



# When Less is More

A Bite-Size Guide to Micro-Learning



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# Engaging Today's Workforce

We are living in a world of lowering attention spans.

*Want to purchase an item? Buy it with one click on Amazon. Need to go somewhere? Call an Uber. Need a boost? Stream music on Spotify.*

Technology has made the availability of information widespread, quick and easy to access, and simple to process. We have to remember less long-term and be fast in understanding new ideas. Consequently, training needs to keep up with the digital trends that characterise people's social and domestic habits. Learners want instant access to materials and decent bandwidth, with the ability to move from impulse to fulfilment in minutes.



Micro-learning serves this population by 'slicing and dicing' content, shortening the duration and accounting for the 'trigger user' (those who react to moods, impulses and events). By dissecting big topics into relevant content that is 2-3 minutes in length, micro-learning is a flexible solution that is in tune with how the brain works.

**A single internet (YouTube) video is only watched for the average length of 2.7 minutes**

*National Centre for  
Biotechnology Information*

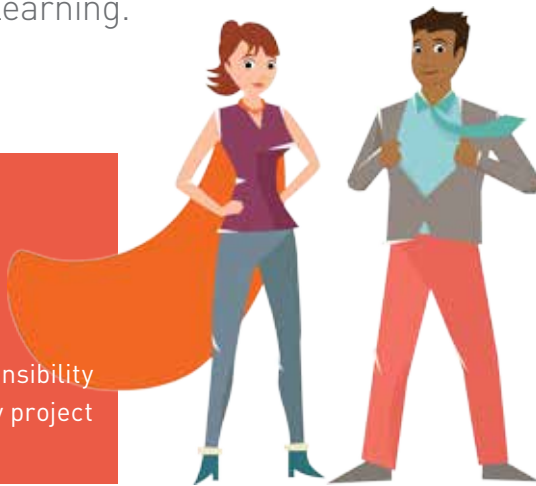
# The Digital Age

And who's leading this digital revolution? Millennials, of course!

Millennials, or Generation Y, (those born after 1980) are now assuming management and leadership responsibilities. They have unrivalled technological competency, the result of growing up with personal computers and the Internet. This generation is coming at just the right time to fill a spiralling demand for knowledge workers. Their innately collaborative approach to learning is changing the structure of how employees engage with and receive digital learning.

Generation Y relish:

- Learning opportunities
- Fewer meetings
- A culture emphasising creativity, collaboration and special amenities
- Leading edge technology
- Reputation for ethics and social responsibility
- Work structures set up to enable easy project collaboration



Managers from the top down are expected to provide:

- Communication, information sharing and transparency
- Feedback and support
- Recognition of talent and contribution
- A work/life balance
- Values-based leadership



## Where are we going?

The "next generation enterprise" will look like this:

- Connected communities with partners and contractor relationships
- Collaborative
- Continually informed
- Technologically adept
- Skilled at experimentation



# Putting the Learner First



## Flexible

Micro-learning should be about flexible learning content, available to the learner at a location and at a time of their choice. The access to this content should be determined by the user.



## Moment of Need

The need for this content – i.e. the challenge or task ahead - should be the trigger point. The content is then 'called down' to help deal with this challenge.



## Learner-Centric

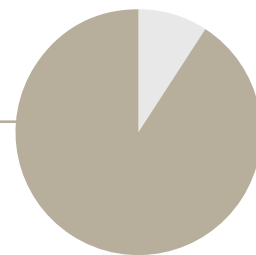
This places the user at the center of the learning proposition; they are responsible for diagnosing the skill gap and then accessing the content to help manage the upcoming challenge.

The micro-learning model is similar to the cloud computing model: the ability for the subject to access training on-the-go is no different from the rapid way organisations have shifted from hard-drive to cloud computing. There is no longer a need for all the applications to be loaded onto a hard drive (the brain!).

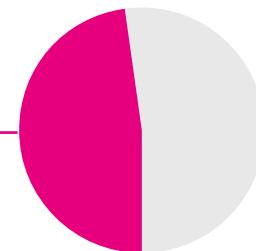
Instead, a mobile device or tablet can be used to retrieve the content as and when it is needed. This is not just an evolution; it is a revolution in the style and system of learning that was designed and developed for programs in the past. This revolution adapts content to better suit the learner of today, providing a more satisfying and ultimately more useful way of applying learning materials.

# Putting the Learner First

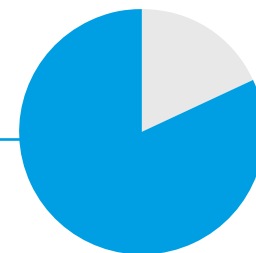
**91%** of staff want to be able to learn at their own pace\*



**48%** use their personal mobile to access work-related apps



**82%** know what learning they need



## Dealing with overload and congestion

Learners are overloaded with information, meaning they are often unable to give up the large blocks of their time required to undertake traditional training. As a result, the responsibility for deciding the way someone approaches their learning is shifting from the employers to the employees themselves. Employees want their training to be on-demand and easily integrated into their daily lives.

There is a need to replace the learning approach that very often involves months of pre-planning and organisation before delivery, to an immediate, 'on demand' model.

But, how would this look in practice?

# Micro-Learning in Practice



*I, the learner, determine when and where I want to receive the learning and it has to be short in length and organised in a style that appeals to me so I can:*

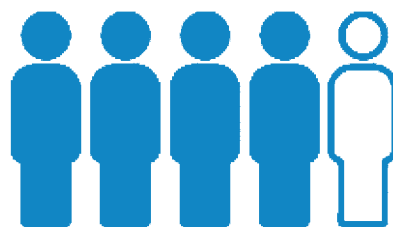
*A: Complete the learning right before I need it (the event);*

*B: Retain the main points so I can use the learning successfully.*

## From the classroom to the streets

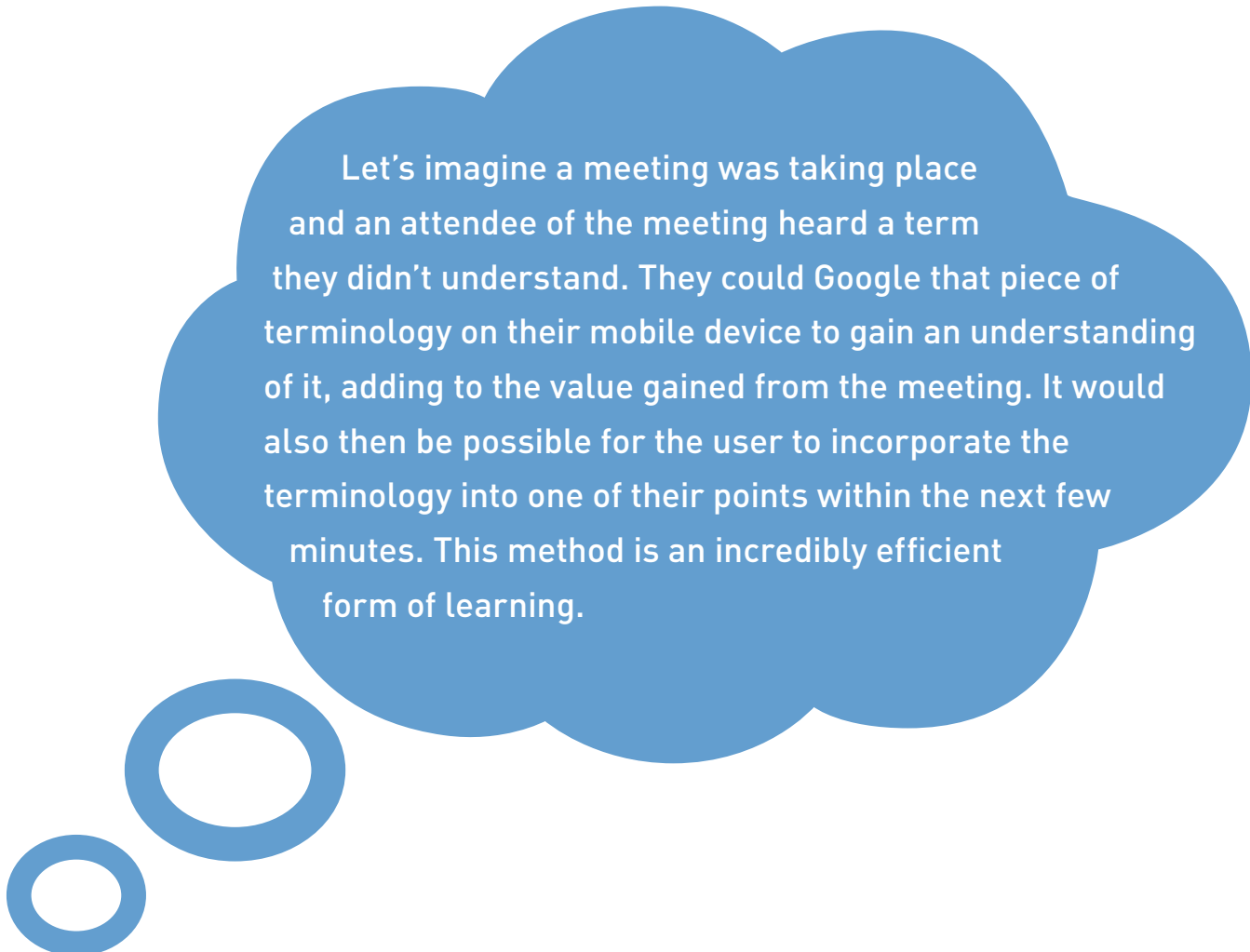
Making learning more integrated means moving it out from the confined and theoretical approach of the classroom, by making sure it is available to learners through their smartphones, tablets and laptops. It is this move to the twenty-four hour availability of information that is crucial for empowering and motivating users as to when, where and how they consume their learning.

By providing them with the tools to reach their own learning goals, learners can adjust the volume of information they wish to receive at any one time. The majority of people do not want to receive large chunks of information weeks or even months before they are able to apply the information in a practical situation.



4 out of 5 learning professionals say micro-learning is changing the knowledge acquisition process by effectively delivering it inside the workforce\*

# Micro-Learning in Practice



Let's imagine a meeting was taking place and an attendee of the meeting heard a term they didn't understand. They could Google that piece of terminology on their mobile device to gain an understanding of it, adding to the value gained from the meeting. It would also then be possible for the user to incorporate the terminology into one of their points within the next few minutes. This method is an incredibly efficient form of learning.

## Not so scary after all

So while micro-learning may seem 'radical' to some, in reality it would simply be putting into practice a method of learning that the majority of learners themselves are already using or readily asking for. In practice, it would suit their work lives far more than the current approaches to training.

When looked at objectively, all the information being conveyed through rigorous training programs and seminars is just smaller pieces of information layered on top of each other, or simple ideas being expanded upon. So, it's logical that "on-demand" information would prove more effective, both as a learning technique, a refresher of past training and a more productive use of work hours.



# Small Things Can Make a Big Difference

So, how is micro-learning different from long-form training models?

**1 It differs in length.** Micro-learning is centred around short, sharp learning objectives structured as “Nano” or “Flash Learning” – meaning no longer than 3 minutes in length.

**2 It differs in when and how it is used.** Micro-learning creates flexible learning content that is “on-demand”. By carrying out vital learning immediately before “The Event” - from running a staff meeting, engaging in a difficult conversation to remembering the four key safety steps - users can effectively integrate the learning content within their work. Learners cannot use 30-minute training videos in the same way.

**3 Micro-learning differs in its character.** Learning content needs to be compact and concise to ensure it can be used immediately before it is needed. The content should not be characterised by the subject (e.g. leadership and change), but by the challenge, such as merging conflicting teams. This drives up the utility of the content and the productivity of the learner.

**4 Micro-learning is optimised for on-the-go learning.** The iPhone/iPad/Android and most other smart devices can facilitate micro-learning, as well as PCs and laptops. Comparatively, most e-learning materials do not work well with mobile devices; it is simply too difficult to watch 30 minutes of video learning content on a mobile phone.

Micro-learning can be used to complement other forms of learning! Even if only 10% of training shifted to a micro-learning structure, the impact on the design and development of courseware would be tremendously valuable in ensuring content was more integrated and available.

# Overcoming Barriers

Clearly, micro-learning needs to differentiate itself from long-form learning, but there are a lot of side battles that also need to be won. Implementing a micro-learning strategy involves many departments (and potential blockers). Each of these blockers can be addressed directly or indirectly if you can secure the right kind of buy-in from an organisation. To do so, you need to focus on some key areas:

**1 Choose your points of contact within the organisation carefully.** Focus the introduction of micro-learning on functions with high impact on the business-critical needs in terms of real time communication. Identify people comfortable with new technology to be potential champions.

**2 Plan the timing of the pilot and rollout carefully.** Involve all departments affected in the planning to ensure there is committed capacity to support the rollout and avoid clashes with major change, sales and marketing programs.

Remember IT can still make or break your project. They can be your best friend or worst enemy. Involve them as early as possible, and go as senior as possible.

**3 Secure senior management support.** A sound business case that identifies the best opportunities for micro-learning will convince senior decision-makers and will certainly be improved by their endorsement.

**4 Manage the gossip.** Micro-learning is heavily associated with technology and the latest gadgets; and technology is often associated with overpromising and letting people down. Insist on a pilot project so you can test the content and delivery systems. Once a pilot and rollout are in progress, support them with clear, consistent, and proactive communication.

# 10 Key Design Tips

To get the most out of micro-learning it is important to work to the strengths of the medium. Applying the content in the most effective way is essential if the micro-learning method is going to really take hold.

## 1 Two to three minutes of content

People watch 30-minute TV episodes on their mobiles, but this is a 'lying back' style of entertainment. Micro-learning requires a more interactive engagement where the user works alongside the content. In our experience at Skill Pill, 2-3 minutes is the optimal time to get content across by deconstructing topics into subcategories.

## 2 Animation works

Previous experience has shown that mobile content works best in the animated format. Animation brings a more playful, relaxed style rather than the formal 'presentational' or 'broadcast' mode that often accompanies traditional video. It is not a coincidence that most aircraft in-flight safety videos are animated today!

## 3 Conversational style

It may seem common sense, but so often it is not common practice. To many people, their phone is as important as their wallet, purse or car keys; so if the mobile is 'personal space', it needs to be treated as such. We believe users want personalised content; this may come from branding, putting a local accent on off-the-shelf content, or from customised content.

## **4** Deliver some 'smarts'

Content needs to encourage a number of 'do different's' (i.e. what a learner should take on board).

## **5** Target the 5% remedial or retrenched behaviours

By identifying the subject areas that are either not done right or lack compliance (i.e. people know what to do, they just don't do it) you can achieve early productivity benefits and cost efficiencies for an organisation.

## **6** Participate: get users to design content

Getting users to generate ideas leads to a more open and collaborative style of learning that organisations are looking for.

## **7** Characterise content by upcoming events

Events or immediate challenges change the value of micro-learning content more than anything else. The need to acquire essential knowledge and 'tune up' previously acquired skills is the driver of micro-learning and can ensure it returns on its investment.

## **8** Resist the temptation to put it all into push-mode

Micro-learning improves a person's productivity because it gets into their personal space. Thanks to smart devices, it is with them all the time and provides the learner with the ability to self-diagnose their own challenges in the context of their daily needs. If a learner feels ownership over the content, then they are more likely to be engaged as a result. Encourage users to 'pull' learning content where possible.

## **9** Encourage users to self-diagnose

Encouraging people to take responsibility for their knowledge gaps and to assess how efficient they are at delivering against certain tasks is part of a productive learning pathway. Users need to be encouraged to define where they need help and given the ability to access useful content as they begin to deliver against the upcoming task.

## **10** Make the experience elegant and emotional

This is what makes micro-learning such a unique and exciting way to deliver training and learning. Animation can be more engaging than traditional forms of learning, increasing learner engagement and retention rates.

# In Summary

Micro-learning is more than just another learning fad; it is a step change in the way people learn. It assumes that an organisation trusts their employees to self-diagnose their learning needs. As a result, micro-learning places the user at the center of the learning proposition, providing them with the tools to access content on-demand, at the moment of need and via any device.

To find out how Skill Pill can make micro-learning work for your organisation, email: [info@skillpill.com](mailto:info@skillpill.com)



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