THE ROLE OF MICROLEARNING IN CORPORATE TRAINING:
Effective Uses, Research, and Examples
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INTRODUCTION

As learning and development professionals, what we do is largely affected by the people we serve as well as industry trends and technology. This is evidenced by the shift we've been seeing lately toward a faster, more easily consumed learning content type: microlearning.

As today's workforce becomes more on-the-go and the days of taking days or weeks off from work to attend in-person training events becomes less feasible, we must- in essence- give the people what they want and need. Basically, we need to be able to continuously train our mobile workforce and give them the right training when they need it...and quickly.

Microlearning is the perfect solution to this new learning landscape. It can solve the problem of delivering short just-in-time training modules- more often than not in a mobile-ready environment- on a more continuous basis.

Microlearning is also easier for us learning and development professionals from a production standpoint. We can crate these shorter learning modules in a fraction of the time it used to take us to create longer, more formal training courses. However, just because we CAN create microlearning doesn't mean it's always the best fit.

In this guide, we'll go over the effective uses of microlearning, the research behind why this learning content type has taken off in recent years, and even some stellar examples of how it's being incorporated into current training programs and literal examples of microlearning courses from one of our partners.
THE ROLE OF MICROLEARNING

As we mentioned before, microlearning is one of the latest trends in elearning, and boasts a lot of benefits, including:

- Ideal for just-in-time learning
- Perfect for mobile, on-the-go learners
- Courses or modules than can be completed quickly
- Effective as a continuous learning format

It’s understandable why learning and development professionals and instructional designers would jump on this trend, but they need to be careful with how they use it. Since it’s such a relatively fresh style of learning, many are still figuring out the dos and don’ts of effective microlearning application.

Not every course suits a microlearning format, as it works best when applied to specific skills objectives, which need to be set at the beginning of the module. If you have a list of complex learning objectives, microlearning might work best as a supplement or in specific parts of the course only.

Here are situations where microlearning seems to be most effective:

JUST-IN-TIME LEARNING

Learning modules that cover one specific topic or skill and are either delivered or made available right when a learner needs them most are an ideal example of effective microlearning. These just-in-time micro-courses fall in line with how most people consume content nowadays via the Google machine. We type in a “how to...” query and are provided with articles or videos on how to do just that.

Trista Kimber, Director of Training and Design at Hooters Restaurants, made this connection and so Hooters filled their LMS with videos of everything from “How to Slice a Tomato” to “How to Clean a Grill” to take advantage of that human inclination to search the internet for answers. It’s become a popular resource for their locations and makes sure their employees have the right training at the moment they need it most.

MOBILE LEARNING

Picture this: you’re on the subway or eating lunch and are trying to multi-task because you know you have some required training that needs to be done and it’s actually due tomorrow. (We totally get the procrastination game, don’t worry!) You’re trying to complete the training on your phone but this 45-minute course just isn’t responding well to your tiny device.

This is where microlearning can make all the difference for the on-the-go workforce. When applicable and possible, it’s best to break up those long courses into quickly consumable mini courses so learners can navigate from module to module without having to worry about completing the whole course at one time.
There are more factors to consider here such as whether or not your courses are mobile-responsive, whether your LMS or training delivery system is mobile-ready, etc. But, if you have all the pieces and parts then creating mobile-ready microlearning courses may help increase completions and training adoption.

**NEED SOME PROOF?**

- Roughly 47% of organizations are now using mobile devices for their online training needs. ([Source](#))
- 70% of learners felt more motivated when training on a mobile device, as opposed to a computer. ([Source](#))
- Smartphone learners complete course material 45% faster than those using a computer. ([Source](#))
- Mobile eLearners typically study for 40 minutes longer than students using a desktop or tablet. ([Source](#))

Making required training available on a mobile device for employees will lead to a 40% increase in productivity. ([Source](#))

**WHENEVER-YOU-CAN LEARNING**

We keep reiterating this on-the-go learning environment because it really is becoming the norm. Though, even if learners aren’t necessarily on-the-go, we think it’s safe to say that many of them are at least if not also very busy.

According to Deloitte, on average, the modern learner can only devote 1% of their work week to professional development. When we break that down that equates to only 24 minutes a week or 4.8 minutes a day for someone who works a 40-hour work week. The key numbers to note are the 4.8 minutes a day and 24 minutes a week.

When faced with the minuscule training allotments microlearning starts to become more attractive not only from an organization standpoint (they’re easier to create and can be produced faster), but also from a learner standpoint because now they can actually fit some professional development into their week.

**CONTINUOUS LEARNING**

This is a nice segue into another area where microlearning is most effective: continuous learning. While the numbers vary based on who you ask, on average, people forget about 50-70% of what they’ve learned after the first 24 hours and continues until they’ve basically forgotten everything a week later. This is incredibly concerning for industries where safety and compliance play a large role and the consequences of failing to comply carry heavy fines.

Continuous learning (especially when combined with a microlearning format) helps battle the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve. This curve shows the brains inability and degree to which it fails to retain information over a short period of time.

However, if safety is of the utmost importance to an organization, then delivering a microlearning course every two weeks on a particular safety module could help learners keep safety best practices top of mind while also cutting down on the number of safety-related accidents.
HARD SKILLS VS. SOFT SKILLS

Because the very nature of microlearning is to take one small idea or topic and create a very specific course around that material, nuanced and complicated topics like soft skills may be too complex to try and tackle in this format. It's much more suited to hard skills where something like learning how to use Microsoft Excel can be broken down into modules that cover one feature or "how to" per micro course.

Comparatively, soft skills can be hard to teach within such a short period of time as it's not just a matter of saying “this is what you do when faced with a combative customer” but is a combination of situational analysis skills that will take time and multiple modules to cover effectively.

This is not an exhaustive list of the ways microlearning can be effective, nor does it encompass all the ways it's not a fit for particular topics or concepts. However, this should provide a better idea of when it might be most beneficial to present material in a microlearning format over a more standard-length course.

To help make things easier, here's a quick infographic of when microlearning does and doesn't make sense:

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Now, this doesn't mean microlearning is a fit for every hard skill, or every busy employee, or every mobile learner. These are just the situations when it's most beneficial to consider whether microlearning may be the best and most effective learning format for a particular idea, topic, objective, or skill. Sometimes the answer will be no.
THE RESEARCH

When faced with the modern training issues—time, attention, mobile learning preference—learning and development professionals are having a time of it staying on top of the learning game. How can we all stay up-to-date on the latest and greatest and who wants to volunteer to be the early adopter or guinea pig of the latest trends?

Luckily, there's been a lot of research lately in terms of microlearning and its benefits (as well as when it's best to NOT use microlearning). Here's some of the best information to know if you're considering moving toward creating more microlearning content.

MICROLEARNING INCREASES RETENTION

We've mentioned times when microlearning is a great fit and times when it's not, but when it's a great fit it can really help increase retention. In fact, researchers at Dresden University in Germany conducted a study to see just what kind of effect microlearning might have on a group of learners.

They took a 16-chapter online text and divvied it up in different ways between three groups. One group read it chapter by chapter and answered just a single question at the end of each. The second, read four chapters at a time and answered four questions after reading each section. The last read half the text and answered eight questions, and another eight after reading the last half of the text. Which group do you think performed best?

If you chose the first group then you chose right. But, are you really surprised? Probably not. It's important to know just how well the first group did when compared to the other two. In terms of speed the first group was able to answer questions 28% faster than the last group, and overall, performed 22% better across three different areas than the last group.

Out of one-hundred, 22- and 28-percent might not seem like much, but could you imagine over a quarter of your learners retaining the information you're putting in front of them? Can you start connecting how improved work performance could mean a bigger return on ROI?
IT FITS INTO OUR “TIME IS PRECIOUS” AND “DIVIDED ATTENTION” SOCIETY

Remember when we said that employees can only dedicate about 1% of their work day to training? That’s about 24 minutes a week or about 19 hours a year. Another source states that the average learning hours per year is somewhere around 31. That’s not a lot of time to train, especially when you consider that unless something has compelling content, we’re not likely to remain engaged.

What’s the ideal microlearning course length? The Association for Talent and Development (ATD) surveyed 144 talent development professionals who said the average length of microlearning courses should ideally be 10 minutes with a maximum of 13 minutes total. Based on the 24-38 minutes workers have available each week for training, that’s a solid two for four microlearning courses!

IT’S PREFERRED BY THE MILLENNIAL WORKFORCE

Did you know that more than one-in-three American labor force workers is a Millennial? Depending on your industry and company that number could easily be 50% or more.

Did you also know that Millennials learn very differently than past generations?

They’re:

- Less fixed, more mobile
- Less hierarchical, more open
- Less fragmented, more connected

They also approach learning with a different mindset than past generations. This article sums it up pretty well: “[Millenials] are masters of multi-tasking, and in order to reduce the “noise” of all the demands on their time, they tend to prioritize their tasks by asking “What’s in It for Me?” (WIIFM).” They’re able to weed out superfluous information, which makes them a generation of effective learners. It’s why microlearning- which gets to the heart and meat of a single idea- is so appealing to them. It allows them to quickly learn something new without having to weed out all of the fluff.

So, when you begin strategizing about your next elearning course, make sure you’re not leaving out a third or more of your workforce’s preferred learning methodology.

The research around microlearning has definitely become more readily available, but like any new(ish) trend, it’s also quite varied. At the end of the day, we always recommend you test, test, and test some more. Just because something worked for one company doesn’t mean it’s going to work or be the most effective way to train at your company. Though, this research should at least help you cut down on the time it will take to find that best fit for your organization.
MICROLEARNING EXAMPLES

At eLogic Learning, we have many clients who have embraced the microlearning format. We also work with great partners like The dominKnow Platform that make creating microlearning content easy. It's always helpful to see what others are doing in terms of trendy elearning formats, so we've included some use case and interactive microlearning examples below!

MICROLEARNING USE CASE EXAMPLE

A great client microlearning use case example comes from our client, Hooters. They used to do their recurrent training via paper-based training manuals that had to be printed and delivered to each of their locations. Updating the training manuals was expensive and time consuming.

Now, Hooters has replaced its quarterly training packet with monthly online safety modules and responsible alcohol safety tips. These safety modules and tips are short microlearning courses that have been readily adopted by Hooters franchisees and their employees. It has also led to a $500,000 insurance break for Hooters. Score!

Additionally, Hooters also saw the need for and benefit of creating microlearning courses to satisfy their employees' desire to be shown a very particular skill whenever they need a refresher. For example, a new line cook might log into the LMS at the beginning of a shift and watch Hooters' video on how to slice a tomato. The line cook might also login to see recall how the grill needs to be cleaned at the end of the day.

All of these videos are short, to the point, and available whenever the employees need a quick refresher.

INTERACTIVE MICROLEARNING EXAMPLES

If you’re on-board with microlearning then you should also know that just making short courses probably won't be enough; there also needs to be a learning strategy behind each. You’re more likely to keep your users engaged when there’s a goal to each microlearning piece and some thought put into the end goal of each course.

This is where interactivity comes in: interactivity is a great way to include substance, knowledge checks, and memorable practice to help learners absorb and retain the information.

On the following pages are some innovative microlearning examples where instructional designers have used interactivity (made possible by The dominKnow Platform suite of authoring tools to take their microlearning to the next level.
MICROLEARNING EXAMPLES #1: THE NEED FOR SPEED

“The Need for Speed” is a course created by dominKnow to discuss the effects of image optimization on speed of a web page in an elearning course. The first of our microlearning examples is a meta module including several interactive elements.

First, they included an embedded video. This video is special for a number of reasons:

- **It’s short:** it’s only two minutes long. It’s very easily consumable in a short amount of time.

- **There are captions:** Ever notice how on social media these days all videos have captions? That’s because it makes users more likely to watch them. They can get the gist of the video without having to deal with annoying audio in situations where it would be difficult to deal with; like in public, on their phone, or in the office. The captions make it easier to consume this microlearning anywhere, anytime. The captions have a secondary benefit: reading along gives the user another way to absorb the information, and forces the user to engage with the video as opposed to passively allowing the seconds to slide on by.

- **There are no talking heads:** We love that this video isn’t just some person chatting. They used the video only when they needed to really show how something worked on a desktop. It makes the video very targeted and applicable to the given tasks. Best of all, the user can follow along on their own computer if they so choose.
Another great interactive feature in the course are these flippable flash cards. They have images on one side and explanatory text on the other, which is revealed when selected.

- They require the user to interact, not just passively consume the course.
- They have a fun animation when flipped, again, keeping the user engaged.
- The image is a great way for the user to make visual associations with the facts, making them easier to remember.
- They reinforce the reasons why this skill/activity is important to the learner (what’s in it for me).
- These flash cards have so many uses – think learning vocab, the steps of a process, or any other set of items that the learner needs to remember. The student can even informally test themselves if they so choose.

This very wonderful conclusion to the course features tiny videos on the different common tools the learner can use to complete the task of optimizing images. These videos are amazing and easy for the user to follow along on their own computer.
Once the videos open up, they feature some extra interactivity features.

- Specific steps are listed on the side of the video, and the user can click to skip to that part of the video. This is great as it meets the needs of multiple learning styles in one piece.
- The user can also enter a full screen mode if they prefer to watch the video without the steps.
- They aren't actually videos, but interactive HTML so it plays better on mobile devices and is responsive.

What an ideal little show me exercise for microlearning! Like the other microlearning examples in this article, it uses the features available in dominKnow authoring tools super creatively.

**Overall, this module features everything a learner could ask for:**

- A clear learning outcome set at the beginning of the course.
- Simple, with very little text or unnecessary videos.
- Interactivity to keep the learner engaged and make it more likely to remember the information.
- Multiple examples with various ways to absorb the information for different learning styles.
- Consideration of mobile or the other ways users will realistically use the module.
- Ability for the learner to choose more specific topics that apply to them and skip others.
- An opportunity for the user to try the new skill out on their own.
MICROLEARNING EXAMPLES #2: WHY YOU NEED RESPONSIVE ELEARNING

“Why You Need Responsive Elearning” is a course created by dominKnow using their authoring tools. This course is great because it contains a lot of interactive graphics that illustrate this topic really well.

Of all the microlearning examples, this one might be the most visual. The course is filled with animated infographics that move when the user scrolls down the page. This keeps all these facts simple to absorb, understand, and engage with. Animated graphics appear throughout the course.

Some of the graphics are more interactive; this section asks the learner to play with the sliders in order to visualize responsive screens. This brings a nice boost to memory and understanding for some more difficult concepts, while keeping the learner engaged with a little fun.

This portion of the course shows the learner how to see the main goal of the course- understating responsive design- in action.
Overall, this course is a great example of microlearning because:

- It sets out to teach a simple lesson, clearly laid out at the beginning of the course.
- It's responsive, and therefore compatible with mobile learning.
- Uses of awesome, easy-to-remember visuals.
- It uses a single page design so learners can easily scroll up and down referring to previous concepts without needing to load and unload multiple pages.
- Makes the visuals interactive to increase engagement.
- Simple, minimal use of text.

**VIEW FULL COURSE**

**MICROLEARNING EXAMPLES #3: PENS CONFIGURATION: ELOGIC**

This course, “PENS Configuration: eLogic” was created using The dominKnow Platform's suite of authoring tools to teach configuration of PENS with eLogic's eSSential LMS. It's a little different from the examples we just looked at. Instead of the course taking the form of a mini-site, it’s an embedded module on a webpage with a variety of features to appeal to different learning styles.

The first part of the course is a short video. Like previous videos we've looked at, it's brief and only used when necessary to show where things are in an application. The steps of the configuration are on the right and are clickable so the user can jump to that section of the course.

Then the user can check out the other tabs:

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<th>Show me</th>
<th>Try Me</th>
<th>Guide</th>
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The video defaults to the “Show Me” tab, but the user can follow up with the “Try Me” tab to put what they just learned into action.

The “Try Me” tab is an awesome step-by-step simulation that requires the user to click on the screen, learning how to do it as if they are in the actual application.

The “Guide” tab has the same information, but in step-by-step screenshots for the learner to read, scan, or even print out. This is awesome for users who learn better in different ways, and also as a reference to have by your side as you complete the steps in the application.

Let's go over what makes this microlearning example so great:

- Offers an interactive simulation for users to learn the skill.
- Clear learning outcome set at the beginning of the course.
- Multiple options for learning.
- A golden example of how microlearning can fulfill just-in-time learning needs.
LESSONS LEARNED FROM THESE INTERACTIVE MICROLEARNING EXAMPLES

There are a few elements that were consistent throughout these microlearning examples – and that should be consistent throughout most microlearning courses.

Keep it simple: Use simplicity in the text and layout of the course. Use only what's necessary and consider why you need it before you use videos and other elements. Keeping the course short is also key; therefore any video elements must be kept short.

Use interactivity for engagement and memory: Interactivity can be a valuable tool in keeping users engaged and playing games to increase memory recall – and even as a knowledge check. Don't be afraid to get creative with it.

Include multiple learning types: Include elements that appeal to different types of learning. This will both make sure all your learners are covered, and learning something in multiple ways will help with memory.

Set a clear learning outcome at the beginning of the course: And with microlearning, make sure it’s not too complicated.

Use visuals more than anything else: They’re easy to absorb, even on mobile.

Microlearning can be such a great option for flexible, easy-to-digest learning. It’s easy on the instructional designer too – it can take less time to develop, and be easier to update. You just have to be sure that you’re using microlearning the way it’s meant to be used. Microlearning still needs substance to be effective, and visuals, interactivity, and simplicity can all provide that substance. I hope these microlearning examples give you an idea of how to create effective modules.
Each advancement we make to the eSSential LMS is to ensure our client-partners can achieve their training and development objectives now and in the future. The eSSential LMS is recognized as a top learning management system year after year because of our commitment to continuous improvement and customer support.

We’re honored to be recognized by some of the most renowned analysts and organizations in the eLearning industry, but we’re most proud of the recognition we receive from our client-partners!

**Brandon Hall** – Silver Award Best Advance in Learning Management Technology for Compliance Training (2017)

**Talented Learning** – Best All-Purpose Extended Enterprise LMS, Top 3 Continuing Ed LMS, Top 3 Compliance LMS (2017); Best All-Purpose Extended Enterprise LMS, Top 2 Continuing Ed LMS, Top 3 Compliance LMS (2016); Top 3 Continuing Ed LMS, Top 10 Channel LMS, Top 10 Customer LMS, Top 10 Compliance LMS (2015)

**The Craig Weiss Group** (formerly Elearning 24/7) – #1 LMS (2018 & 2017); Top 3 LMS (2016); Top 3 LMS, Top 2 Extended Enterprise LMS, & Top 5 NextGen LMS (2015); Top 5 LMS (2014)

**CODiE** – Best Corporate / Enterprise Learning Solution Finalist (2017)


**Capterra** – Top 20 LMS Software (2014 & 2015)

**Bloomin’ Brands** – Purveyor of the Year (2009 & 2010)

AND MANY MORE!
ABOUT ELOGIC LEARNING

eLogic Learning is an award-winning industry leader in learning management systems, custom course content and learning strategy development. Founded in 2001, eLogic provides personalized solutions to each of its client partners to help their learning and development efforts succeed.

WHY WE’RE DIFFERENT

eLogic also puts a strong emphasis on its partnership approach. We believe clients shouldn’t be treated as just an income source or numbers on a spreadsheet but as partners who can trust us to keep their best interests in mind and help them succeed.

Now, we’ve noticed a lot of other vendors throwing around the words “partner” and “partnership” lately too, but that really isn’t enough, is it? For us, it goes beyond just words. We’re here to make sure we deliver on our promise to help our client-partners increase productivity, mitigate risk and generate revenue and/or see a return on their investment.

WE GIVE BACK

We are committed to devoting our time, resources and efforts to benefit the world around us. That’s why with each new client or sale, we celebrate our success by having our employees select a charity where we donate a portion of the proceeds. It’s our way of saying thanks and giving back.

LEARN MORE

You can learn more about eLogic Learning, eSSential LMS, or even schedule a free live demo by clicking the buttons below:

REQUEST A DEMO  CONTACT US  VISIT OUR WEBSITE