



ACTIONABLE GUIDE

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO MICROLEARNING IN 2023

Discover how microlearning can transform your organization's learning culture, build resilience and have a competitive advantage.

Microlearning has been around for about 20 years, and as with everything that's been around for a couple of decades it has naturally changed a lot over the years.

This guide aims to break down microlearning in 2023. It will look at what has changed over the past 20 years, the best practices of microlearning today, when to use it, and how to implement it.



**NELLIE WARTOFT,
CEO & FOUNDER OF** **TIGERHALL**



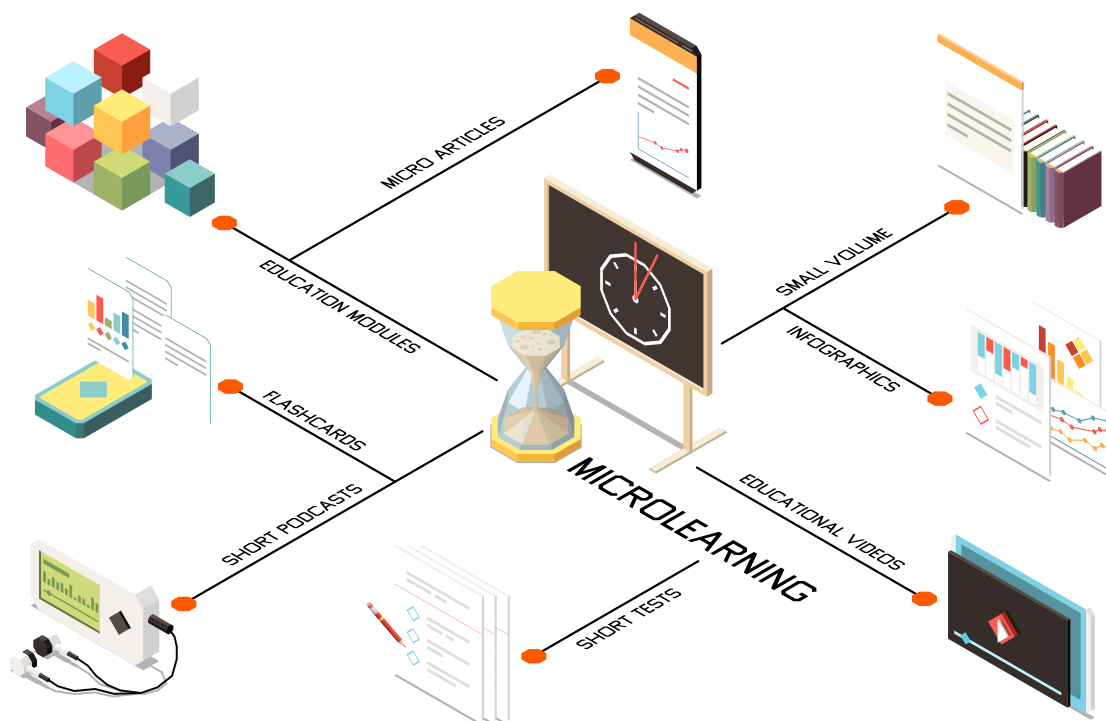
What is **microlearning**?

It's easy to simply say that microlearning has developed as a result of our evershrinking attention spans. However, that's an oversimplification. While attention spans certainly play a role in users' preferences for microlearning, the evolution of consumer technology and our digital societies play a much greater role in the overall development of microlearning as an approach.

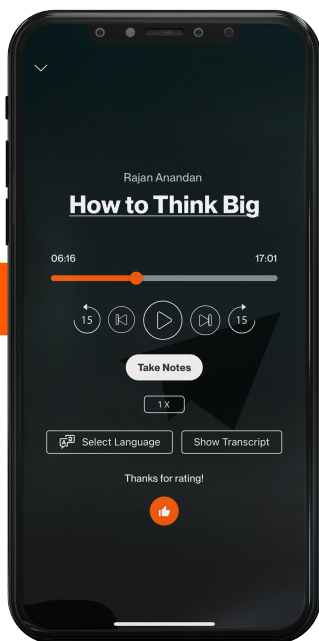
Microlearning was conceived when digital technologies became more mainstream in the early 2000s. It accelerated further when smartphones became the de facto mode of interacting with content and people around you - any time, from anywhere. The way consumer preferences have evolved has heavily influenced the development of microlearning. When you think of Tik Tok, Instagram and Twitter, they have micro-consumption at the core of their operating models. This is not primarily because of short attention spans, but because they are **easy to fit into your busy life**, and it's easier to create short content that engages than long content. There is a reason there's an entire film industry dedicated to making engaging long-form content - it is really hard to keep humans engaged in the same piece of content for 2-3 hours at a time.

The other reason why smartphones have contributed so greatly to the evolution of microlearning is that **users can now bring their learning with them on the go**. There is no longer a need to sit for hours in a classroom or in front of your laptop watching videos or scrolling through slides. You can simply tap into your learning content while exercising, doing the shopping, picking up your kids from school, or getting ready for the workday. This was impossible before smartphones had the media delivery capabilities they have today.

And, with the introduction of smartphones, the way that we prefer to consume information has fundamentally changed. When you consider that 78.1% of all global website visits in 2022 came from mobile devices, it's no surprise that microlearning and mobile-friendly training is on the rise.



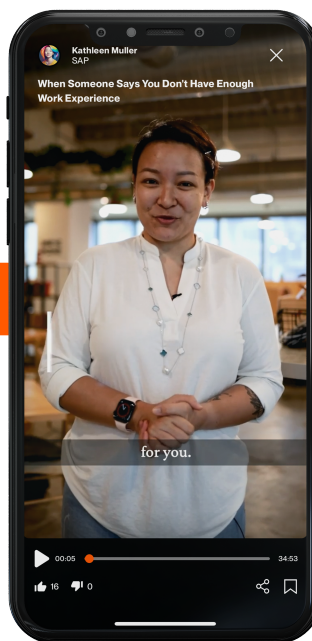
Podcasts
10-15 minutes



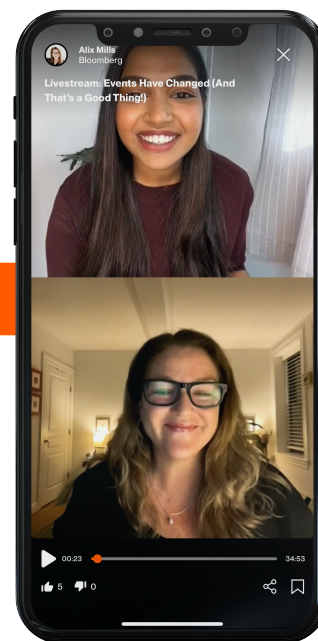
Power Reads
3-7 minutes



Videos
1-3 minutes



Livestreams
20-35 minutes



It is for this reason that mobile learning and microlearning are so closely connected, and often appear in tandem. While **microlearning breaks information down into short 2-5 minute bursts**, mobile learning enables us to deliver that information through the devices that Millennials, Gen Z - and society at large - use religiously. This is why microlearning is such a great fit for the modern age, where everybody has a mobile phone, and most people have plenty of micro-moments to fill, such as their commutes to work. Giving people training in these mobile-first, social media-like formats that learners are most familiar with is the key to driving adoption and ensuring your content has an impact.

And, on the attention span, a short attention span isn't necessarily a bad thing: whilst our attention span has steadily declined over the years, research shows that our brain's capacity to consume and process information has actually increased.

The Top 10 benefits of microlearning

1. Knowledge retention is higher with spaced learning

Studies have found that learners learn best and are more likely to recall what they have learned when they can process information in small, manageable chunks rather than in a longer and more concentrated time frame - aka spaced learning. Research on spaced learning and spaced repetition also shows that **learners are 80% more likely to remember information** when they have a 12-hour window in between the consumption of materials - especially when this 12-hour window includes sleep. Cramming a ton of information into the same day, such as a oneday workshop, delivers very little, if any knowledge retention.

2. Microlearning is more engaging for users

50% of employees say that they would use their corporate learning tools more if the content was shorter and more digestible. Research has shown that we learn more (and retain it better) **when we study in short focused bursts** rather than when we're forced to sit through hour-long classes — but of course, your younger self that was bored to tears at school or during university lectures knew that already.

3. It's based on need and context

There is nothing worse than being forced to learn something you don't care about, at a time when you don't need it - and even more at a time when the problems you are actually facing are something completely different from the learning materials you are presented with. There is no greater erosion of trust between employees and learning teams than when this happens. The frustrations of not being understood leads to employees viewing learning teams as incompetent and far removed from their reality. This is where microlearning is helpful - the employees themselves can **access the right content at the right time**, based on the challenges they are facing in their work right now. In addition, microlearning is much easier to personalize at scale compared to traditional learning where the delivery effort is so large for each programme it's hard to incorporate additional work for further individual personalization.

4. It gives learners more freedom and flexibility

A learner can decide what they want to learn based on what challenges they are facing and how much time they have right now. They can set their own learning schedule, and whether it's best suited for them to pick up on their way to work, during lunch, or on the weekend. They **can also choose how long they want to spend on learning** each time - whether it's 5 minutes or 50 minutes, it's up to them.

5. Microlearning doesn't take time that the learner doesn't have

Microlearning doesn't get in the way of a learner's core day-to-day work. Unlike a full-day workshop or a 6-month course, microlearning is **layered into their everyday lives and flow of work**. With microlearning, there is no need to take time out from the job and take employees away from their critical tasks.

6. It's scalable

Instructor-led courses that take place in a classroom are really hard to scale. You can only have so many students in the class, there are only so many instructor hours available, and let's not mention the budget, logistics, associated admin and everything else that goes with this sort of course. For today's large enterprise audiences of tens of thousands of employees, it's simply not feasible. Microlearning allows you to scale to very large audiences, and most importantly - **keep it highly personalized and relevant** while you do it.

7. Faster response time to business needs

When businesses have a need, they want it solved fast. This doesn't allow time for course creation and curriculum development, because by the time that course is created and the curriculum is developed the business is unlikely to still have that need. The pace of change in business today doesn't allow for long content creation timelines, and this is where microlearning allows you to roll out something that is targeting a business need **within days instead of months**.

8. Microlearning is more agile

The only constant is change - in learning too. You need to deploy learning that you can **easily change, move around, re-purpose and re-build**. It's much easier to move around small bricks than to lift an entire house.

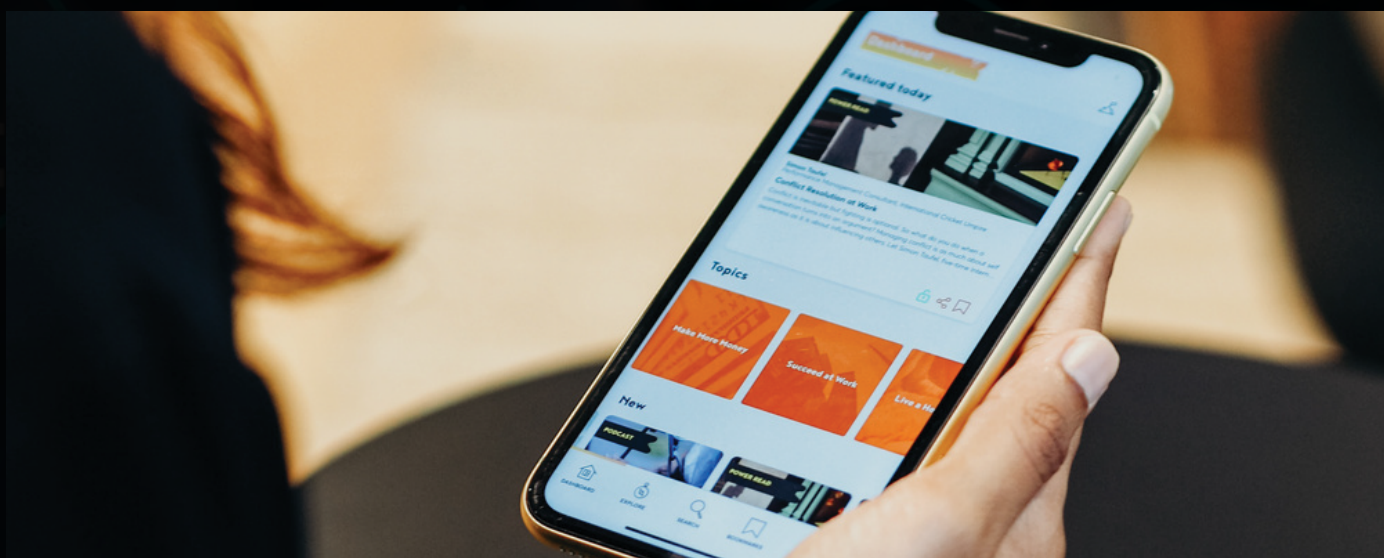
9. Sense of achievement leading to virtuous cycles

One of the most underrated benefits of microlearning is how **instant completion quickly leads to a sense of achievement**, which in turn leads to positive emotions and a desire to achieve more. This instant sense of achievement drives a virtuous cycle where learners experience positive emotions that drive them to want to do more, rather than the negative emotions experienced when after an hour you see that you've completed 3 out of 786 modules. At that moment nothing feels more daunting than completing the remaining 783 modules.

10. Microlearning is easy to update and maintain at scale

With how quickly the world changes and companies are moving, the learning needs to be very easy to update and maintain at scale as new information becomes available and old information becomes obsolete. This is especially true for areas including product training, onboarding programs and key strategic initiatives, which tend to change every quarter.

In addition, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission recently determined that a firm can be guilty of security compliance violations for simply having an ineffective training program. Ensuring that the organization's **training materials are always up-to-date** is another important driver for microlearning in the enterprise.



Top use cases of **microlearning**











Some of the most effective use cases of microlearning involve areas where learners constantly face new challenges on a daily basis - such as being a first-time manager, onboarding in a new role, or launching a new market. Other top use cases involve rapidly-changing areas, where you don't want to devote 12 months of your time only to realize that what you learned in month 1 or 2 of the program is already obsolete by the time you've completed the course. These areas include all things digital, transformation, technology, and commercial models.

Top use cases to consider implementing microlearning for are:

1. Leadership development – and first-time managers to executive leaders

Leadership is a role within which you face daily challenges and new scenarios. While you can learn broad leadership philosophy through macro-learning, microlearning lends itself really well to those problems you need to solve right here and right now. Walking into a tricky feedback conversation? Preparing for a performance review tomorrow? Making a resource allocation decision between two different markets? You need the knowledge and inspiration at your fingertips - not in last year's Leadership Summit or the workshop coming up next quarter. This is where microlearning comes in very handy.










Driving Transformation for Senior Leadership

-  Podcast from Your CEO
-  Unexpected in Business: Ride the Waves of Change
-  Group Mentorship or Livestream
-  Large Organization: First Step to Being Agile
-  Leaders: Use Crisis to Drive Transformation
-  Resilience as a Leader in Times of Turmoil
-  Livestream with **Maya Hari**
Global VP, Operations, Twitter
-  Innovate or Die: What Startups Can Teach Corporation
-  Decision Making As a Leader
-  The Mechanics of Effective Decision Making

2. Sales

We all know that no-one is as starved for time as a salesperson. Have you got a professional development course for them? If so, why should they prioritize spending time on your training over having lunch with a potential new customer or closing that large deal so that you, Mr. Talent Leader, can have your salary paid out at the end of the month? And, how can you argue with that? Most field sales reps do have something in common though - they are always on the go. Perfect for micro-learning! Tap into your professional development in the car on the way to that customer lunch, or get a 10-minute bite on how to close a CxO through solution-selling before you pick up the phone to ask them to sign the contract.

Driving Better Client Discovery for Sales Teams

-  Livestream with **Your VP of Sales**
-  The Art of Asking Good Questions in Client Meetings
-  Client Questions: Fine Line Between Friendly and Nosy
-  Ask Better Questions to Solve Business Problems
-  Livestream with **Benjamin Goodman**
SVP & GM, New Relic Inc
-  Think That Client Meeting Went Well? Think Again
-  **Your Sales Playbook**
-  Reading Clients in a Sales Meeting
-  The Playbook: Discovery Meetings in North America

3. Digital transformation

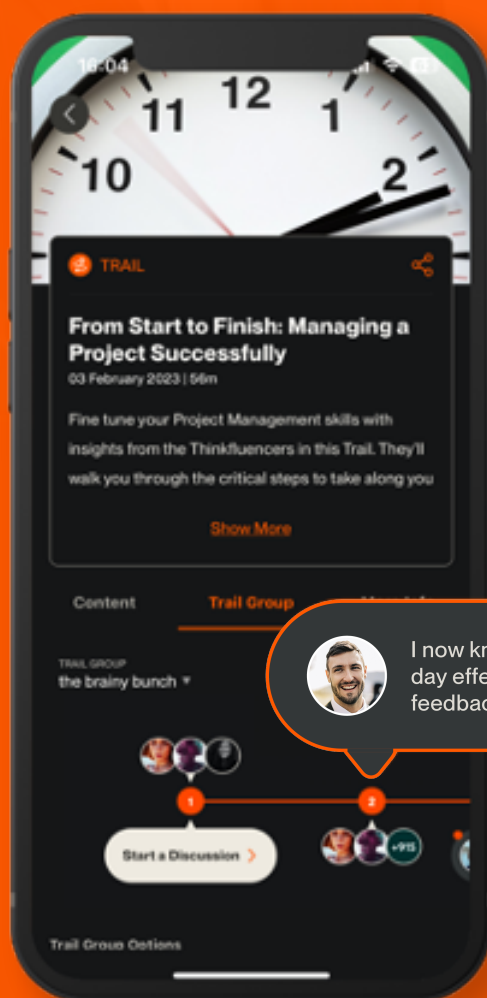
With things changing quickly and people needing to be up-to-date continuously, there may be no better topic suited for microlearning than digital transformation. While certain professionals need to have deep technical expertise in AI, ML, and data analytics, most people's needs are at the levels of understanding new technologies coming up, how they can be applied to their business models, and how they can solve business problems with the help of these technologies. For this, microlearning is absolutely perfect.

Purpose of Change

-  Livestream Launch **Kevin Samuelson**
CEO, Infor
-  How to Think Big
-  Leading Disruption in Today's Markets
-  Stay Relevant in the Face of Change
-  Big Picture Strategy
-  Ingraining Client Centricity throughout Your Organization
-  Peer Coaching
-  Unexpected in Business: Ride the Waves of Change

4. Soft Skills and Relational Problem Solving

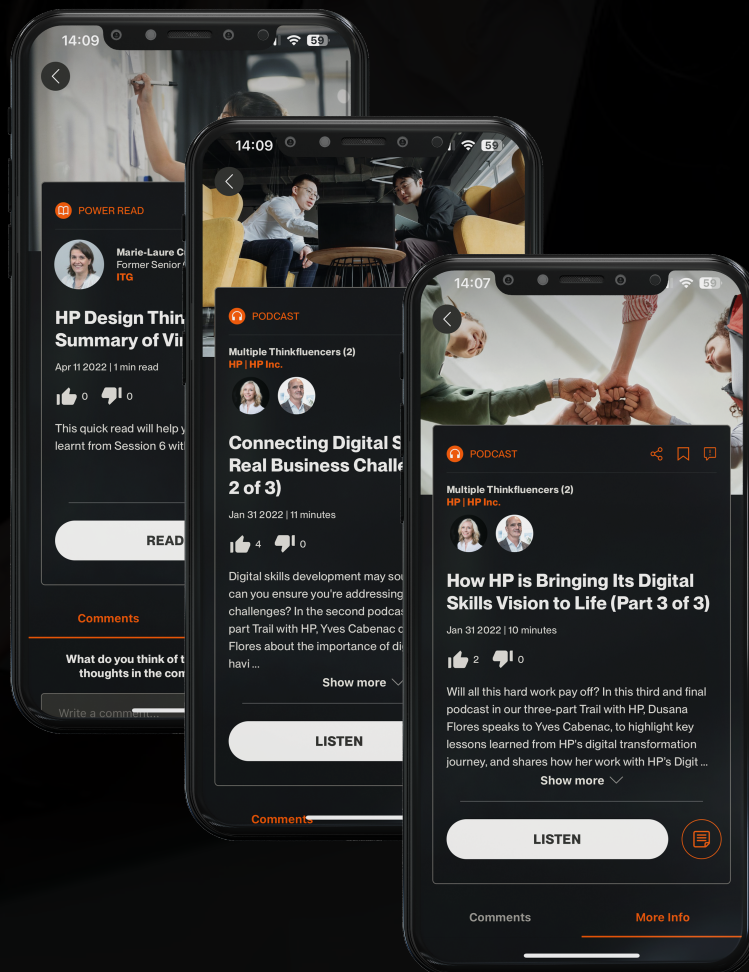
We all know that no-one is as starved for time as a salesperson. Have you got a professional development course for them? If so, why should they prioritize spending time on your training over having lunch with a potential new customer or closing that large deal so that you, Mr. Talent Leader, can have your salary paid out at the end of the month? And, how can you argue with that? Most field sales reps do have something in common though - they are always on the go. Perfect for microlearning! Tap into your professional development in the car on the way to that customer lunch, or get a 10-minute bite on how to close a CxO through solution-selling before you pick up the phone to ask them to sign the contract.



I now know how to plan for my day effectively, and how to take feedback in a positive way!

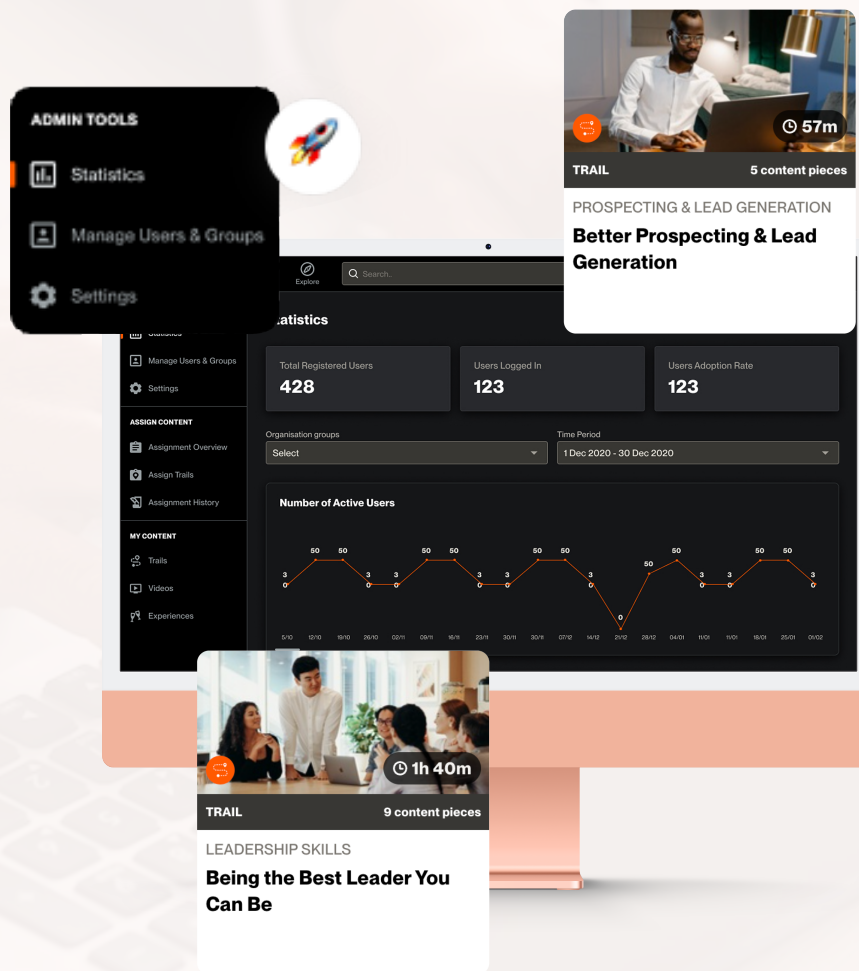
5. Onboarding

Most of us who have worked for a large enterprise at some point in our careers remember how overwhelmed we felt by the onboarding material that we were told to consume in our first few weeks in the role. The expression “drinking from the firehose” springs to mind. We, more often than not, consumed it diligently only to discover a few weeks later that we didn’t have the answer to something we wished we knew even though it was covered in the onboarding just a few weeks earlier. Cramming critical onboarding information into an intense onboarding experience not only makes your employees feel overwhelmed, it also has close to zero effectiveness and very low knowledge retention. It’s a much better and more effective experience to get started on the job right away and have access to the right bits and pieces of information the moment you tackle that particular task as it arises throughout your first few months - or even throughout the first year in the role.



6. Strategic initiatives

As much as CEOs might like to think people listen when they talk, the truth is that most employees are increasingly tuned out of town halls and/or large global forums where their leaders aim to address the entire organization. In addition, driving a strategic initiative takes more than just one large town hall and a letter in the annual report. It requires deep integration with employees' day-to-day activities, and continuously nudging them towards a new way of thinking, a different mindset or a fresh process. This can be done very effectively with microlearning. Microlearning enables you to spread out the key messages about the strategic initiative and insert them at a suitable time and place when employees need that information. It's time to start moving away from the one-off townhalls employees are going to forget, and start moving towards continuous engagement in a strategic initiative that will drive the micro-behaviors required to make it a success.



7. Internal knowledge sharing

Someone just closed a really impressive deal, someone just solved a tricky issue for a customer, someone just streamlined a process and saved themselves 30 minutes of admin. These are all great opportunities to share and spread knowledge internally with your teams and colleagues across departments and business units. Particularly in today's remote environments, these success stories can sometimes take months to reach the right person, if they ever do at all. Over and over again, similar teams operating in different markets or business units repeat the same mistakes that someone, somewhere else in the organization, has already made and overcome. If these best practices, solutions and success stories had been more easily made available and easy to consume, internal learning would be at a different level and the organization as a whole would be moving much faster as a result of more effective knowledge sharing. This is a great use case for microlearning, and micro-sharing!



Product
With Scott Belsky



Marketing
With Ann Lewnes



Technology
With Abhay Parasnis



Asia Pacific
With Simon Tate



Digital Media
With David Wadhvani

How has learning changed from 2003 to 2023

	PAST	TODAY 
Main reason to use microlearning	We use it because people have zero attention span	We use it because it's the most effective way to learn in the flow of work
Core platform microlearning is integrated into	Learning Management Systems (LMS)	Social learning platforms, learning from others and together with others
How it's driven	Top-down	Bottom-up
Core benefit	Easier and more digestible to consume	Personalization at scale
Time of usage	Pre- and post training session	On the go, in the flow of your daily life
User experience	Clicking through content on laptop	Mobile-first, ensuring a great mobile-first experience
Main criticism	You can't use it for deep skilling	Overloading employees with too much information
Timing	Scheduled	At the time of need
Formats	Flashcard software	Podcasts, videos, power reads
Assessing learning	Quizzing to test people for knowledge retention	Reflection to guide practical application
Time constraints	Maximum 20 minutes in content length	More flexible, however long is required to suit the content. More focus on being succinct and to the point without wasting time on fluff.

Common myths about **microlearning**

There are some common myths about microlearning, which for the most part stick around because people have not kept up with how the field of microlearning has evolved. These include:

You can't use microlearning for deep skilling

While there are areas microlearning can be more suited to, it doesn't mean it can't be applied to others as well. A common objection is that if it's a long, difficult, complex topic, it cannot be easily grasped in 3-minute sessions. That's entirely up to you and how you choose to structure and create the content! I think we all have a friend or two who has picked up a new language using Duolingo. Duolingo is the definition of microlearning, and learning a new language is the definition of deep skilling - a complex and time consuming process.

Microlearning can very effectively be used for deep skilling, as long as it's well structured and thought through and not just a hotchpotch of short video clips cut from much longer boring original videos. That won't make sense to any learner! From the outset, you have to build it as a microlearning course and treat it as one. That means thinking through a microlearning lens when you think through the order of content, pace of repetition, spacing of key concepts, and so forth.

It has to be below 20 minutes per piece

While brevity is a key aspect of microlearning, there is no hard and fast rule about it having to be less than a certain number of minutes. Sometimes 3 minutes is suitable, sometimes 30 minutes. It doesn't matter. As long as it's something that can fit into people's daily lives and they don't have to carve out an entire separate block of time for it, it is microlearning. For example, a 30 minute podcast fits very well into walking the dog, and a 3 minute video fits into that time you spend waiting for that friend who's always late. Considering that the variety of formats available for different types of content is just as important as the length, start with the learning objective and topic in mind and from there figure out what makes sense from a length and format perspective.

Your organization is not ready for It

Lack of organizational readiness is a common myth that is rarely proven to be true, and it is more often that not rooted in a perception of how the company operates based on certain “old-school characteristics” rather than actual employee preferences. Age is another question that comes up without any root in science - the majority of us love succinct and to-the-point content delivered to us in a great user experience, regardless of if we are 18 or 68 years old. Who spends more time on Facebook, you or your parents? I thought so.

Secondly, do you want them to get ready? If you want them to get ready and transform into being ready - the power is in your hands and you have to do something about it. Choosing to do nothing or roll out something more old-school is not going to move your organization further into the future and get them ready for microlearning. It will do the opposite. You can't do much about the past, but it's your choice if you want to take the first step into the future right now.

Microlearning is the same as bite-sized learning

A lot of the time, they are paired together, or rather used interchangeably. And, whilst they are similar, and at times complement each other, they are not the same thing. It is possible to have microlearning that isn't bite-sized, just like it's possible to have bite-sized learning that isn't microlearning.

The difference between bite-sized learning and microlearning is that bite-sized relates to the length of the content piece, whereas microlearning relates to the style of learning. It's possible to be bite-sized without being microlearning. For example, take 10,000 3-minute videos that supposedly enable you to become a machine learning scientist. That's bite-sized content, but it's not microlearning. It's also possible to have microlearning without being bite-sized. For example, you're doing a presentation on ESG tomorrow and you've decided to tune into a 60 min podcast on ESG, 60 minutes is not bite-sized compared to a 3-minute video, but it is microlearning because you're learning about what you need to know here and now as opposed to taking a 6-month course on ESG policies. We usually see microlearning being bite-sized too as no one would put up with a 6-month course to solve a problem here and now, but it doesn't mean they are the same thing, and sometimes you can have one without being the other.

It's just long—form content chopped up into short pieces

This is the absolute worst way to go about doing “microlearning” and it’s also where many go wrong! Microlearning is NOT about taking your traditional long-form content that is hours and hours worth of talking heads, and then chopping it into multiple 2 minute chunks. A 27 hour video course does NOT become microlearning because it’s suddenly chopped up into 810 2-minute videos. Now the learners just have to press Play and Next 810 times instead of once. That is not the point!

To be successful at microlearning, you really need to approach it from a new perspective and think about it through a microlearning lens. This means rethinking your approach to content and curriculum development and starting from scratch. We’ll go through some microlearning best practices next.

Best practices of implementing microlearning

As with everything in life, it all boils down to execution. With bad execution, you won’t get anywhere. But, with good execution you can achieve anything you want to achieve. And this is what good execution looks like:

1. Be intentional with your use cases

Think through what you want to use microlearning for. If you haven’t used it before, best practice is to start with a couple of use cases, build familiarity and success, and go from there.

Most suitable use cases to start with tend to be in leadership development and sales enablement or training, for reasons mentioned above in the Use Case section. For example, you may want to start with first-time managers as a test audience, or have the sales team share customer stories and talk through how they closed deals.

What you use it for matters less than how intentional you are about using it. Be intentional about the purpose and why you are doing it as well as the results you are expecting. Rolling something out for the sake of rolling something out will never achieve much, and ultimately will hurt you and your reputation as a talent leader in the long run.

2. Involve executive leaders

Don't be that L&D team that sits in the corner, developing your own curriculum, isolated from the rest of the business and senior leaders' needs. Get out there, get to know the business, understand how the business operates and what makes it tick. Understand the various needs across various departments, geographies, business units and executive leaders. And, don't just send a survey from your corner of the office - get out there and get to know your executive leaders. Involve them, help them get their knowledge out there, inspire them to share their stories, and connect them with the employees. Make them a part of your curriculum and design. Speak their language, connect learning with what's important to them, and then let them drive your microlearning strategy from the front.

3. Utilize different formats

As much as microlearning is about brevity, it is also about utilizing a range of different formats depending on what the topic is and what the strategy is. Take podcasts for example, they are a vastly underrated format but they allow learners to plug in on the way to work, while driving to a customer, or even when getting ready in the morning or cooking in the evening.

Use podcasts for storytelling, videos for behavioral mimicking, and power reads for showcasing a structured framework, for example. Choosing the right content format goes a long way towards ensuring an engaging and relevant microlearning experience.

4. Combine microlearning with Social Learning

You get a very powerful combination when you combine microlearning and social learning. The microlearning approach to content fits perfectly with social learning technology which has great mobile-first experiences, the on the go aspect, and utilizes social elements like feeds and the ability to follow others to see what they are learning and sharing.

Microlearning is also a great approach to the knowledge sharing part of social learning, making it easier and more feasible for people to create and share their learnings and experiences. For most people it's a lot simpler to record a 2-minute video clip or voice note a 15-minute podcast than it is to author a 6 month course or record a 27-hour video curriculum.

Microlearning combined with social learning allows for the speed, agility, personalization and scale you want when building a true learning culture at a large organization.

5. Make sure it's a great mobile experience

When designing your microlearning lessons, make sure to think about how your learners use their mobile phones rather than how your existing e-learning content is structured. Build on familiar and intuitive behaviors so that learners don't have to worry about learning how to use the learning tool, and can focus purely on your training content instead.

With the great benefit of microlearning fitting seamlessly into people's everyday lives, you wouldn't want to lose out by not providing them with a great mobile experience. A great mobile experience enhances the entire delivery of the microlearning and helps people access it from anywhere, any time, in the flow of work and life.

6. Use stories from the real world

Across all types of learning there are proven benefits to using stories from the real world, and it's even more powerful in microlearning. A good story captures your audience and draws them in. Making content relatable for your audience is key, and good stories do exactly that. It's also a great way to involve your executive leaders - have them share their stories from the real world and what they've been through in their careers, through quick microlearning content that people can learn from on the go.

Worst practices of implementing microlearning

And, on the contrary to good execution, here's what really bad execution looks like in the field of microlearning:

1. Just cut long content into smaller chunks

It won't cut it, no pun intended.

2. Forget the actionable portions of it

Just rolling out content for the sake of rolling out content won't help anyone. Focus on what actions you want this microlearning experience to lead to.

3. Make it scheduled training and not based on needs and context

The entire point of microlearning is for users to be able to access it at a time of need, from wherever they are, in the moment. Scheduling it as classic training takes away the entire needs-based benefit of microlearning, and quickly brings you back to the old ways of scheduling training sessions - just now they are consuming short videos instead of sitting in front of boring trainers talking at them in a classroom.

4. Make it a race to completion

While completion rates can be a good indicator of engagement, it's a dangerous one to chase. If you make it all about racing to completion and use the old carrot and stick methodology to get people there, it's a sign your learning culture isn't where it should be. You'd be better off investing your carrot-and-stick chasing time in building a true learning culture and driving initiatives like social learning - helping them share and learn from each other - than chasing people to complete microlearning modules you've put up on the intranet.

5. Put people through it alone

We are all social creatures, and no one likes to sit on their own watching content they didn't sign up for. Take advantage of the social aspects humans love, including knowing what's going on, what's happening around them, what their tribe is up to, and so on. You will also see the added benefit of FOMO when they see their peers much further along in the game than they are. That will make them catch up much more quickly than your carrot and stick techniques ever will.

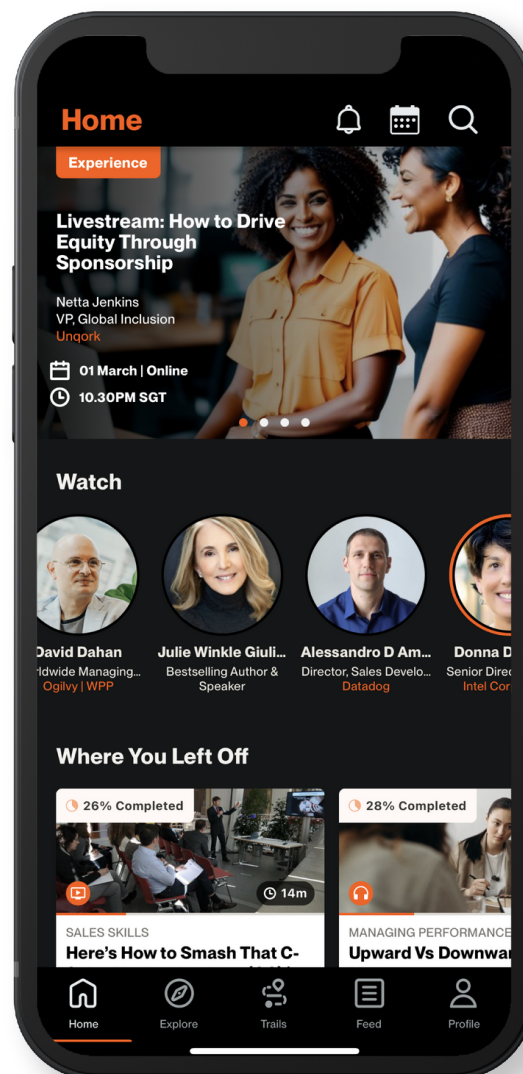
6. Make it desktop only

As mentioned above, you lose the entire benefit of layering microlearning into people's everyday lives when you make it a desktop experience only. You want to encourage people to learn new things swiftly on the go in between meetings, while taking a walk, or on the train back home. When people can only access it on their desktops, you take that entire benefit away and engagement levels will go down with it.

7. Over—quizzing

No one likes feeling like they're back at school, so don't make them feel like that. Using quizzes to assess knowledge puts the focus of measurement in the wrong place. You always want to see real-life progress and actual achievements rather than high scores on a test (hopefully!), so why focus on measuring success through quizzes. Sales leaders would much rather have a team member who has improved in closing deals than someone who doesn't close deals but scored 10/10 on that test. You could then argue that there is something wrong with that test, and while that's accurate it doesn't take away from the fact that quizzes can be wildly misleading while true performance metrics never lie.

In addition, having to complete a quiz every time they access microlearning could frustrate learners. This also counteracts the short, just-in-time nature of microlearning. Knowing that they will always be tested on something may cause learners to avoid Microlearning in the first place, and start associating it with micro-assessments instead - and you don't want that.





IN SUMMARY

Microlearning platforms that utilize a variety of content formats and mimic the experience we have while having a quick scroll on social media are the ones that will best engage your audience. It's all about making learning engaging and convenient for the end user, so they can quickly pick up where they left off and still be motivated to continue.

Research has shown, over and over again, that microlearning is one of the most effective learning methods out there - thanks to its ability to engage, be relevant, have great timing to the moment of need, and drive social engagement across the organization when combined with social learning.

Avoid chopping up long-format content into short snippets (aka fake microlearning), making it all about completion, and over-quizzing your learners. Instead, be intentional with your use cases and what you're implementing microlearning for. Involve your leaders, utilize a wide variety of content formats, and deliver it through a mobile-first social learning experience. If you do, you will be well on your way to reaping the rewards and building real learning cultures through microlearning and social learning!

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Thank
You,



NELLIE WARTOFT, CEO & FOUNDER OF **TIGERHALL**

I love discussing this topic! I welcome any additions, thoughts, protests, questions or brainstorming invitations to nellie@tigerhall.com.



♥ Already switched to Tigerhall

