
common sense I-Call: Mobile Learning for developing and threshold countries

Mobile phone technology is the most widespread communication technology worldwide. Today, GSM networks penetrate even most remote areas and all levels of society. So it is the ideal tool for the distribution of learning content in order to achieve the widest possible outreach.

Most existing mobile learning solutions, however, are not suitable to threshold and developing countries, since they heavily focus on latest 3G technology and require PDAs/smartphones and relatively broad bandwidth, which is not available in all regions – or only at high cost. Some mLearning attempts have utilized SMS technology, but not much content can be transmitted in this format.

The lack of literacy and/or media competency in different levels of society further complicate matters.

To use the full potential of mobile phones for learning purposes, a simple and easy to use solution is needed. Such a solution should not only focus on written text and multimedia, but should also make use of audio formats and traditional approaches to learning, like story-telling.

common sense – eLearning & training consultants, together with partners from the technology and media development sector, have developed I-Call, a mobile training solution to offer a cost-effective, easy to use, highly visible and widely available learning tool, accepted by users of different backgrounds and education levels.

I-Call comprises a multi-level approach, the development of local content, and allows access for target groups from remote regions as well as for 3G connectivity within urban and professional contexts.

The novelty of I-Call lies especially at the use of audio-based story telling via GSM networks at the community level. Thus it is independent from phone-models and of data-connections. The learning content is provided in the format of interactive stories. Learners listen to stories (similar to audio soap operas) and make decisions in place of the protagonists. The stories continue based on the decision of the learner. This way, the learners experiences the consequences of their own decisions.

The stories can be provided in national and local languages, and are accessible by dialing a local (free-call) telephone number. The learner takes the decisions how to continue the story via keypad in an interactive dialogue system (“if X should do this, press 1”...).

Story-based learning has a rich tradition in many societies and relates easily to local culture. Well told stories are attractive for many people, which will help to disseminate knowledge throughout society. This model attracts attention by a good combination of entertainment (e.g. roles spoken by well-known local actors) and delivery of useful and important messages.

At e-Learning Africa common sense is going to demonstrate I-Call at stand C8. Arndt Bubenzer and Dennis Mazali will present the possibilities of I-Call for the health sector in Africa, Andreas Hörfurter is going to present a current pilot application in the environment sector in Kenya.

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