What Makes Microlearning Effective?

The Science Behind Microlearning Techniques

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Microlearning makes use of lessons that are 10 minutes or less

- This method is based on the 80/20 Rule

- Microlearning strategies can help combat the Forgetting Curve

- Microlearning strategies help combat training fatigue

- Employees can only devote 1% of their work week to training

- Microlearning is 17% more effective than traditional training methods

- 94% of learners prefer microlearning techniques to traditional training

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For training to be effective, it needs to be ongoing and consistent. Unfortunately, busy schedules and changing dynamics to the workforce make it difficult to provide training on a consistent basis if using traditional methods.

Microlearning provides a solution to this problem. Providing online microlearning lessons allows employees to complete training in a fraction of the time, complete the training at their convenience so productivity is not disrupted, and better comprehend and retain the material learned.

WHAT IS MICROLEARNING?

Microlearning is a training technique that uses short bursts of focused information to deal with specific topics. Microlearning lessons average about 10 minutes or less to complete, making it easier for trainees to understand and retain the information learned.

Microlearning is most often used with online training programs, so trainees can access the material at their convenience and complete required training in less time than traditional methods. It can consist of video, audio, or text, and usually involves a quiz after completing the material to enhance comprehension.

Microlearning techniques are based on Pareto's Principle, better known as the 80/20 Rule. This rule states that 80% of results seen are driven by 20% of our efforts.

THE 80/20 RULE

What does this have to do with microlearning? By focusing the lessons on the most important points of a topic, trainee attention is increased, meaning they are more likely to remember what they have learned. The focus is on one-to-two objectives allowing the trainee to take away more information from each session.

The focused lessons provided by microlearning techniques require less effort to retain more information. With 20% of the time used for traditional training methods, the training provides 80% of the desired results for improved behaviors and operations.

MICROLEARNING AND THE FORGETTING CURVE

The Forgetting Curve is a theory that was formulated in 1885 by Hermann Ebbinghaus. This curve shows how information is forgotten over time if it is not reviewed or applied. The loss starts after 20 minutes and increases after one hour.

After 30 days, most people will forget 80% of what they have learned in traditional training or education settings. Microlearning provides a method to combat this.

By breaking the information down, trainees can take in bite-sized pieces of the information, allowing for repeated review of important topics. In fact, microlearning has been shown to provide twice the return on investment (ROI) over traditional training methods and improve focus, supporting long-term retention by up to 80%.
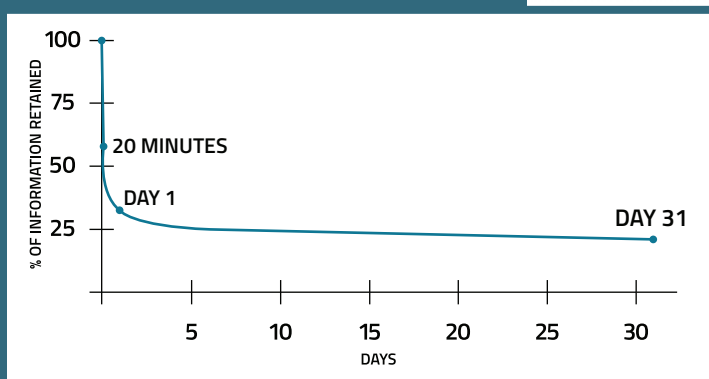
MICROLEARNING AND TRAINING FATIGUE

Fewer than 15% of trainees retain information after a traditional training session. This is because after 90–120 minutes of the same activity, people will lose complete focus and have no retention of the information covered after this period.

The most effective training sessions run no longer than 90 minutes total. It helps to change up the material at least every 20 minutes to break up the monotony. An effective session will also engage the trainees at least every eight minutes.

Breaking up the learning improves long-term memory. Microlearning combats fatigue and makes it easier for learners to retain the information. One study showed that memory was enhanced within 24 hours after completing a microlearning session, especially compared to traditional training methods.

MICROLEARNING TO MEET TRAINING NEEDS

Using microlearning techniques makes it easier to tailor the training to specific trainee needs. This method breaks the information down, so trainees can understand and put to use the information that is important to their needs..

Breaking training down into bite-sized chunks also improves trainee participation. 58% of people surveyed stated they would be more likely to participate in learning if the content was broken down into more manageable pieces.

Microlearning aligns more with how our brains process information, allowing for consistent and effective training. By reducing the training time, microlearning reduces the chances of training fatigue and makes it easier to put new information to use.

Companies with a consistent training program throughout the year see 218% higher revenue per employee and 24% higher profit margins.

Spaced Learning

One way to use microlearning is to use the material to enhance what has already been learned. This is called spaced learning.

This technique allows for consistent training on a focused topic to reduce the forgetting curve and make the training more effective. It takes about five times of repeated information before it is stored in long-term memory. Spaced learning uses short bursts of information, regularly repeated over time.

Just-in-Time Learning

Another microlearning method is just-in-time learning. This allows trainees to do a quick review of important information when they need it. It is a method that provides a refresher course quickly rather than long training sessions that stop productivity.

Allowing trainees to access just-in-time learning modules is especially helpful with tasks that are not completed regularly. This ensures no steps are missed and works to reinforce information that is not used regularly.

MICROLEARNING AND BUSY SCHEDULES

The average employee can only devote 1% of their work week to training. This averages out to less than 5 minutes per day, or close to 20 minutes per week.

Consistent, ongoing training is the most effective means to improve behaviors. Microlearning allows employees to complete training consistently without putting a strain on productivity.

The optimal time for a microlearning video is six minutes, but training videos should not exceed 10 minutes or training ROI is diminished. The average retention rate using microlearning techniques is 75%. Compare this to the 15% for traditional methods, and it's clear that microlearning better fits into busy schedules.

Overall, microlearning is 17% more efficient than traditional learning methods, as it requires less time dedicated to a specific lesson. This is why microlearning lessons have an 82% completion rate.

MEASURING TRAINING RESULTS

Learning should follow a pattern. This starts with determining the desired results. From there the pattern requires understanding what behaviors are required to meet these results. Then a determination can be made on what skills or knowledge is required for the desired behaviors.

Most training programs are measured based on the Kirkpatrick model. This model evaluates training programs based on four factors:

REACTION	LEARNING	TRANSFER	RESULTS
Level I. Reaction is a measure of learners' reactions to the material provided.	Level II. Learning is a measure of what trainees take away from the lessons.	Level III. Transfer measures changes in behavior after completing training.	Level IV. Results is a measure of the effect training has on business outcomes.

Applying this to microlearning strategies, you can see why this is a more effective means of training.

- Level I: 94% of learners that have used microlearning techniques prefer this method over traditional training methods.
- Level II: People who use microlearning techniques were able to answer questions 28% faster.
- Level III: The average retention rate for microlearning is 75%.
- Level IV: Microlearning is 17% more efficient.

The Phillips ROI Model added a fifth element to the training measurement model, ROI. This measures the cost benefit of the training program by comparing the monetary value added to a company to the cost of training.

- Level V: 60% of the top organizations consider microlearning to be the most effective method for employee training. Microlearning reduces costs by up to 50% while increasing training speed by up to 300%. This is on top of the increased information retention levels.

CONCLUSION

Microlearning is the preferred method of training for trainers and trainees alike. It is a more effective method of training and less time-consuming, meaning participation in the training is significantly increased.

Microlearning allows organizations to provide consistent, ongoing training that fits into the busy schedules of employees. It also improves information comprehension and retention, all of which drives better employee behaviors and increased productivity.

ABOUT VERTICAL ALLIANCE GROUP

Vertical Alliance Group is the industry leader in on-demand business education, employee training, and safety training anytime, anywhere. With more than 1,000 expert videos that pioneered microlearning in online training, our training platform reduces employee turnover and training costs to make your business more profitable and help protect against legal issues.

Our training solutions are backed by more than 20 years of experience in providing training that is easy to access and that reinforces information retention. The training library is used by more than 1,500 clients across 300,000 users across multiple industries.

For more information about training for the transportation industry, check out www.infinitiworkforce.com.

For more information about training for all other industries, check out www.WeAreTraining.com.

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