra reinforcement and put together detailed video scripts and voice-overs for animated graphics to address them.

Hands-On Experience Outside of the Classroom

While learners can gain practical insight by reading about a topic and hearing expert comments, they can learn a great deal more when they have a chance to actually carry out the processes they study. But since we wanted SAP Learn Now to *always* be available, we didn't want to tie class exercises to internet connectivity or system availability. We found a solution using one of SAP Education's newest products: SAP Workforce Performance Builder.

SAP Workforce Performance Builder enables SAP Education customers to create detailed process simulations for SAP systems and solutions — or for that matter, almost any Windows application. By recording our class exercises with SAP Workforce Performance Builder and deploying them as simulations from within the SAP Learn Now app, we provide all the exercises a student would encounter in a traditional SAP classroom, complete with step-by-step directions and the extra explanations learners would usually get from an instructor. The students see the actual screens from various SAP solutions right on their iPads. With the SAP Workforce Performance Builder-based exercises, SAP Learn Now users can practice using the systems as often as they wish.

The SAP Learn Now project team also wanted to give our learners a way to test their conceptual understanding; once again, SAP Workforce Performance Builder provided the means. SAP Workforce Performance Builder not only provides the capacity for recording, editing, and deploying simulations, but also simplifies the creation of e-learning and assessments. Using SAP Workforce Performance Builder's unique capacities, we recreated every "self assessment" from the original class book in electronic form. SAP Learn Now customers can answer questions, get immediate feedback with explanations, and receive an overall summary of how they did on a quiz.

A Global Community of Education

Even though we designed SAP Learn Now for individual learning, we know that learning is often a social process. We also know — and research has confirmed — that informally acquired knowledge is as useful and valuable as knowledge gained in more formal presentations. So, we designed SAP Learn Now to ensure our customers had the opportunity to learn from each other as well as from us.

Students can use most of SAP Learn Now's functionality when they're offline, but when they *are* connected to the internet, a single tap of the screen will connect them to a special "learners" section of the SAP Customer Network. They'll be able to post questions about the class, read and respond to others' questions, and even receive RSS feeds of pertinent material. The SAP Learn Now Community feature integrates the learner with a truly global learning community.

Learn More

Right now, SAP Learn Now is available for the iPad 2 and higher (running Apple iOS 5.x and 6.x operating systems). And as the tablet market continues to grow, we hope to make it available for other formats. You can download version 1.x for free from the Apple App Store right now — we include a chapter from our SAP01M class with every copy so you can see right away how it works. Additionally, you can always check the SAP Education web shop at **http://training.sap.com** to take a look at our growing list of titles or to license a class.

At SAP Education, we plan to continue to innovate and expand SAP Learn Now with the goal of empowering our customers as they fulfill the training needs of their organizations. Its ultimate purpose is the same as for every SAP Education offering: to build your bottom line and help make your business a best-run business. ◾

FIGURE 1 ▼ An example of an SAP Education course shown on an iPad