

Small Steps to Big Wins:

How Microlearning Transforms Organizations

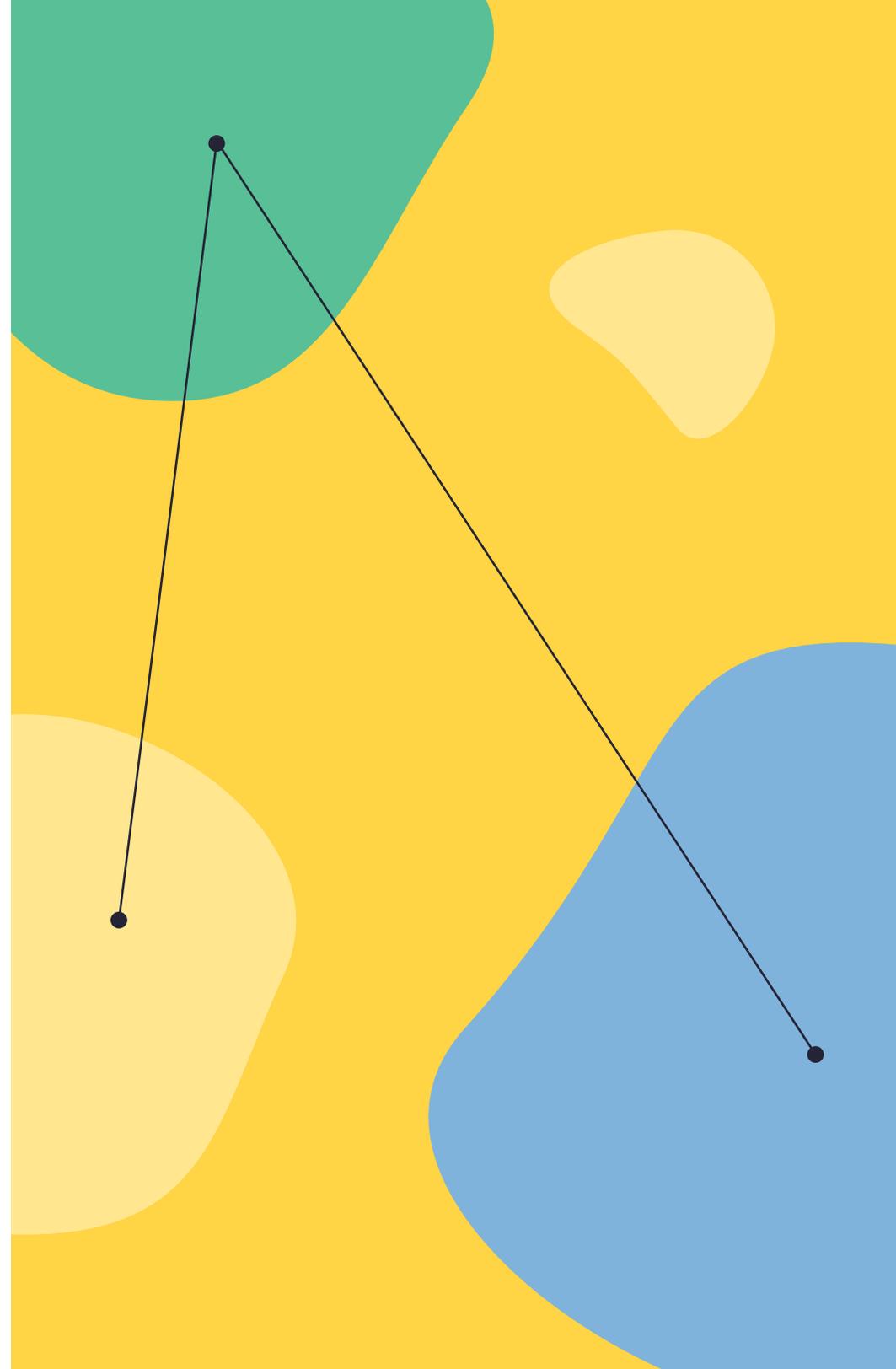
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What is microlearning?

Microlearning is the process of building successful behaviors in small, focused segments. It's an educational approach that embraces the power of small learning moments to transform individuals and organizations.

Microlearning is already transforming Learning & Development itself, and not a moment too soon. The training systems we used in the past don't work anymore. Learners are uninspired. The last decade's technological innovations have, so far, left learning behind. L&D—the most crucial driver of an engaged and productive workforce—is begging for the next evolution to reveal itself. We believe microlearning is that answer.

This guide explains the method, philosophy, and business benefits of microlearning. The idea is simple: in an environment of information overload, small content is the only way to engage learners in the process of building successful behaviors. This is more than the most effective approach to learning and development; it's the only way to transform learners in the 21st century. Read on to find out why.



Why effective learning is transformative

When it comes to learning at work, we all have a simple goal: to get better at what we do every day. But acquiring knowledge isn't enough to help us perform better. In order to do better work tomorrow than we did today, we need to change our behavior. That's when learning becomes effective. That's when we see results.

Wait, my employees are great! Why does their behavior need to change?

A behavior is a set of actions you take to achieve a specific outcome. In order to improve your outcomes, you need to improve your behaviors. That's what effective learning does.

Let's say you want to deliver more convincing presentations. You watch a YouTube tutorial and learn how to stand tall and speak clearly. Neither is a behavior that feels natural, but you keep the instruction in your head. The problem is, when it comes time to give the speech, you tense up and can't apply what you learned. All that studying didn't *actually* result in a better presentation because you

didn't *actually* stand tall and speak clearly. The learning took place, sure. It just didn't change your behavior. It wasn't effective.

Sustained behavior change is what separates passive tutorials from learning interventions that drive results. Learning for its own sake is great, but effective learning is how individuals develop and how organizations perform better.

How can learning change behavior?

Slowly. Gradually. Bit by bit, at the learner's own pace. Behavior change is hard; it requires learners to invest time and energy into transforming the way they operate. Effective learning not only has to get learners to stick with the program, but drive results too. It needs to make people excited to learn, and then it needs to work.

Microlearning succeeds on both counts. Behavior change becomes a rewarding journey of small wins that accrue not just to one person, but to a whole group of people. It's not just learning; it's *effective* learning that you can feel working, from the individual all the way up to the entire organization.

How microlearning works

Microlearning engineers continual performance improvement by changing behaviors a little bit at a time. It's not just creating shorter pieces of content. It's giving learners tiny, targeted resources that help them perform actions better.¹ Before long, these adjustments add up.

Individual microlearning moments...

Each microlearning intervention is built around one highly-focused, self-contained learning unit. This tiny resource can be any format (video, GIF, short piece of audio or text, etc.) and carries a small cognitive load, which makes it easily digestible.² The learner accesses this learning resource in a moment it could help them perform an action better—before a meeting, for example, or while they're composing an email. Each improved action is a small win that takes place seamlessly inside the workflow.

...add up to continual improvement.

The most common question people ask about microlearning is, "What can I really learn in a short piece of content?" The answer's easy: you can learn one single thing. That's the point. Microlearning isn't about what happens after one fleeting course correction. It's about what happens in aggregate, between many of them. Learners interact with each unit of microlearning continually, and behavior change becomes a career-long journey of self-improvement.

Since microlearning units are highly focused, each can be used to serve many different learning objectives. For example, a short video training on phone etiquette can be packaged into onboarding for a receptionist, job support for a salesperson, or even leadership development for the CEO. Best of all, flexible learning modules mean that you, the learning admin, don't need to navigate a huge content library. A relatively small pool of high-quality microlearning resources will supply material for the vast majority of your training use cases. When you need something unique, micro content is easy, fast, and affordable to create or refresh.

Microlearning drives over 20% more information retention than long-form training.³

Using technology. Not hiding from it.

Microlearning is the first learning approach designed for the 21st century. Learning with small segments of information has always been around (ever study with flashcards?) but only recently have these resources been able to deploy in a sophisticated, immersive way on users' favorite devices. Unlike traditional training, microlearning thrives on these five digital-age realities:

1. The rise of video

Video is the dominant content medium of our era. By 2019, 80% of all Internet traffic will consist of video.⁴ It's already a huge part of the web; 35% of U.S. bandwidth in 2014 was Netflix.⁵ Luckily, video is actually a great learning tool. For one thing, it presents material in a format modern learners already prefer. Better yet, our brains process video faster than text, which minimizes the content's cognitive load.⁶ Microlearning content doesn't have to be video, but it does have to be easily digestible.

2. Mobile connectivity

Microlearning is the most effective way to learn on mobile. Forty percent of smartphone users say they're "always in a hurry" when

looking something up with their devices, and 29% say they'll immediately abandon a site or app if it's too slow.⁷ Mobile devices are ideal for microlearning, which requires learners to consume and interact with tiny pieces of content on the fly—exactly what mobile users are already accustomed to doing. Given that half the planet will have mobile Internet by 2020,⁸ optimizing for this technology is crucial to meeting learners where they are.



“Digital users tend to consider video more engaging on the whole because it requires less cognitive strain.”

—Liraz Margalit Ph.D.⁹

3. Search on demand

L&D is way behind on search capability. Right now, workers spend 20% of their day searching for support resources.¹⁰ That's not OK in the instant-access age of Google. The industry is rightfully fed up: the majority of LMS buyers cite ineffective search as the primary reason they're looking for a new solution.¹¹ Microlearning is the answer: its bite-size modules are highly searchable, super relevant, and immediately applicable—so much so that on-demand “pull” learning is an important pillar of the methodology.

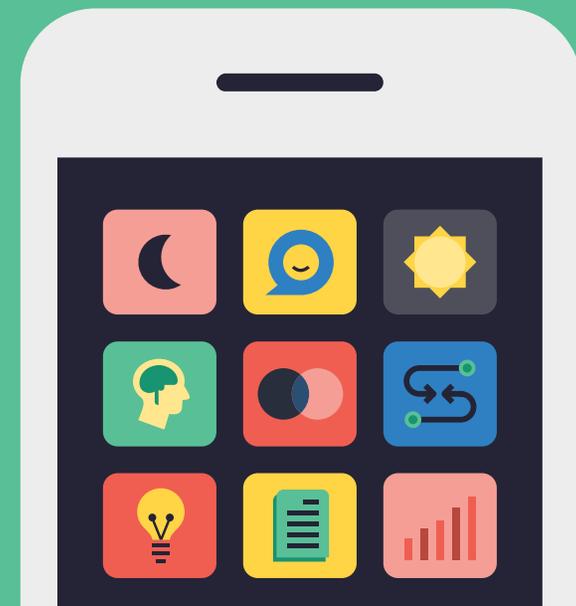
4. Big data

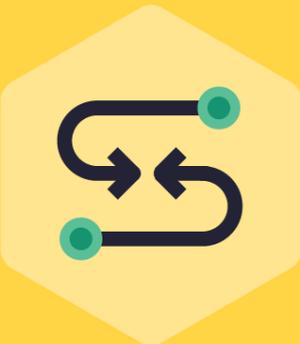
Here again, L&D has been way behind. Ninety percent of today's global data has been created in the last two years,¹² yet only 31% of learning systems generate more data today than they did a year ago.¹³ With microlearning, every learning moment generates countless data points: how the learner performed, how long it took them, what they chose to learn voluntarily, etc. Microlearning is single-handedly pushing enterprise learning into the era of big data.

5. Personalization

Microlearning is already more personalized than any other approach because it gives the learner the exact piece of information they need at the moment it's needed. In addition, granular data means your training system will know your learners as intimately as Google knows their personal lives. Years ago, deep personalization might have been considered intrusive. Today, it's table stakes. Isn't it time your learning system becomes as personalized as your learners' favorite apps?

*Mobile use grew **58%** in the past year.
App personalization technology grew **332%**.*¹⁴





How to transform an organization

Microlearning changes organizational behavior in three steps:

- 1. Short content engages learners**
- 2. Targeted resources adjust behavior**
- 3. Successful behaviors build across the organization**

Think of it this way: a great schoolteacher doesn't just teach material to the class. They also inspire every student to see learning as a rewarding, enriching pursuit. After all, if the kids don't show up, it doesn't matter how good the instruction is.

Microlearning operates on both levels. First, it attracts people to learn. Voluntarily. As in, they actually like doing it. This alone is a revolution. People hate time-consuming, inconvenient training. Microlearning offers a faster, easier, more effective alternative.

Learning engagement creates more learning moments. And in each of these moments, micro content is highly effective at introducing and reinforcing real-time behavior adjustments. By keeping people engaged in learning for long enough to let behavior changes accrue, results manifest quickly. And they add up all across the business.

Step 1: Deliver content learners love

Microlearning's ability to engage the 21st century brain is essential to getting learners to stick with the hard work of transformation. Here's how it works.

People want to learn...

Only 38% of employees feel they have access to effective learning at work.¹⁵ The companies that fail on this front are missing a critical opportunity: over three-quarters of employees say learning is a key driver of employee engagement.¹⁶ Young employees particularly demand it, valuing the chance to develop professionally more than any other job perk (60% more than cash bonuses, in fact).¹⁷

... but nobody has any time...

Amid all the zillions of things vying for our attention, workers are only able to commit about 1% of the workday to training and development.¹⁸ That's a real problem, because effective learning takes time. Training content needs to fit into our rare free moments in order to be consumed at all. Then it has to work efficiently.

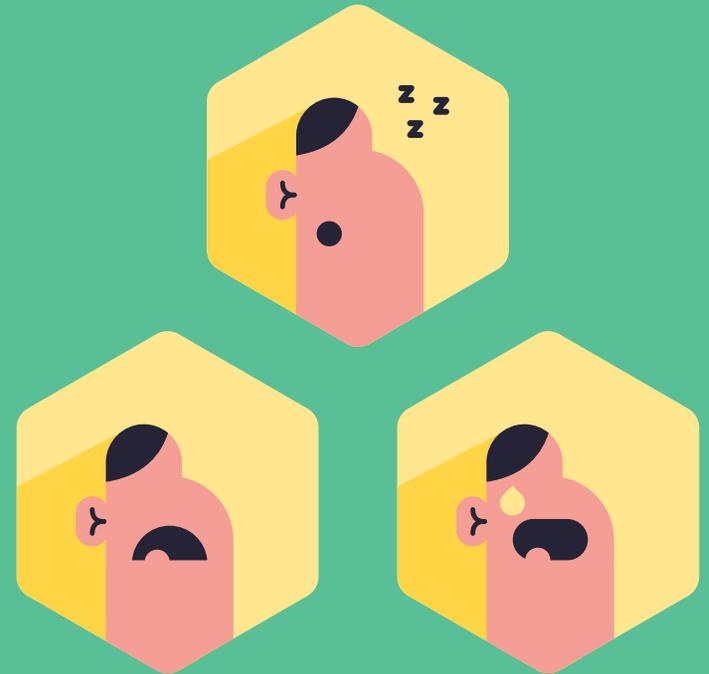
...or attention.

Life in the digital age has driven workers' attention spans to all-time lows: in 2014, the average attention span was 59.5 seconds and declining.¹⁹ Most learners even consider a 4-minute video too long to watch.²⁰ A third of all users abandon web pages within 5 seconds if they load too slowly.²¹ And those are sites they *want* to visit! Imagine how quickly they're checking out of long, boring content assigned by their manager.

58% of employees say they'd use their company's learning software more if the content was broken up into shorter lessons.²²

There's always time for small wins.

Microlearning meets these digital-age requirements. It gives learners information on their terms and at their pace. More learning takes place, which creates more opportunities for the highly-focused content to change behaviors. That's where the second benefit of microlearning comes in: efficacy at the point of impact.



More than 80% of unsuccessful learning programs fail due to low engagement.²³

Step 2: Change behavior one micro adjustment at a time

Microlearning engineers lasting behavior change through lots of tiny adjustments, delivered where and when they're most useful.

Micro content strikes while the iron's hot

Learners pull microlearning moments at any time they find convenient, on any device they want. This immediate availability means more than just an accessible training program. It also empowers just-in-time performance support, ready to be retrieved by the learner and used the moment it could change behaviors. In clinical studies, just-in-time learning has been found to be up to 7 times more effective than traditional, long-form training.²⁴

Your brain gets a personal trainer

Here's how tiny moments of behavior adjustment add up. Think of microlearning like a personal trainer you hire to get fit. First they divide your overall fitness goal into lots of small behaviors. Then they help ensure you're on track at each point along the road to success. That includes crafting a workout routine aligned with

your goals, making sure you get to the gym, and giving you form corrections in real time, while you're doing the work. None of these momentary behavior adjustments are large in scope. The trainer's not lecturing you about nutrition in a moment when all you need is a simple reminder to keep your back straight. Instead, the interventions are tiny. But together, when you keep going to the gym and keep doing things right, they accrue into big results. Not only do you get in better shape, but you gain the habit of effective exercise too. Small wins, in other words, build into big wins.

*It takes over **40 minutes**
to re-learn every hour of
material that is not reinforced
with short, daily reviews.²⁵*



4 out of 5

learning professionals say microlearning is changing the knowledge acquisition process by effectively delivering it inside the workflow.²⁶

Practice makes effective

In order to retain new information, learners can't just see it once. They have to review it periodically. That's because our brains gradually forget new information as soon as we learn it, a phenomenon you may have heard of as the "Forgetting Curve." (To be fair to your brain, it's trying to be efficient by only hanging on to the information it needs.) Microlearning combats the forgetting curve by making it easy for learners to review the same material over and over again, until the behavior change sticks. In fact, a number of effective practice techniques proven to aid retention and transfer are only available with micro content. These techniques include:

- **Spaced repetition:** Repeatedly interacting with learning content at strategic intervals is the most effective way to aid memory.²⁷ Try doing this with an hour-long lecture.
- **Variation:** Learning a skill in a variety of formats and contexts ensures it will be there at the moment of application, no matter where or when that moment occurs.²⁸
- **Interleaving:** Gaining multiple related skills in parallel is a kind of variation that deepens metacognition and facilitates transfer.²⁹

Step 3: Engage the entire organization in microlearning

Just like small, targeted adjustments lead to big behavior change, individual transformation adds up to organizational transformation.

Flexibility scales

Remember the Three 'R's of conservation? The same principles illustrate why micro content is super efficient at scale.

- **Reduce:** A unit of microlearning is a behavior change boiled down to its smallest, simplest, most transferable essence.
- **Reuse:** Each micro unit appears to the learner repeatedly over time, reinforcing the objective.
- **Recycle:** Each unit can be used in a variety of learning objectives for different uses across the business.

*Microlearning is **50%** cheaper and **300%** faster to develop than traditional training.³⁰*

Content is updated more often

Say your organization updates its goals and priorities on a quarterly basis. Only with microlearning will you be able to produce or curate learning that keeps up with those rapidly shifting business objectives. No other learning approach refreshes with the same agility as a fast-moving company.

Everyone gets a personal trainer

When you administer microlearning with a system that can synthesize user data into personalized learning, giving one learner a custom experience isn't much different from doing it for thousands. All your employees stay on track, not just some.

A culture of learning takes over

When people are engaged in learning, transformation becomes the norm throughout the organization. Candidates striving for promotion vie to learn more than their peers. New hires onboard with an experience that gets them used to continual learning right off the bat. When everyone in the office transforms their behaviors, the organization transforms too.

These small moments are the start of something big.

Truly getting better at your job is a great feeling—one that too few workplaces provide. Employees and companies don't need more inert learning programs. They need true transformations of behavior. They need effective learning.

Microlearning doesn't claim to be the end-all-be-all of information transfer. If you want an epic story to sweep you off your feet, read a novel. If you want to arrange a culture-building All-Hands meeting, by all means, have that presentation in person. But if you want your learners to get better at their jobs every day, you need to build successful behaviors. And to build successful behaviors, this is the approach that works.

Microlearning is how L&D engages today's learners. It's the most effective way to adjust behavior in real time and the only way to usher into your organization the learning techniques that we know are effective, but which haven't yet been integrated into the traditional training experience. This is L&D adapting to the 21st century. Microlearning makes it possible.



Make microlearning your own.

Grovo uses a proprietary methodology to produce microlearning content in-house, which we combine with the technology and learning expertise you need to transform your entire organization. Request a demo to find out more.

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Grovo is reimagining learning for today's teams.

We combine beautiful technology, engaging content, and hands-on advisory support to deliver a better way to learn at work. The heart of Grovo's approach is microlearning — bite-sized lessons, exercises, and real-world practice, delivered in the right way, at the right time. From digital skills to leadership training, Grovo teaches people the behaviors to be extraordinary at what they do, on a platform that learners and trainers love.

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