

What is Micro-Learning & Why It Works

Safety Training

WHAT IS MICROLEARNING?

“Microlearning is a way of teaching and delivering content to learners in small, very specific bursts. The learners are in control of what and when they’re learning.” - eLearning Industry

The concept of delivering bite-size learning and following up with reinforcement activities has been around for a very long time. Micro-learning is a modern approach to delivering learning materials in small, bite-sized portions that target specific topics. The conciseness of these materials makes it easier to digest.

- Microlearning is performed in short time bursts.
- It requires little effort from individual sessions.
- It involves simple and/or narrow topics.

Also, the industry cannot agree on what “micro” means. Some say it is 3 minutes. Others say it is 8 minutes. And some say it is merely the amount of time it takes to teach a

single concept/achieve a single learning objective. Most microlearning conversations are around technical skill-based learning - not concepts, and not soft skills. Microlearning frequently involves bundling more than one component together – for example, three 6-minute microlearning pieces are created, but all three must be taken to obtain mastery of the content.

The other important thing about microlearning is the reason behind it - attention spans and learning retention. To support learning retention and memorability, we use storytelling, interactivity, professional narration, and modern motion graphic tools used by NASA and videogame developers.

As instructional designers, we purposely chunk content the way we do and put practice exercises where we put them to make the content bite-sized, and to help solidify the content of one section before moving on. In our full lessons, each of our sections are kind of like micro-learning components.

Millennials will make up a large part of the future workforce. Traditional models of eLearning just won’t cut it with this demographic, and will naturally be phased out. The popularity of microlearning is on the up as it’s the ideal way to ensure that learning is received, digested and engaged with.

The more important factor in any training is keeping it relevant, interesting and memorable...not to make it as short as possible. Here’s the connection: if a piece of training content is too long, employees won’t remember it, yet quality should always win over quantity. Five minutes of ‘ho-hum’ content is not better than 15 minutes of engaging, memorable content.

We learned when eLearning took the training industry by storm that not all content should be eLearning, and, similarly, not all content should be micro. Regardless, all training, to maximize effectiveness, should have ongoing reinforcement, if possible.

Concerning reinforcement of

training, as a former learning consultant I didn't recommend one-off, event-based training. I always designed something before the instructional event to set the stage, motivate, provide context, and I recommended something after training to reinforce key concepts and training objectives. For example, one tested, training reinforcement I used is to include a scripted weekly email series of "do you remember" topical points, sent for weeks after a training event.

The business benefit of bite-sized training content is in support of training efficiency. Microlearning content provides flexibility, options for training that require a smaller time commitment for employees, and keep them learning on the job with minimal disruption to workflow or productivity. For example, a 5-minute training video can be attentively watched in the 10 minutes before your next meeting, appointment, or shift change.

HOW TO USE MICROLEARNING EFFECTIVELY

The following are some examples of how microlearning can be applied in practice:

- **Short and brief tips:** When

so much information is thrown at workers, the possibility of retaining all of it is very low. For effective transfer of knowledge, the microlearning objective should focus on just one concept.

- **Use interactive videos:** The process of taking in information is better easier with the use of videos rather than bulky materials that cover an excessive amount. Even better if the video contains branching scenarios .
- **Use of short quizzes for checking progress:** The employees are provided with continuous access to these materials, and as each section is completed, they are required to provide suitable responses to the questions.
- **Use of gamification:** Short games, or some gaming elements within the microlearning can be used by companies to increase interactivity, add an element of competition, the end goal being to help train their staff in health and safety more effectively.

BENEFITS OF

MICROLEARNING INCLUDE ENGAGEMENT & RETENTION

Many workers complete an in-depth course as part of their compliance training, but one-time exposure isn't enough to ensure that information is retained for the long term. Because each lesson is concise and narrowly focused, microlearning content is easily digestible, allowing learners to complete a unit during a break, between meetings or at the beginning of a shift. Presenting content in multiple formats, including short videos, games, quizzes and flash-card style Q&A activities, boosts engagement, which can improve knowledge retention.

An ongoing microlearning program also prolongs learning beyond the initial training course, offering repeated exposure to broad themes via courses that progress through bite-sized takeaways. Continuous microlearning helps learners cement key information in their long-term memory while advancing their understanding.

EASILY MEASURE PROGRESS

Your learning management

system should house your microlearning courses, making it easy to track learners' progress from the start of compliance training and throughout the microlearning retention campaign.

Your LMS can help you further improve compliance training tracking by collecting data such as course completions. This is especially practical when it comes time to provide records or proof of compliance during audits or other regulatory checks.

It used to be enough to show that employees had completed training in order to limit a company's legal liability for wrongdoing. This is no longer the case.

In the U.S., the Department of Justice now evaluates the effectiveness of a compliance program, its design and whether the company shows evidence of a sincere commitment to ethics and compliance. Adding microlearning to your annual program can help increase engagement to improve results and demonstrate your dedication to full compliance.

What's more, an LMS should also enable you to create charts or data visualizations that display performance or behavioral metrics

alongside training results—providing deeper insights and empowering you to continuously improve your compliance training program.

MICROLEARNING REINFORCES A LEARNING CULTURE

When training occurs only once a year, learners might not think about compliance training after they've completed the annual update. Adding a continuous microlearning retention strategy does more than reinforce compliance content—it fosters daily learning.

Along that same vein, microlearning also helps with knowledge retention as the course focuses only on what is truly necessary for that topic without the clutter of irrelevant information. Smaller, digestible pieces of content deliver the important information and nothing else, meaning you are much more likely to remember what you learned.

Microlearning's short, focused content makes it a digestible and engaging format, which is reinforced by its mobile-friendly format. When learners can simply reach into their pockets and pull out exactly the information they need when they need it, they can quickly upskill and return to

their workflow without getting lost navigating a lengthy course for answers. This makes self-guided learning a more approachable process and puts your learning culture into your employees' hands.

A SPRINGBOARD TO IMPROVED PERFORMANCE

Rather than an annual obligation, engaging, continuous microlearning can turn required compliance training into a springboard for ongoing employee education and skills development. It can also improve your organization's efficiency, ensuring compliance and reducing legal risk. Best of all, once learners are in the habit of ongoing learning, skills development becomes second nature, freeing employees to focus their attention on what really matters.

MOBILE-READY CONTENT

It seems that everywhere you look, people are constantly on their phones. According to the Pew Research Center, 81% of Americans own a smartphone, up from 59% just five years ago. Offering short training courses optimized for use on smartphones or tablets makes the information easily accessible so learners can take training when it is convenient

for them.

ADDRESSES SHORT ATTENTION SPANS

By now you have probably heard that our attention spans are roughly that of a goldfish. It makes sense, then, that shorter training videos better suit the reality of today's learners. Microlearning courses get directly to the point without the "filler" content you often find in long lecture-style training courses.

FITS INTO BUSY SCHEDULES

In addition to our short attention spans, the average employee also faces numerous external distractions throughout the workday. A study by the University of California-Irvine found that employees work for roughly 11 minutes before being interrupted by a phone call, an email or a co-worker stopping by. Microlearning offers very short bursts of content — often less than 10 minutes — making it easy to fit training in between other tasks.

OFFERS ONE OBJECTIVE AT A TIME

While a typical training course introduces multiple learning objectives, a microlearning course deals with only one. This assures learners are able

to fully grasp the concept at hand before moving on to the next. For instance, you could assign one 30-minute course on fire safety, or a series of microlearning courses covering alarms, evacuation, fire suppression and fire extinguisher use separately, ensuring full understanding of each.

CONCLUSION

Microlearning for safety, while often overlooked, is critical to organizations. It's human nature to forget skills and knowledge that aren't used daily, and this is true even for the most talented and skilled individuals out there. According to the Decay Theory, retrieving these memories becomes more difficult over time, especially with the interference of newly acquired information.

So what does it mean for employers? Help your employees remember the concepts that they may have forgotten and take them back to basics from time to time. It is also essential to update them on new technologies and renewed policies.

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