

**2022**

**A Guide to  
Microlearning  
for D&I Learning  
Development**

**PREPARED BY**  
Marshall E-Learning Consultancy



# Introduction



The corporate Learning and Development (L&D) market has changed significantly over the last decade. Since the early days of the new millennium, we've come from page-turning courses to a wide variety of videos, small micro-learning experiences, mobile apps, and flexible learning platforms. Death by PowerPoint training sessions are fortunately passé and ongoing engagement remains low for MOOCs.

In recent years, new forms of training and development, such as microlearning, have emerged on the market. Microlearning breaks entire training materials down into short and understandable components that tackle a single learning objective.

Microlearning is set to be a permanent fixture in eLearning. It can be implemented by itself, but it works best as part of a broader eLearning and learning and development offering.

**Effective D&I learning will result in more inclusive workplaces through changed behaviours, strategies and policies.**



## One growing trend is microlearning...

Microlearning can help employees retain the information that is being given to them. It can increase the impact of D&I training and cultivate more inclusive workplaces.

Microlearning has been a part of traditional learning for some time, and while it is underutilised by most businesses, it is starting to influence the corporate world. Our findings show that 28% of organisations are considering microlearning for their (D&I) development, yet only 7% have already implemented some elements of D&I microlearning.

For the 64% of organisations that have not yet considered microlearning, this whitepaper examines the benefits, limitations, and opportunities for microlearning for D&I topics.

*"This year, we want to enable organisations to take a more joined-up strategic approach to diversity learning and provide effective resources that are fit for purpose, for both the client and also their employees. With time pressures on all of us these days, microlearning can benefit organisations and their staff in many ways."*

DAVID MARSHALL, FOUNDER OF MARSHALL E-LEARNING

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# What is Microlearning?

Microlearning breaks training content into bite-sized chunks that are easy to access. Instead of lengthy seminars or longer eLearning courses, employees can interact with microlearning in shorter, more frequent bursts.

Zoom fatigue in the wake of COVID-19 lockdowns has also meant that average learning session times have decreased. According to RPS research, microlearning improves focus and supports long-term retention by up to 80%

## Microlearning theory

Microlearning theory is based on a concept by Hermann Ebbinghaus and his trials on human memory. The German psychologist pioneered [the 'forgetting curve' theory](#) which illustrates how much information the brain can retain over time, and how quickly people forget new information.



Bite-sized courses are more focused, so learners don't have to clutter their memories with irrelevant information. This makes the retention of key information easier.

# The Time Benefit

Way back in 2014, Deloitte found that the average employee answered 110 emails per day, and couldn't spare more than 24 minutes per week for training. That's 1% of a 40-hour week. Jump along to 2022, and in a typical working week, most employees only have 20 spare minutes to dedicate to learning and development.

Bite-sized lessons that workers can complete between other tasks make learning with minimal distractions easier to incorporate into a daily routine.

That translates to less than 5 minutes per day. As such, asking your team to take time from their work for training can be a challenge. Yet, if you break content up into digestible chunks, it's much easier for the employee to grasp. And it lends itself to spaced repetition too. A study by The German university Hochschule Weserbergland found that by using spaced repetition learners can recall 80% of what was learnt after 60 days.

The human attention span is getting shorter, and Microsoft indicated that the average attention span has dropped from 12 to eight seconds. As workers spend more time than before interacting with digital media, there's never been a better moment to consider microlearning.

Microlearning is the preferred way to learn due to the prevalence of smartphones. It is a natural fit for mobile learning. It's easy to complete simple learning tasks on our devices. As knowledge can be consumed through smartphones, it boosts completion rates.

The microlearning market was valued at \$1.59 billion in 2020 and is projected to reach \$4.04 billion by 2028.

Modern workplace learners want to access eLearning courses on mobile devices, on the move, and in their free pockets of time – on public transport, during coffee breaks, and before meetings.

# Examples of Microlearning

With microlearning, you can craft learning experiences based on any relevant assets. For instance, you could include a two-minute video, a well-designed infographic, or a short podcast snippet.

**Video:** Research shows that video learning is more effective than in-person instruction, so leveraging this format for microlearning is highly beneficial. Our survey findings showed that 71% of organisations felt video format was the most interesting to enhance D&I microlearning opportunities.

**Games:** Short and simple games that challenge employees to recall the information they're learning are another engaging tool to include in a microlearning strategy. Over a third, (31%) of Marshall E-Learning participants thought simulation and game-based learning as the 4th most interesting aspect of D&I microlearning.

**Podcasts:** 40% of UK podcast listeners are aged between 26 to 35 and listen to podcasts on a weekly basis. L&D teams can meet learners where they're at with brief audio segments containing quick hits of information. Marshall E-Learning survey results found that half of organisations thought podcasts as the third most attractive microlearning element.

**Action-led microlearning:** This encourages learners to be reflective and actively engage with the content by putting their own plans together for developing their skills instead of passively absorbing information.

**Flashcards:** Remember when you created small pieces of content ahead of your exams and looked at them repeatedly until they were ingrained in your memory?

In practice, this bite-sized eLearning includes graphics, images, animations, dramatised scenarios, reflective questions, and mini tool kits. They have a high impact on grabbing the attention of the learner and, in the case of D&I, are effective when they include stories and lived experiences.

# Benefits for Businesses

Microlearning, due to its focus and brevity can also be seen as more inclusive and may help neurodivergent employees such as dyslexic learners or those with ADHD. The variety of learning formats to suit different learning styles, from quizzes to videos, also assist with this.

100% of organisations say that disability accessibility for microlearning materials is important

*Source: Marshall E-Learning D&I microlearning survey March 2022*

One of the biggest benefits of microlearning is that it can be completed fast. For this reason, it's a fantastic way to deliver just-in-time learning where employees have access to knowledge whenever they need it.

When L&D teams are under budget pressures, microlearning is cost-effective as it can reach lots of learners.

There's no need to pay for a trainer's time or rent physical classrooms.

It is less resource-intensive to update digital information than to reprint training materials and add additional classroom training sessions.

Microlearning responds effectively to a plethora of diverse learning styles.

Microlearning courses narrow the focus and teach learners at the moment of needs.

It works well for remote and hybrid workers as microlearning is on-demand and can be completed from any location

# Benefits for Businesses

Microlearning comes in short bursts which reduce the initial cognitive load, enabling a learner to take breaks and easily return later. All of this helps learners absorb information. And when employees are able to progress through the material more easily, they often experience greater feelings of achievement. This can motivate them to pursue additional training.

Improving the effectiveness of training can also have a massive impact on professional development and career progression within the organisation. And let's not forget that L&D training is important in the era of The Great Resignation. According to LinkedIn 2018 Workplace Learning Report, 94 % of employees would stay at a company if it invested in their career development.

Although microlearning benefits workers of all ages, microlearning is Gen Z-friendly.

Microlearning has been shown to increase engagement by 50%.



According to learning architect Ray Jimenez, PhD, in his book 3-minute eLearning, by creating micro-courses learning developers can reduce development costs by 50% and increase the speed of development by 300%.

# Our findings

In our recent survey, Marshalls asked organisations what they saw as the main benefits of D&I microlearning. The majority felt that the bite-sized content matching the attention span of the learner was the biggest benefit. This was closely followed by the flexibility of microlearning and how it can integrate into the regular working week.

## Benefits to learners

Microlearning adopts a 'little and often' approach. Learners are much more likely to retain information if it's broken up into digestible pieces that they can revisit on a regular basis.

Other benefits of microlearning for employees include:

- Microlearning is performed in short and focused bursts.
- It requires little effort from individual sessions.
- It involves simple and/or narrow topics.
- It enables learners to learn a new skill or knowledge and apply it immediately without disrupting their workflow.
- It is flexible in delivery and accessible.

When bite-sized learning content is easily and readily accessible, learners can take it at their own pace, wherever they are, and most importantly, when they are "ready."

# The Downsides of Microlearning

Microlearning is not the be-all-end-all solution that will replace all other eLearning forms. Moreover, some of the challenges can be addressed with the right LMS or microlearning provider. With its emphasis on small, isolated chunks of learning, it's not so great when it's essential to have a holistic view of the training material. Other disadvantages include:

## Managing huge content

Organisations we surveyed said that the biggest challenge of microlearning is that it is not suited to deep or nuanced topics and understanding (54%). Unlike more traditional eLearning formats where content is split into 30-minute sessions, microlearning content may only be five minutes long, which means you'll need more content to cover all topics. When there's a large body of material that needs to be studied and comprehended in detail, it presents challenges.

## Not suitable for complex tasks or skills

Brief modules and online training activities are not typically the best choice for more complicated tasks, skills, or processes. Online microlearning experiences are "micro" because they allow for rapid online training. Microlearning alone doesn't necessarily translate into immediate improved performance. However, in the right context and as part of a wider

Focus on including only one objective per module.

50% of organisations have a secondary concern that microlearning could be fragmented or seen as a 'scattergun' approach.



# Diversity and Inclusion

## MICROLEARNING

With a growing interest in environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors, which include diversity and inclusion (D&I), the need for effective learning on the topic is crucial.

For many employees, properly understanding diversity and inclusion (D&I), and learning to navigate D&I issues in a business context, can be overwhelming

Microlearning can effectively encourage personal reflection and is therefore an effective format for D&I learning, as it can be a daunting prospect for many to get to grips with often sensitive topics and unfamiliar terminology and to understand different lived experiences. The delivery of content can be drip-fed to employees to embed learning and to create an organisational culture where engagement with and constructive conversations around equality, inclusion and belonging are the norm.

D&I training has received a degree of bad press, being considered as compliance training or a 'tick box exercise'. This presents a barrier in terms of bringing about change in an organisation, and microlearning can be seen as a gentler and more reflective approach through accessible material which can be revisited by the learner.

*"The best way to counteract this is to break it down into more manageable chunks of information. These information bytes can be linked to real-life situations that people can relate to."*

**- Ann Allcock, Head of Diversity at Marshall E-Learning**

As an effective approach, microlearning can increase the impact of D&I training, ultimately creating more inclusive workplaces. Improving the effectiveness of training will have a knock-on positive impact on achievement or organisational D&I goals such as recruitment and progression of minoritized groups.

# Microlearning within eLearning

Microlearning doesn't need to be a replacement for other forms of learning. Traditional courses and eLearning are here to stay. In fact, when we asked organisations if they thought microlearning would complement or replace more traditional forms of learning/training for D&I, 100% saw it as complementing it. Companies should not see microlearning as a stand-alone learning vehicle but rather as a supplemental strategy.

Microlearning is an important companion to traditional training. It is a critical element of an emerging model of learning and development called the continuous learning model. This is an approach and ecosystem that encourages and supports individuals and organisations to continually increase knowledge, competence, performance, and innovation across the whole employee lifecycle through recruitment, onboarding, coaching, mentoring and wider training and upskilling.

35% of organisations already have an online broader hub or library that contains some D&I resources for staff.

Source: Marshall E-Learning D&I microlearning survey  
March 2022



*“There is still a time and place for traditional and in-depth eLearning. But nowadays, instead of providing three-hour courses that require page-turning and slow video or animation, we need to offer learning on-demand and recommend content just as needed. Microlearning can work particularly well in the area of D&I.”*

*- David Marshall, Founder of Marshall E-Learning*

# Implementing Microlearning

As always, success comes down to execution.

Microlearning is sometimes considered to be informal or optional learning. Traditional learning methods are more likely to be seen as formal and mandatory. To correct this misperception, leadership needs to support microlearning initiatives. This will increase the likelihood that managers hold their teams accountable for completing microlearning.

Establishing the performance or learning objective upfront can help identify whether the goal can be accomplished through microlearning. Or is it better suited to another form of learning?

It is easier and less time-consuming to roll out microlearning courses because they are modular in nature.

35% of organisations have an online D&I hub or library that contains microlearning resources for staff.



# Final Thoughts

Nowadays, traditional training models are being seen as time-consuming and potentially less effective. On average, people spend more than 7.5 hours per day consuming media, with an uptick in consumption since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. In a world that is consuming larger quantities of media than ever before, information retention can be a challenge.

With microlearning, L&D teams can combat media overload by helping employees access the right information at the right time and remember the most important things they need to know. This makes microlearning in a work context particularly valuable. Work-based learners who are busy and have limited time to learn new skills or refresh their memory can benefit from microlearning.

It is important to realise that microlearning is best delivered as part of a wider online training strategy. However, when and if you decide to implement microlearning within your training and development offering, both the range of format and delivery options and the opportunities to enhance D&I learning are extensive and exciting.



# Microlearning with Marshall E-Learning

Marshall E-Learning has a range of diversity and inclusion microlearning resources, including video-based dramatised scenarios, animations, infographics, and learning 'nudges'. We are creating a suite of single-topic, video-format D&I mini eLearning modules to respond to organisational environments where people's time for learning is limited.

At Marshall E-learning, we're totally focused on creating content that's exactly right for your employees. And if unique content is required for your organisation, we'll create a bespoke course for you from scratch.



Contact us:

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