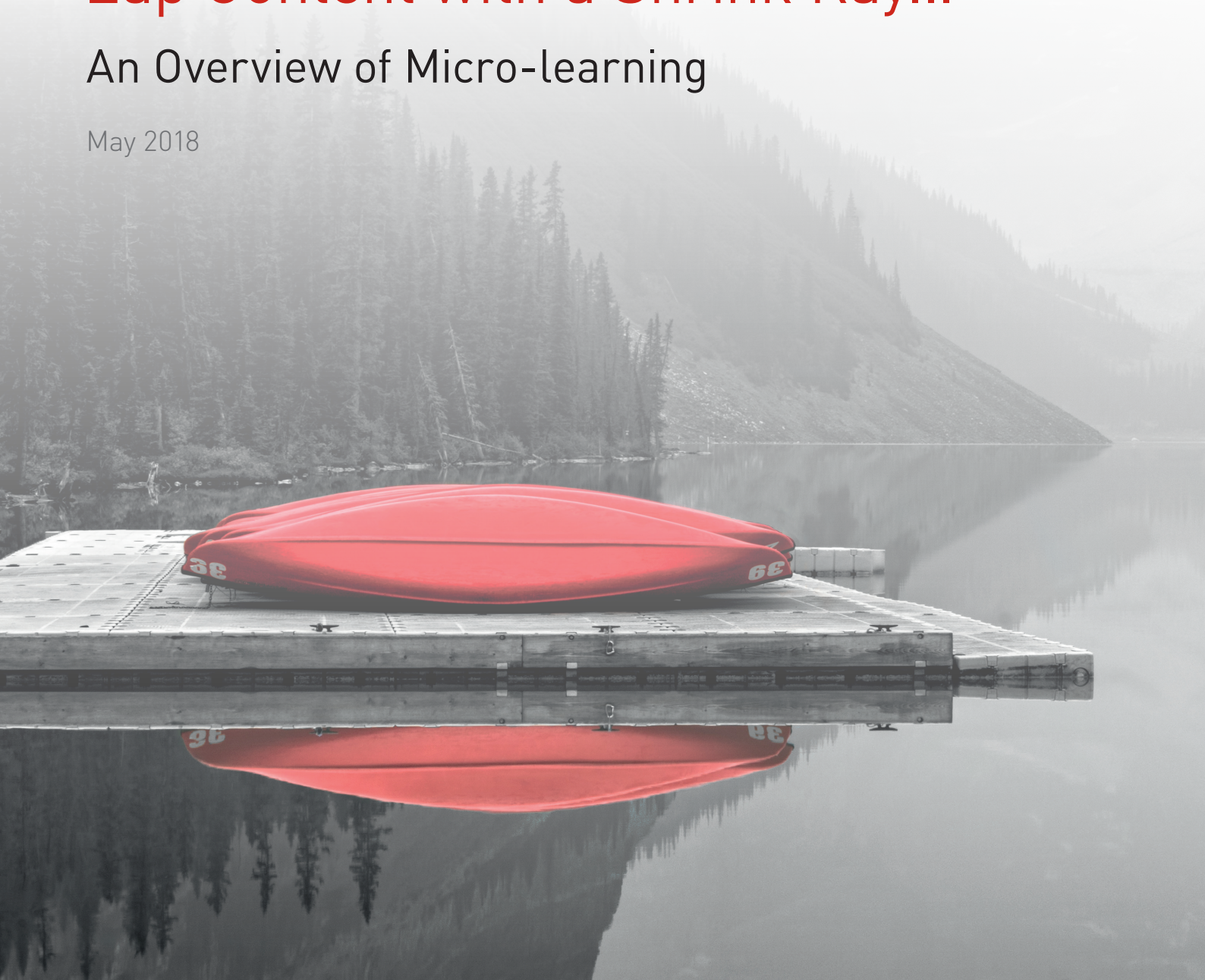




Zap Content with a Shrink Ray...

An Overview of Micro-learning

May 2018



Everyone's talking about micro-learning. All kinds of organisations are adopting it and extolling the benefits:

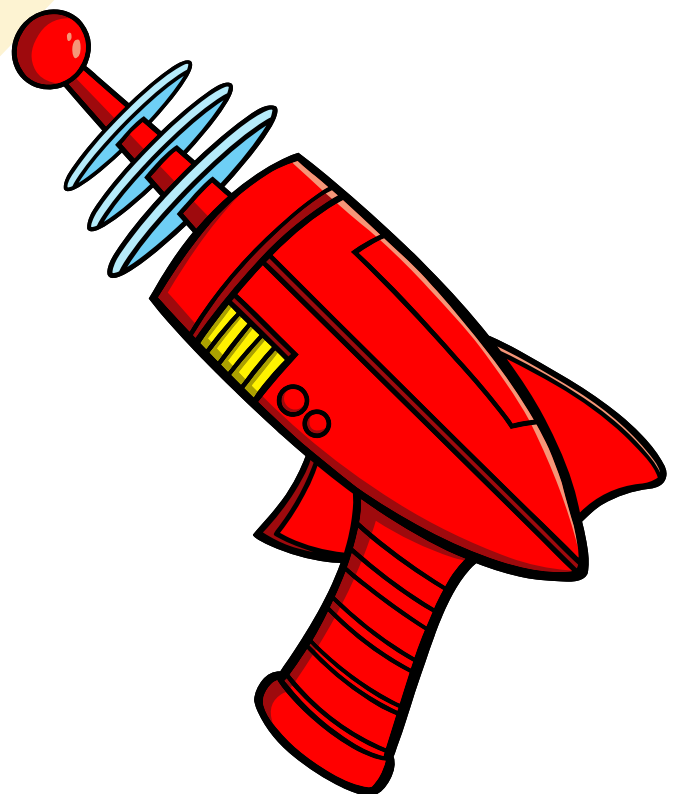
Less time spent in the classroom, improved knowledge retention, better engagement with millennials.

It's hard to ignore the hype. But, on the flip side, we've heard all this before. Only to wind up disappointed...

So, what's the real story?

Is micro-learning really a step change in the way we learn or just another learning fad?

Here's a quick 5-minute guide to get you started.



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Engaging Today's Workforce

Attention spans are getting shorter. Want to buy something? One click on Amazon. Need a ride? Request an Uber. A boost at the gym? Spotify's got you covered.

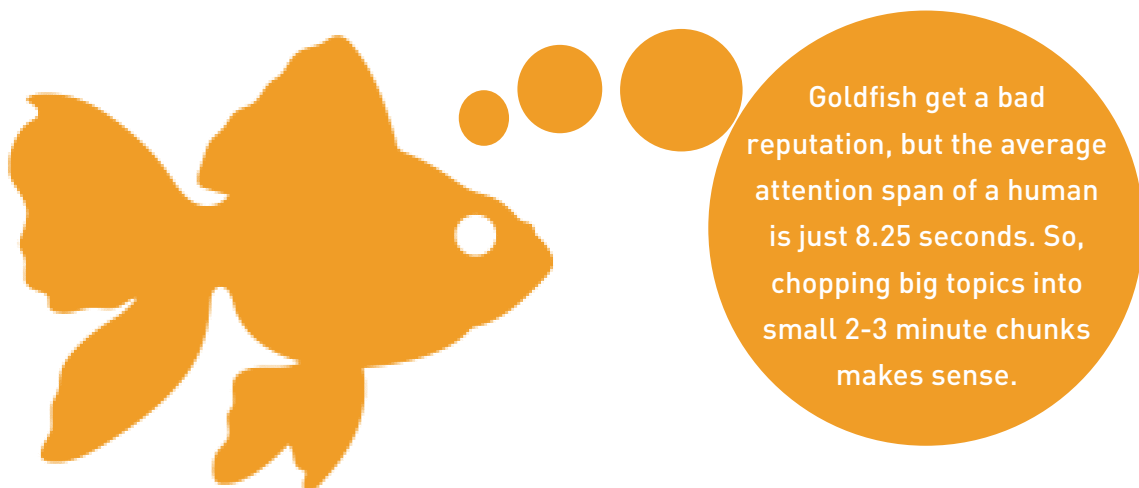
Technology means information is all around us. It's quick and easy to access, and extremely simple to process. So, we don't need to remember as much long-term and can grasp new ideas faster.

And training needs to keep up!

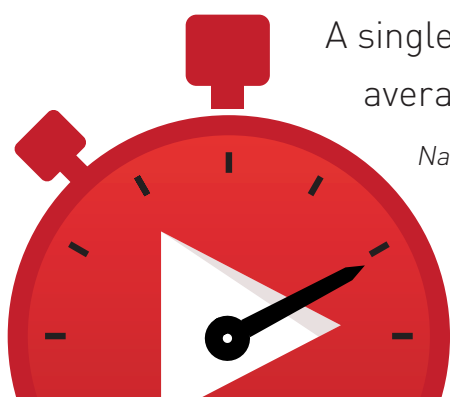
Think about the digital trends that characterise our social and shopping habits. Learners aren't any different. They want exactly the same things: instant access, decent bandwidth, and to move from impulse to fulfilment in minutes.

Step forward micro-learning.

By slicing and dicing content we're better placed to serve this population - trigger users who react to moods, impulses and events.



Short-form digital content works with the brain, not against it.



A single internet (YouTube) video is only watched for the average length of 2 minutes 40 seconds

National Centre for Biotechnology Information

The Digital Age

Everything's changing fast, but who's leading this digital revolution? Clue - avocado toast.

Millennials, or Gen Y, (born after 1980) have now taken on management and leadership responsibilities. Internet babies, they grew up with digital devices, and now they possess unrivalled technological skills.

Plus, they're hitting their straps at just the right time - filling a spiralling demand for knowledgeable workers in almost any industry you can think of.

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 needs to be flexible, available to the learner when and where they choose, on their terms.



Moment of Need

The challenge should be the trigger. Content is 'called down' to work around any roadblock that stands in the way.



Learner-Centric

The user is central to the learning proposition; responsible for diagnosing the skill gap and sourcing content to deal with the problem they're facing.

Remember when all your important files were saved on your hard drive, chaining you to the desk?

Well, now they're up in the cloud.

Office, train, coffee shop - no matter where you are or what you're doing, thanks to your phone, tablet, or laptop, you can pull down the info you need.

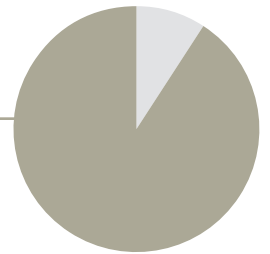
And the same thing is happening to learning.

You once stored knowledge in your own personal hard drive, the brain, in case you needed to use it. And it wasn't immune to the occasional glitch.

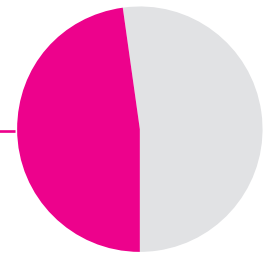
But, there's been a paradigm shift - no need to panic when your mind goes blank. You just call up a shot of learning via that device in your hand. It's much more efficient than trying to remember.

To quote Josh Bersin, micro-learning 'is not just a form, it is a way of learning'¹. Micro-learning isn't an evolution, it's a revolution - better suited to the learner of today. A way to apply learning materials that's infinitely more useful and satisfying.

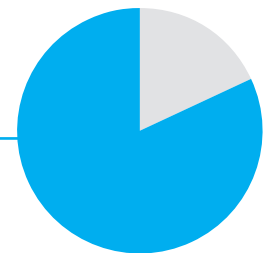
91% of staff want to be able to learn at their own pace²



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



82% know what learning they need



¹Josh Bersin, *HR Technology in 2018: Ten Disruptions Ahead*, November 2017

²Towards Maturity, *The Learner Voice: Part 3*, November 2016

Information Overload

Learners simply don't have time for traditional training anymore. Blame information overload; a tidal wave that starts with your inbox, impacting on the way that we learn.

Responsibility for deciding how to approach learning has shifted - from management to the shop floor - where people are clamouring for on-demand training that fits with their working day.

Not the other way around.

People can't always wait for a course. They need a fix in the here and now. The old way of doing things - months of planning prior to delivery, is giving way to this immediate model of training.

But, how would this look in practice?

Explosive Growth in Micro-Learning	
Micro-Learning	Macro-Learning
<i>I need help now.</i>	<i>I want to learn something new.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 minutes or less• Topic or problem based• Search by asking a question• Video or text• Indexed and searchable• Content rated for quality and utility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Several hours or days• Definitions, concepts, principles and practice• Exercises graded by others• People to talk with, learn from• Coaching and support needed
<i>Is the content useful and accurate?</i>	<i>Is the author authoritative and educational?</i>
<i>Videos, articles, code samples, tools</i>	<i>Courses, classes, MOOCs, programs</i>

Josh Bersin, *The Disruption of Digital Learning*, March 2017

Short-Form Learning in Practise



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);

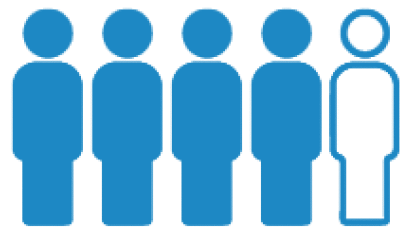
B: Retain the main points so I can use the learning successfully.

Breaking Out of the Classroom

Making learning more integrated means breaking out of the classroom - ensuring people can learn with smartphones, tablets and laptops. 24/7 availability of information is crucial for empowering and motivating users as to when, where and how they consume learning.

Imagine they have a dial.

By giving them the tools to reach their own learning goals, learners can adjust the volume of material they want to receive. Our brains are like sieves - most people don't want large chunks of information ahead of its application - they'll only forget it.



4 out of 5 learning professionals say micro-learning is changing the knowledge acquisition process by effectively delivering it inside the workforce³

³Dr. Minimol Anil Job, Dr. Habil Slade Ogalo, "Micro Learning As Innovative Process of Knowledge Strategy", December 2012

So, you're in a meeting and someone uses a fancy business term you don't understand.

No problem, Google it.

You might even use said term when you're trying to get a point across later in the discussion. Not only is it an incredibly efficient way to learn, it really isn't scary or radical.

Not ready for micro-learning? Actually, you've pretty much got the hang of it. You just haven't realised yet...

Mention anything to do with micro-learning, the instinctive response is barriers: apps, platforms, devices, LMS integration, all the usual hang ups.

But actually, all short-form digital learning boils down to is this - recognising a problem and sourcing some content that helps - which is pretty much what people are doing informally anyway. Resulting in a much better fit with their schedules.

Let go of the comfort blanket for a moment and think objectively...

All the knowledge conveyed through off-site training programmes and seminars is just smaller pieces of information layered on top of each other, or simple ideas expanded.

Ergo "on-demand" information would prove more effective: as a learning technique, a refresher of previous training and a more productive use of time at your desk.



Small Things, Big Difference

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

Well, it's shorter. Obviously!

Micro-learning is centred around short, sharp learning objectives structured as "Nano" or "Flash Learning" - think 3 minutes max.

OK, what else?

It differs in when AND how it's used.

Short-form learning is transactional.

By carrying out vital learning immediately before 'The Event' - running a meeting, having a difficult conversation, remembering key safety steps etc. - users can effectively integrate the learning content within their work.

Try doing that with a 30-minute training video.

Micro-learning differs in character.

Learning content must be concise to ensure it can be used RIGHT before it's needed. And content shouldn't be characterised by subject. But by the challenge.

So, terms like sales and leadership don't work here. Something like 'merging conflicting teams' works better instead. By associating the content with a diary entry, you can drive up the utility of the content AND the productivity of the learner.

Micro-learning is optimised for on-the-go.

Smart devices can facilitate micro-learning, as well as PCs and laptops. E-learning materials? Not so much. Try watching 30 minutes of video learning content on a mobile phone and you'll quickly give up.

Micro-learning can be used to complement other forms of learning!

Even if only 10% of training shifted to this format, the impact on courseware design would be priceless - ensuring content was more integrated and available.



Overcoming Barriers

Micro-learning needs to differentiate itself from long-form learning. That's a given. But you're going to have to fight your fair share of side battles too.

Getting started with short-form digital learning means dealing with different departments. Be prepared - plenty of potential blockers stand in your way - nothing you can't handle though.

To secure the right kind of buy-in and tiptoe safely through the minefield, zero in on these key areas:

Choose your points of contact 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 champion your cause.

Give plenty of thought to the timing of the pilot and rollout. Involve all affected departments to ensure there's capacity to support you. And avoid clashes with major change, sales and marketing programmes.

Secure senior management support.

A solid business case identifying the best opportunities for micro-learning will convince senior decision makers and will certainly be improved by their endorsement.

Manage the gossip.

So much as whisper the phrase micro-learning and people immediately think of technology; a byword for overpromising and under delivering.


Insist on a pilot to test content and delivery systems. Once you've got the green light, support your pilot and rollout with clear, consistent, and proactive communication.

Remember, the IT department 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 far up the food chain as possible.


Mixing the Secret Sauce - 10 Key Design Tips


Want to get the most out of short-form learning? Work to the strengths of the medium.


Applying the content in the most effective way is essential if micro-learning is going to really take off.


 **Two to three minutes of content** Yes, people watch 30-minute TV episodes on their mobiles, but 'lying back' isn't the same thing as learning. Micro-learning needs a more interactive engagement - because the user works alongside the material.


Trust us, we've been at this a while, 2-3 minutes is the optimal time to get content across by deconstructing topics into shorter subcategories.


 **Animation works** Short-form content works best when it's animated. Animation brings a more playful, relaxed style unlike the formal 'broadcast' mode of traditional video. The last in-flight safety video you watched? Animated. And that's not a coincidence.

 **Think mobile!** The mobile device is the natural location of micro-learning. But remember: this is a personal space - so treat it that way by avoiding being 'preachy'. Keep the tone conversational.


 **Go beyond generic** Don't forget to personalise content: brand it, give it a local accent, or full on customise it. It all helps.

 **Deliver some 'smarts'** Content needs to encourage 'do different's'. So, target the 5% remedial or retrenched behaviours. By identifying subjects that aren't done right or lack compliance, you can reap quick wins for your organisation.

 **Participate** Let the user drive. Getting employees to generate ideas means a more collaborative style of learning, and that's good for everyone.

 **Characterise content by upcoming events** Events or immediate challenges change the value of micro-learning content more than anything else.


Acquiring essential knowledge and 'tuning up' previously acquired skills is the driver of micro-learning. And we all want return on investment.

 **Resist the temptation to put it all into push-mode** Hassle people with notifications to drive take up and evidence our success to the business, right?


Wrong.

Short-form digital learning improves productivity because it gets into a personal space. Thanks to smart devices, it's available any time, and lets the learner diagnose their own challenges in the context of their working day. If they feel ownership over the content, they're more likely to be engaged as a result.

So, don't hit them over the head with it. Encourage users to 'pull' content where possible instead.

 **Encourage people to self-diagnose** Encouraging people to take responsibility for knowledge gaps, and to assess how well they deliver 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.

 **Make the experience elegant AND emotional** We can't stress this enough. This is THE very essence of what makes micro-learning unique and exciting.

Emotion - unlike traditional forms of learning, animation is visually appealing, driving learner engagement and retention rates.

Elegance - the window of opportunity is short. If learners can't find relevant content within five minutes, they give up. The elegance of your content delivery system is absolutely crucial.

Less course catalogue, more digital TV.

In Summary

Micro-learning isn't just another learning fad; it really is a step change in the way we learn.

It assumes an organisation trusts its employees to self-diagnose their learning needs.

The result: this short-form style places the user at the centre of the learning proposition, giving them the tools to access content on-demand, at the moment of need and via any device to hand.


Are you ready to embrace micro-learning? Ready to offer agile, experience-rich learning, more attuned to the modern workplace - and improve business performance?

The next step is using short-form digital learning to its full potential, deconstructing the traditional training model and rebuilding from the ground up with new content and delivery systems.

It's a big step, so talk to Skill Pill first. We'll help you kick things off - free of charge.

Try our micro-learning content for **free**.

Let us know which topics you'd like to look at and we'll set you up with your own personalised, branded content showcase - 2 weeks access for yourself and up to 5 colleagues.



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