

The Five Moments of Need: A Framework for Effective Learning

In the field of instructional design and workplace learning, Bob Mosher and Conrad Gottfredson developed the **Five Moments of Need** model to provide a structured approach to learning and performance support. This model emphasizes that learning should not be limited to formal training but should also address the real-time challenges employees face in their work environment. By aligning instructional design with these five moments, educators and trainers can ensure that learning is effective, relevant, and immediately applicable.

The Five Moments of Need

Mosher and Gottfredson (2011) categorize learning into five distinct moments:

1. **New** – When individuals are learning something for the first time. This is the stage where structured learning, such as instructor-led training or e-learning modules, is most useful.
2. **More** – When learners need to deepen their knowledge or refine their skills. This often involves advanced courses, coaching, or mentorship.
3. **Apply** – When learners must apply what they have learned in real-world scenarios. At this stage, performance support tools, such as job aids, checklists, and just-in-time learning resources, become critical.
4. **Solve** – When learners encounter problems or unexpected challenges that require troubleshooting. This moment of need is best addressed through searchable resources, FAQs, or expert guidance.
5. **Change** – When learners need to adapt to new processes, policies, or technologies. Continuous learning strategies, including microlearning and ongoing support, are essential to help them transition successfully.

Implications for Instructional Design

The Five Moments of Need framework shifts the focus from event-based training to continuous learning and performance support. Traditional training models often emphasize formal learning (the New and More stages) but fail to adequately support learners in the Apply, Solve, and Change moments (Gottfredson & Mosher, 2011). To bridge this gap, instructional designers must integrate a variety of learning interventions, including:

- **Blended Learning:** Combining formal training with job aids, simulations, and on-the-job coaching.

- **Performance Support Tools:** Creating easily accessible resources, such as knowledge bases, quick reference guides, and interactive help systems.
- **Microlearning:** Delivering short, focused learning content that supports real-time problem-solving.
- **Adaptive Learning Systems:** Using AI-driven tools to provide personalized recommendations based on learner needs.

Real-World Applications

The Five Moments of Need model is widely used in corporate training, healthcare, and technical industries, where employees require ongoing support. For instance, in healthcare settings, nurses and doctors frequently use digital reference tools (e.g., medical databases) to solve problems and apply knowledge in high-stakes situations. Similarly, IT professionals rely on searchable documentation and community forums to troubleshoot software issues in real time.

Conclusion

Mosher and Gottfredson's Five Moments of Need model provides a comprehensive, learner-centered approach that extends beyond formal training to real-world application. By designing learning experiences that support all five moments, organizations can improve knowledge retention, increase efficiency, and enhance overall performance. Instructional designers and educators should adopt this framework to create holistic, flexible learning environments that meet the dynamic needs of modern learners.

References

Gottfredson, C., & Mosher, B. (2011). *Innovative performance support: Strategies and practices for learning in the workflow*. McGraw-Hill Education.