



What is Microlearning & why should you use it to scale e-learning output



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Introduction

In an era of remote work, Human Resources (HR) and Learning & Development (L&D) teams are being pushed to develop new and creative ways to train their workforce. Businesses need to find new ways to upskill current employees and keep content relevant to be prepared for any unforeseen business requirements. As a result, HR and L&D teams are letting go of traditional training methods and embracing the newest trends. This need is also due to the fact that the new generation of employees is mobile-driven, needing information to be readily accessible on the go and in easily digestible formats. To meet the needs of this generation while also keeping up with changing working conditions, what learning and training options are available?

With these rapid changes, Microlearning stands out as a highly versatile solution to maintain the knowledge currency in organizations. Microlearning is one of the newest and most widely accepted methods in today's training world. With a bite-sized approach to learning, it meets the needs of L&D teams and learners alike.

In the following pages, we will take a deeper look into why Microlearning is gaining traction in the corporate world, as well as reveal the benefits it offers to learners and businesses.

Basics first: What is Microlearning?

Microlearning is a resource-based learning and training trend. It is a more engaging, less time-consuming, and cheaper way to produce learning content compared to traditional methods. While it's not the best solution for every learning need, it's surprisingly effective for quite a few of the requirements. Organizations are rapidly embracing Microlearning as it is cost-effective to build, quicker to deploy, and can be updated efficiently. It can be easily accessed at the time of a learning need (just-in-time).

Microlearning can serve a few different purposes. It can be used for just-in-time training, as mentioned above, but it can also complement other learning activities. For example, Microlearning can be used alongside classroom training or a more formal e-learning course for knowledge checks. Additionally, it is important to note that it can either be stand-alone assets or a series of multiple micro-courses, depending on the learning need and approach. According to an author and L&D expert, Carla Torgerson, Microlearning can be used in the following ways:

- Preparation/Pre-work: Anything that comes before long-form instruction
- Follow-up/Boost Learning: Anything that comes after long-form instruction
- Short form: Anything that can stand alone
- Performance Support: Anything that can support the performance on the job

How “micro” is Microlearning?

Considering the dwindling attention spans of the new generation, Microlearning modules should average between two to five minutes in duration. Longer Microlearning courses can be between ten to thirteen minutes, but this can also be dependent on the desired learning outcome. Studies show that more success has been achieved with shorter courses rather than longer. But this is not hardcoded and depends entirely on the content of the course. The bottom line: so long as you achieve the desired learning outcome, the length of the course should not matter.

When considering a few situations, however, there are recommended lengths for the courses. For example, if a learner is preparing for a class, an asset of five to ten minutes works best. For the purpose of reviewing previous information, five-minute assets typically work best. And, for assets that complement a more formal training, eight-minute resources are proven to be most effective.

According to a study by Association for Talent Development, the optimal duration for a Microlearning activity is between two and five minutes. This is because two to five minutes is the average attention span, so there is a higher chance that everything learned after those five minutes will not be retained as well.

Microlearning courses, however, are not just about breaking down a ten-hour training into small pieces. It's a stand-alone action-oriented learning exercise that gets learners to learn, act, and practice. To achieve this, it is best to first identify the learning objective, then work backwards to break it down into smaller, micro, courses and content.

Chapter 2

Why is Microlearning worth your consideration?

Imagine you're developing software and encounter a problem midway through. What do you do? Do you go back to your trainer or course module for help? Probably not. You are more likely to refer to the help tab in the software, check with a coworker, or look for the solution on YouTube. Any of these options are, in fact, a form of performance support. The goal here is to attain information at the time of need, often in a "micro" and highly accessible format. This is the focus of many L&D teams today, shifting to different methods and learning approaches, such as:

- Formal learning toward informal and workplace learning.
- Top-down approach toward a bottom-up approach.
- Learning approach toward performance support.
- Knowledge focus toward a skill focus.

Microlearning is a perfect asset to align with these shifts, and performance support is one such example of areas where Microlearning can be utilized. Consider the 5 Moments of Need framework. While the "new" and "more" moments are in the purview of formal to semi-formal learning solutions, the more informal aspects of learning involving "change, application and solving" moments belong to the domain of performance support. The connection of performance support with skill focus, together with its absolute impact on the business outcome, is quite evident, relevant, and direct.

Additionally, the connection between learning content and workplace support can be very powerful in helping overcome the forgetting curve. Imagine taking a course that provides a checklist of the things you need to do before starting a certain task. Back in the workplace, you'll probably remember the checklist, but not its exact content. You're unlikely to go back to that course to go through it. If the checklist was easily accessible, in a Microlearning format for example, you could use it to quickly refresh your memory and perform your task.

Training alone cannot drive consistent performance at the point of work where end-users are hands-on with customers, systems, and application workflows. Neither can training be overlooked such that employees often work without a net, exposing the business to errors, delays, liability, material waste, reduced customer satisfaction, or attrition. For this very reason, the world highly favors the adoption of new, in-the-flow-of-work performance support (Microlearning) approaches rather than away-from-work (formal) training methods. It precisely reflects the authentic performance requirements back on the job. Microlearning is, in fact, short-run home to your company's business objectives.

According to the forgetting curve, we forget 80% of what we learned after a few hours. This is the case unless this knowledge is repeatedly reinforced. Microlearning is one such way that this knowledge can be reinforced, preventing important knowledge from being forgotten. Additionally, when content is broken down into bite-sized pieces, learners are more likely to complete the full course. With their higher completion rate and brief time requirement, Microlearning enables employees to gain important knowledge without needing to be away from their initial tasks for a long duration, compared to conventional training methods. Since it is also mobile-friendly, it is much more accessible to the newer generation of the workforce. Below, we have outlined the ways in which Microlearning can complement more conventional methods of training or used for specific situations to provide powerful training and learning experiences for employees:

Formal Training	Whether you require trainees to go through some content before the actual training or are creating assignments to be taken afterward, Microlearning is a perfect solution. Even better, it can also be used to complement the mainstream formal training itself. These “micro” modules can be as effectively used in both synchronous and asynchronous modes of learning.
Autonomous learning	Microlearning is a great option for self-learning. Employees can gain new skills and upgrade their knowledge in a self-paced manner by taking mini courses.
Performance support	Employees need regular support to effectively perform their tasks, even after a formal training takes place. Microlearning modules are widely used by organizations as performance support tools. This is due to the reduced time to respond to critical tasks, reduced costs, and fewer errors that come along with Microlearning.

There are several formats in which Microlearning can take place. Each have their own set of advantages and reasons for use. Below are a few such formats:

- Interactive Checklists
 - Instructions
 - Guidelines
 - ‘How-to’ videos
 - Flow charts
- Flashcards
 - Maps
 - Tables
 - Factsheets
 - Podcasts

Microlearning content addresses explicit topics and behaviors, and therefore must be developed rigorously to drive the desired result. Whether you have a lean budget for a series of short and simple learning activities or a big budget for more complex content, such as games and interactive videos, Microlearning can deliver results. Microlearning empowers your employees with access to and control over the information they need in a 21st-century workplace.

Chapter 3

Benefits of Microlearning

There are several advantages of Microlearning that make it worth including in your organization's e-learning strategy. These can be observed from both an organization's perspective, as well as from a learner's perspective. We have outlined a few of these benefits below:

From an organization's standpoint:

- **Affordable and agile**

As the cost of creating small assets is comparatively quite low, it is economical and easier to quickly create and implement as the need arises. The value added can be felt in many facets of the business.

- **Shorter development cycle**

With only one learning objective as the focus of a single Microlearning, creators can quickly structure and create courses.

- **Easy to update**

Because Microlearning content is only small bits of knowledge, it is easy to change and update information that is covered in the course. With the right tools as well, this process can be made even more seamless.

- **Flexible**

Microlearning can be tailored in several ways to the specific need and format of the learners. There are a variety of different formats available, each with their own advantage, that can be utilized and customized quickly to a learning need.

- **Wider reach**

As Microlearning assets are created in a device agnostic manner, employees can access them from desktops, laptops, tablets, or mobiles on the go. With the right tools to create Microlearning, the overall user experience does not get compromised, creating an environment where learning can take place anytime, anywhere.

- **Versatile**

These assets are useful for numerous business needs. Whether it is before formal training, on the job, or as a refresher, Microlearning courses can be used in several situations that arise in business.

From a learner's standpoint:

- **Improved learning outcomes**

Through shorter modules, Microlearning reinforces continuous learning habits to help learners achieve better outcomes and retain information better.

- **Learn anytime, anywhere**

With information available in bite-sized pieces on a mobile learning platform, employees can access the information they need when they need it.

- **Better engagement**

With the use of rich media and interactive formats, learners tend to stay more engaged with the content which allows for better knowledge-retention.

- **Performance Support Tools**

Microlearning can easily take the form of performance support. These tools help learners apply the learning precisely at the point of work and can be easily accessible when in a smaller format.

- **Approachable**

With the variety of formats available for Microlearning, learners can be addressed and access the content in their preferred way of learning. This can help with knowledge retention and adds a level of personalization for the learner.

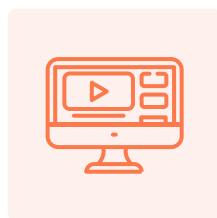
- **Knowledge at the time of need**

Ideal for the newer generation of the workforce who grew up relying on the internet for quick snippets of on-demand knowledge. The fast-paced, data-driven society of the future has a short attention span but an unlimited need for information. Employees naturally gravitate towards faster methods, such as Microlearning, to take away one or two useful bits of information.

Chapter 4

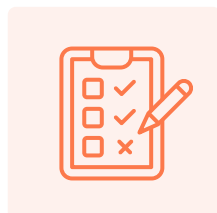
Practical Microlearning Examples

With the benefits of Microlearning identified for both organizations and the learners, let us look at a few of the different formats of Microlearning:



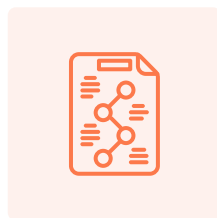
How-to videos

How-to videos are great ways to convey small bits of information in a short period of time. Additionally, these videos are often easy to access, so learners can easily get the necessary information at a time of need. Tasks can be completed in a timelier manner when this information is so easily accessible.



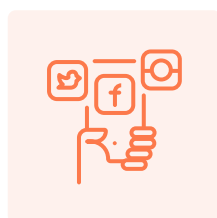
Checklists

Checklists diminish the likelihood of important steps or tasks getting disregarded. They also give the learner or employee the confidence that their work has been completed correctly. Retail workers refer to checklists that outline the steps they need for daily store opening procedures. These guides can include cleaning standards, verifying product specifications, and more.



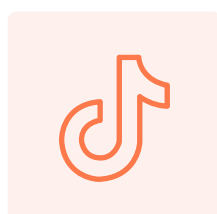
Infographics

Infographics focus on key points by giving graphic and visual representations of information, data, or knowledge. Employees can refer to these infographics for quick facts in a time of need. They do not need to be extensive but are solely there to provide only the necessary information to complete a task effectively.



Social media for Microlearning

Social media platforms, like Twitter and Instagram, are being used for more than mere storytelling. And with the newer generation of the workforce active on these platforms, they are the perfect place to share information. With a smaller amount of space to share content, creators can deliver concise bits of information that can be comprehended in a matter of seconds.



TikTok explainers

For learners looking for even shorter videos, a social media platform like TikTok is filled with educational content covering various topics. From skincare tutorials to gardening tips, TikTok truly serves as an example of bite-sized learning, enabling learners to focus on specific questions and get answers in as short as 15 to 30 seconds.



Whiteboard animation videos

Educational videos don't always come in the form of an instructor sitting in front of a video. In fact, the art of whiteboard animation content is becoming increasingly popular. As its name implies, these types of videos portray a whiteboard – a traditional classroom tool for teaching – and an instructor's hand drawing out concepts with a voiceover recording narrating the lecture. Its familiar classroom approach to teaching, combined with audio and visual features, makes it ideal for conveying complex subjects like security or compliance training.

With remote work and digital learning becoming center stage in the corporate training world, creating microlearning content is more than just a way to keep up with learning trends. It is a way of providing an optimal experience for today's online learners. While at the outset, Microlearning looks quite simple and straight to incorporate, the process needs a well-thought-out approach. Otherwise, it can get tricky from the start. The courses should be planned, designed, and developed to align with the overall learning strategy. Additionally, the plan must have a scope for versioning, hosting, and management. Who is going to review the content before it is sent to be published for the masses? Will the content be Subject-matter Expert-generated or user-generated with Subject-matter Expert approval? Though the Microlearning module itself might be small, it needs a definite plan. Therefore, it is important to be effective and smart in creating a plan to ensure full benefits from Microlearning.

Chapter 5

The best practices of Microlearning

Microlearning is most effective when there is a solid foundation and strategy behind it. Below, we have outlined a few tips for setting up the strategy and creating Microlearning content

Part 1: Setting up the strategy

Before getting started creating content, it is important to develop a strategy that will guide the creation and ensure the courses deliver the desired learning outcomes. A few best practices for the strategy are:

1.

Check whether it is appropriate for your Use Case

Microlearning is a great tool, but it is not suited for every learning need. Some tasks are very complex and cannot be condensed into a standalone segment of under ten minutes. Likewise, there are certain learning tasks that if taught from an e-course, textbook, or slideshow would lose their essence. These tasks require in-person or on-the-job training. If your planned subject matter is complicated and tricky, warrants in-depth study, or necessitates in-person training, Microlearning exclusively may not fit the bill. That said, it can be used as a complementary training method.

2.

Focus on the knowledge and skill gaps

Identify the areas of content that have repeatedly been problematic to learners, are critical to performance, require a quick and appropriate response, or are important facts that should be at their fingertips. These segments lend themselves to be ideal candidates for Microlearning.

3.

Know your audience

Microlearning does not fit all user profiles. How a piece of content is presented to a new employee is going to be different when presented to a manager on the same topic. If the content is created as 'one size fits all' it will only target a handful of learners and leave others disinterested and demotivated. It is a good idea, instead, to consider different employee profiles, seniority, experience, location, the way they consume learning modules. In addition, it is important to consider the result the learners wish to achieve. Addressing the pain points of each target audience will ensure the content is suitable, relevant, and useful.

4.

Schedule content delivery

Whenever a new employee starts a new role in an organization, there is typically an eagerness for him/her to go through new material and learn everything about their new function and company at the start. When all the information is available at once, there is a risk that the relevant information will not be retained due to overload. Instead, to maximize the knowledge transfer, time released Microlearning modules should be made available to learners at regular intervals to keep the momentum of learning.

5.

Test frequently

To ensure that Microlearning delivers the desired learning objectives and outcomes, it is important to frequently verify that the learner has understood and retained the information from the module. This can easily be achieved by assessments. This can be done as a standalone piece of content or built into the Microlearning course.

Part 2: Creating the content

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2.

Keep it brief

Microlearning is, by definition, short. But how short should it be? Research has shown that effective microlearning content lasts between two and seven minutes. But because attention spans are on the decline, learners are not guaranteed to make it through the entirety of learning content, even if it is just a few minutes long. With that in mind, it is still worth making sure your learners can easily skim the content and develop clear takeaways.

3. Include relatable examples

When diving into an unfamiliar subject, learners benefit from having examples they can relate to and draw conclusions from. To ensure the examples you include are relatable, consider real-world scenarios that learners are likely to encounter on the job. This not only helps them apply their learnings to their own experiences but can also strengthen their retention.

4. Apply an active and relatable tone

Employing a conversational tone that communicates in a way learners do in their everyday lives can also improve relatability. Using an active voice ensures your content gets the point across quickly, allowing your learners to form conclusions and close their knowledge gaps faster.

5. Keep it engaging

Keeping content short and specific is not enough to make sure learners stay focused. Consider balancing text out with engaging visuals or interactive elements. You could also deliver your content in an engaging format altogether. For example, videos create a multisensory learning experience (visually and audibly), which can also improve learner retention rates.

Traditional method of Microlearning creation

The traditional approach to creating Microlearning, after identifying the right tool and strategy, is for the L&D teams to take a centralized approach to content creation. Within this approach, they reach out to all stakeholders, talk to employees, try to understand the requirements for the course, and then begin the content creation process. However, it has recently come to light that this method might not be the best and most efficient method of content creation for training. The most common problems faced are:

- Content creation takes too long. By the time the content gets ready it is already time for updating.
- Too much sequential communication and coordination is involved
- The centralized team may not have all the relevant knowledge available to them promptly
- The conventional method of aligning a centralized team of instructional designers with Subject-matter Experts is not scalable to meet the ever-increasing speed of business and learning needs

To overcome the challenges of internally scaling instructional design, another approach is to outsource training content development. However, the learning curve for business requirements, challenges, and opportunities is equally steep for a third party. This increases the delivery time and costs beyond what many organizations can afford. So, what is the way ahead?

The new method of Microlearning creation

In the new era of open learning, the creator economy has prevailed as the preferred solution for many corporations. This is a recent development, in which everyone who has expertise and knowledge worth sharing in an organization can be a content creator. This scenario evolves the L&D role to guide as facilitators and enablers to support users in their content creation.

Most of the business knowledge is in the hands of Subject-matter Experts rather than instructional designers. To leverage their rich and relevant experience, Subject-matter Experts, the employees, can become the creators of content. At Easygenerator, we refer to this process as Employee-generated Learning (EGL). This method ensures that the knowledge stays where it is generated. It eliminates the time needed to transfer knowledge from Subject-matter Experts to instructional designers. It is scalable, easy to use, and allows every employee to work more productively. It is a new way to share knowledge that counts and drives business growth.

This approach is especially relevant in today's remote working new age where centralized content creation is becoming less and less relatable. It is not only cost-effective, but it also directly impacts the growth of business positively.

The additional advantages of this process include:

- Increased control, creation, and updating of content at the local level
- SMEs tend to understand the specific needs of their areas of responsibility much better than L&D teams
- Inhouse domain expertise and experience is leveraged efficiently
- Quicker response to business challenges and opportunities

But the question remains, how can Subject-matter Experts create instructional sound training content if there is not an easy way to streamline and automate corporate instructional design?

Chapter 6

Easygenerator for Microlearning creation

Easygenerator is an easy-to-use, SCORM compatible, and cloud-based authoring tool. With an intuitive interface, it is a solution that allows you to create Microlearning content quickly and efficiently without the need for training.

With zero-learning curve, Subject-matter Experts, your employees, can quickly start creating Microlearning courses to share with fellow employees. As Subject-matter experts are the gatekeepers, creators, and owners of company knowledge, Easygenerator empowers them to capture and share specific knowledge. And with the little training required, they can create this content alongside their daily tasks.

These Microlearning assets can be shared with employees shortly after being created. Easygenerator offers handy features to give Subject-matter Experts a head-start in sharing their tactical knowledge in form of job aids, how-to guides, checklists, and more with the ready-to-use templates. This not only ensures that employees receive the information they need, but also sets a quality standard for Microlearning content that is being created.

Furthermore, Easygenerator provides a plethora of features to co-author, collaborate, review and distribute content. With the ability to make changes to your content anytime, updates can be made quickly enabling content to always be relevant. Microlearning can be hosted in an LMS, published on the web, or even as standalone content.

Easygenerator offers the perfect solution to get started with Microlearning and keep up with the latest trends in e-learning. Check out below how BHP, a mining company based out of Australia, used Easygenerator to create Microlearning content for their employees:



Success Story:

How flexible microlearning with Easygenerator saved the BHP Risk team over AU\$250,000

Rob Jack is Principal of Risk Culture and Capability at BHP. He works alongside five colleagues in the Risk Strategy and Development team. The team is part of a larger 60-person global Risk team at BHP. Together, their mission is to support and verify risk management activities across the company and give assurance to the Board and senior management. It's up to Rob and his colleagues to ensure consistent risk knowledge and capability across the company, which is mandatory for thousands of Risk Owners and Control Owners globally.

Challenge

BHP's Risk team relied heavily on external learning vendors to create risk-related learning content for the global team. The Risk team would write the content themselves, distribute it to external vendors to create the training material, then upload the training into their central Learning Management System (LMS). Outsourcing course creation to third-party e-learning vendors was too slow, too expensive, and inflexible. Every little change needed to be discussed and signed off, before being sent to the vendor. By the time this whole process played out, the content was often out of date. When BHP launched its new risk framework, Rob and his team knew it was time to update their approach to creating and managing learning content. The new framework provided them with specific learning requirements that needed to be carried out across the company's global Risk team. With several learning modules catering to different employees' needs, Rob and his team knew they needed a cost-effective way of maintaining a large volume of content.

Solution

To fulfill these learning needs, Rob and his team turned to Microlearning to maintain the amount of learning content. Using Easygenerator as an experiment at first, the team quickly realized how they could make their training engaging and effective by creating content in-house. Rob and his team could cater to each learner's individual needs, based on their background knowledge and location. And without needing the experience to create learning content in Easygenerator, Rob and his team could produce new learning material within days, while it used to take months. BHP's risk team had more freedom in creating, editing, and localizing learning content. They could successfully offer learners a more personalized and accessible learning experience with Microlearning modules, while also cutting costs.

Outcome

By turning to Easygenerator to create content in-house, the BHP Risk Strategy and Development team is more flexible than ever when it comes to creating learning materials. Due to the level of personalization the team can achieve with their courses, there has been a boost in learner engagement. Even better, Rob no longer must spend AU \$100,000 on a third party to create a 60-minute video. This has saved BHP over AU \$250,000 on their course creation by developing modular Microlearning with Easygenerator.

Final thoughts

Any learning strategy that can impact recall, retention, and application will have a positive impact on the return on investment. Microlearning is one such strategy that appeals to learners, leads to high completion rates, and packages bite-sized information that can be applied precisely at the time of need. Designed to meet the mandates of knowledge acquisition through training, performance support, or informal learning, Microlearning, when done right, can establish a clear value for the business. With Easygenerator, this process can be especially streamlined and ensure top quality Microlearning is created for and by the experts and knowledge holder in your organization, your employees.