HOW TO DESIGN A GREAT MICROLEARNING EXPERIENCE

WITH SUCCESS STORIES
INTRODUCTION

By now you should have known that microlearning is one of the biggest trends for 2018 and it will continue to grow further in 2019.

The term Microlearning, describes the use of eLearning in small, bite-sized, right-sized content to help learners accomplish a specific learning outcome.

Essentially, the exact same practice as a normal length course but on different (smaller) scale. Reducing the course size into five-minute-long, quick-hit, training session – separating what you NEED to know, from what is NICE to know.
Recent research from Deloitte, shows the challenges we face in training today’s modern worker, who is overwhelmed by information they are inundated on a daily basis, distracted by interruptions they either cause themselves or those that others create, and as a result has the attention span of a fish.

Given all these daily pressures and needs, microlearning has emerged as a good solution to meet the learning requirements of individuals. The question arises, how do we design a microlearning experience that has lasting impact?
Learning Experience Design for Microlearning

The main aim of Learning Experience Design (LXD) is to help someone learn something effectively. Any learning course needs to help improve learning outcomes and experience of the learners. In other words, designing Microlearning course should help the learners connect emotionally and intellectually with the content and thereby improve the learning process.
Here is a summary of the guidelines for the design of Microlearning content and interfaces.

**Pictures are oases in the desert plains of text**

*People learn better from a combination of text and visuals rather than text alone.*

Visuals might include photos, infographics, illustrations, diagrams, or comparative charts, as well as videos and animations. Text refers to both on-screen text and audio. It’s essential to design combinations of text and visuals properly to yield learning advantages.

Also, one must keep in mind that pictures or graphics should be relevant and not merely decorative.

**Chunk the Content**

For microlearning, what we need to do with our training content is to chunk it down into bite-sized bursts to lower the cognitive load. Basically, focus on one idea per module.

In microlearning we have a maximum of five minutes to make an impact on the learner. So, choose your content wisely. Do not try to condense all available content into one module. Chunk the content in such a way that, each module represents one idea.
Content is **Self-Contained**

In order to create targeted and quick learning experience, you need to design and develop the content that is self-contained. For this we can include a variety of multimodal learning experiences. For example, you might add a short overview video, a quick reference guide, an income tax calculator (in case of an accounting courses), mini-games, mind maps, or a data chart. All of these can be included and readily accessible within the microlearning experience.

**Mobile-First Approach**

With increased penetration of mobile devices and visible changes in the consumption of multimedia content, it is best recommended to design microlearning modules with mobile-first approach for a compelling microlearning experience. So, these modules have to be easily accessible on mobile devices. The learners should be able to access the learning anytime, anywhere and on any device. It will be even better if these could be available offline (assuming the learners do not have access to internet all the time).
Guidelines for Designing Microlearning

Specific, Targeted and Small

Less is always more in case of microlearning. The less clutter you have, the better for your learners. Segregate your content. Define a well thought out learning objective for each piece of content (the 4-Mat model – what, why, how and what-if) can be used to easily create an impactful microlearning course.

TIP: Here you can use a concept called “Brevity”. Brevity implies briefness. As microlearning is targeted to a specific performance objective, you need to include only those content that adds value to the learner.

Acknowledge the learners

Consider allocating scores, badges or some kind of reward to learners when they complete a challenge within the microlearning module. Even a simple acknowledgement like “You have passed” will be enough. Using LMS, check the analytics to highlight how many learners have made it to a certain level, look at the leaderboards, or run surveys and social polls.
Why Microlearning?

People want to make the most of their time and would prefer to fit training into spare moments, rather than spending half an hour of their down time on a desktop or laptop. Fitting a learning module to a quick coffee break, or a train journey back home is much more convenient these days.

Just like the videos we watch, microlearning breaks the content down into small units (the NEED to know) and is arguably and effectively responding to this new age of quick, minimal thinking that technologies are responding to.

“... the thing is mobile sets learning free and we can now learn virtually anything, anywhere and anytime and that’s amazing.”

- RJ Jacquez

Employees receive information outside of work in little chunks and snippets – whether they’re millennials or not.
The Brain Science of Microlearning: Why It Works?

So, what is that makes microlearning so efficient?

There may not be any theory out there with a bigger case for the support of microlearning approach than Cognitive Load Theory (CLT). This was first described by John Sweller, who proposes:

- Learning happens through a mental map
- Learning happens through transfer of knowledge through working memory

To understand better, let's consider our brain as a sink and drain. As we learn our brain can take only certain amount of information and construct a mental map of it. This is the sink and the information will be stored in the working memory (which is considered a drain).

Also, the working memory retains information that is only relevant. Therefore, our brain is like a sink with slow drain. If you “pour” too much information or content at once, you would experience a cognitive overload or that feeling you get after listening to 30 minutes of boring lecture. Thus, only the first 10 minutes of the lecture will be stored in the working memory.

Microlearning focuses on these, as it limits cognitive overload. The instructional design for microlearning takes the responsibility of how the content is presented and facilitated.
Numbers Don’t Lie

As the modern learner has less and less time to dedicate to learning, our training must adapt to the needs of the learner and work well within the time that the learner has to learn these modules.

According to Bersin by Deloitte:
1% of a typical work week is all that employees have to focus on training and development. Which translates to 16 minutes a week that can be allocated for training in a normal 40-hour work week.

Also, as per the article written by Patty Shank: Microlearning improves transfer of learning by 20%.
Keeping the Learners Hooked: Case Studies

Using these guidelines and with a bit of creativity, we have delivered numerous microlearning courses to customers. Here are a few of them.

**Drug Discovery**

The process of drug discovery is complex. The customer wanted their employees to be sensitive and aware of the process at a macro level. In the course, after presenting how much time it takes to discover a drug, there was a decision-tree activity to ensure learners get the required perspective on the time taken to discover the drug.
Health and Nutrition

The customer wanted an exciting microlearning course that would act as a refresher on an existing course on Basics of Nutrition.

We developed the microlearning course that begins with a pop-quiz which allows learners to recollect the information. We also included a timed mini-game wherein for every right answer, the progress bar increased and for wrong answer decreased. A leaderboard was generated based on results.

The microlearning nugget was part of a series of such nuggets that helped the learners recall the concepts well.
Compliance

We developed a scenario based microlearning course on the subject of compliance.

Compliance course can be quite dry and boring for learners. As it is a mandatory course and of little interest for employees, they tend to focus on completing rather than learning. Thus, we recommended a microlearning course as it is short and engaging.

Industry: Insurance
Trained: 13,850 employees

Impact

100% Course completion rate
22% Improved retention
45 min Previous course duration

Improved retention

Course completion rate
Previous course duration

Compliance course was highly effective.

Trained: 13,850 employees

Case Study 4

Our Goal

Do you think you’re too preoccupied by knowing what to do, while you’re on the job? With this course, we’ll help you focus on your work.

Course name

Our Goal

Do you think you’re too preoccupied by knowing what to do, while you’re on the job? With this course, we’ll help you focus on your work.

Course name
Banking Products

The customer wanted to refresh the staff on the basic concepts of bank accounts that they have for their customers. We created the course with a variety of short interactive templates.

We used interactive sliders and flip-cards to explain the concepts. One of the match-the-following activity combines the timer along with the multiple-choice questions for which rewards are given. The content and activities are presented using unique design templates for smartphone delivery.
Final Thoughts

In summary, microlearning refers to learning experiences that happen in tiny bursts and short times. Microlearning may not be an optimal solution for complex tasks in workplace learning, but it is neither a one-size-fits-all approach. Microlearning can be considered as a good companion for training.

At Tesseract Learning, we have implemented microlearning courses using unique activities, interactions and games, which are device agnostic. Learners get the same experience, whether on a PC, a tablet, or a smartphone.

A well implemented Microlearning strategy will help you reap great rewards. Do contact us to know how we can implement microlearning solutions for your organization.
Tesseract Learning helps organizations implement world class learning products that empower their employees and foster their business.

Our offerings:

- Custom eLearning
- Mobile Learning
- Microlearning
- Gamification
- Adaptive Learning
- AR/VR

Contact one of our learning experts today to learn more:
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