

Microlearning: Small Bites, Big Impact.

8 must-haves every organization needs to be
successful with microlearning



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The times they are a-changin’

There’s a major shift happening in the business world that will—and should—turn corporate Learning & Development inside out. In an era where businesses need to continuously improve performance and increase competitiveness, they must move from simply “training” employees to ensuring employees have the knowledge they need to do the job well and positively impact business performance.

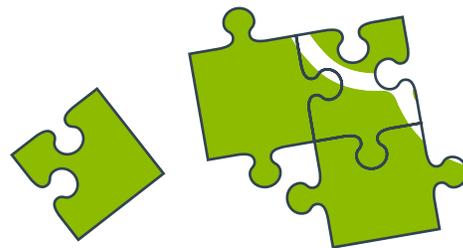
Traditional training approaches—whether in the classroom or via eLearning—have been providing lukewarm results for years. This just isn’t good enough and it’s showing: according to a recent report by Aberdeen Group¹, 49% of organizations say their main employee learning challenge is ensuring that what is taught is actually understood and applied on the job.



When employees don’t have the appropriate knowledge, they are not only less effective, but can’t make the most educated decisions; leading companies to lose millions or even billions of dollars.

In the next 12 to 24 months, many businesses plan to increase their spending on learning by as much as 87%¹. With corporate L&D groups stuck in a rut with traditional training approaches, much of this investment could prove to be ineffective. However, there have been huge strides made in both brain science and technology, resulting in a wealth of techniques and solutions that provide more impactful methods for improving employee knowledge.

One of the most important advances in employee knowledge approaches is microlearning—a technique that will totally change the face of corporate Learning & Development.



Axonify has been delivering successful microlearning solutions to organizations like Bloomingdale’s, Walmart and Ethicon (division of Johnson & Johnson). This experience gives us unique insight into what microlearning is, what it can be, and the opportunities it presents for your organization.

What is Microlearning?

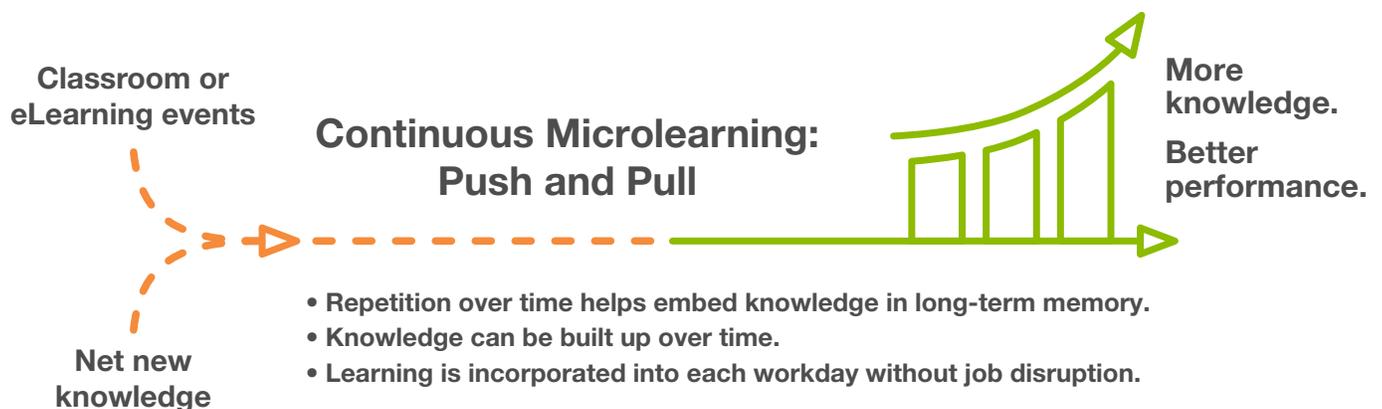
Microlearning is a technique of delivering learning content in short, bite-sized bursts (from three to five minutes), several times per week, or even daily. Neuroscientists have determined that we can only absorb four to five pieces of information into short-term memory at any given time, so by breaking it into short chunks, it's easier to understand and assimilate.

But this doesn't mean that microlearning is simply about creating 1-minute videos or putting short pieces of content into an LMS. For microlearning to work, it needs to:

- Include proven techniques for reinforcing content so that employees remember it and can apply it on the job
- Support multiple content formats
- Provide personalized and adaptive learning experiences
- Offer gamification to engage employees in ongoing learning
- Include modern social elements for collaborative learning
- Be accessible from multiple devices, including mobile
- Allow employees to pull information when they need it
- Offer reporting and analytics that measure learning effectiveness and tie it to business results

When microlearning is delivered in a consistent, ongoing way, you have the ability to **drive continuous learning, build up knowledge over time, and produce real behavior change** that results in improved job performance. Smart organizations understand this: Aberdeen Group's Best-in-Class companies are 60% more likely to consider microlearning to be effective for employee development¹.

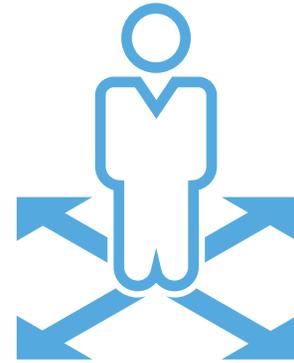
How Microlearning is Used



Microlearning isn't just useful for pushing out learning to employees each day. The reality is that to meet the needs of today's modern workers, you need to offer them the ability to access small bites of information at a moment's notice, so they can pull knowledge at the point of need. Populating a knowledge-on-demand performance support resource with chunked microlearning content lets employees search for information and have it at their fingertips quickly, which suits the way we learn today.

Why is Microlearning essential in today's modern business environment?

Over the past few years, there has been a convergence of circumstances that have made organizations—and employee learning—ripe for change. Changing business requirements have altered what employers need from their workforce and what employees need to do the job well. At the same time, employees are dramatically changing the ways in which they work and learn.



Increasing Knowledge Demands

All employees (whether they work in an office setting, retail floor or warehouse) must know more information than ever before to keep up with growing product complexity, highly knowledgeable and demanding customers, risk and compliance requirements and more—but they must also be prepared to shift gears in mid-stream—acquiring more or different knowledge to accommodate rapidly changing roles and responsibilities. This requires constant learning, but using existing training methods is proving to be cost and time-prohibitive. When employees lack the knowledge they need to be top performers, their visible, and not-so-visible mistakes can cost companies millions, even billions of dollars.

The Failure of the LMS

While Learning Management Systems (LMSs) can deliver training to large groups of employees, they are ineffective. They simply replicate this flawed model of pushing maximum volumes of information at learners in the shortest possible time, which pretty much guarantees that employees won't learn and retain the material.

Traditional “one and done” training sessions—whether in the classroom or via eLearning—have proven largely ineffective in helping employees retain the knowledge they need. Single-event training is highly susceptible to the “forgetting curve³,” a proven cognitive science concept that has identified up to 90% of knowledge is quickly forgotten, unless reinforced.



Learning & Development specialists have also realized that traditional training—designed for long periods of concentration—doesn't have a hope of competing for the attention of today's modern learners whose attention spans are becoming shorter and shorter⁴. While as much as 85% of organizations currently use an LMS⁵, the challenge is that it will be difficult to effectively retrofit microlearning into their platforms. This is primarily because they're based on old technologies, and old modes of learning, which we now know don't map to how the brain really works.

Changing Needs of Knowledge Workers



Based on Bersin's Modern Learner profile². Today's knowledge workers are vastly different than they were even ten years ago, yet learning & development still largely focuses on that old profile.

Today's modern knowledge workers are a different breed: they have their hands full with deadlines, rapidly shifting roles and responsibilities and almost constant interruption. They're usually just too overwhelmed, distracted and impatient to sit through lengthy training sessions that could be mostly irrelevant. Instead they need learning that is current, easy to digest and accessible when and where they need it.



Why you should adopt Microlearning

Microlearning can be delivered to the desktop, on smartphones and tablets—even over Point of Sale terminals—in small chunks, where and when it makes sense for employees: on the job, at home, or while travelling. But microlearning offers far more than that:

- It adapts to the pace of today's business and meets the needs of your modern learners, providing learning in short bites that are fast and easy to absorb. And because it's fast and easy, employees are more receptive to learning.
- Microlearning's short, fast bursts are highly suited to mobile environments, making it the preferred mode of learning for today's highly mobile workforce.
- It's far less disruptive to job performance: microlearning can be delivered in short daily bursts, which means employees don't need to spend hours away from their jobs to learn.
- Microlearning lets you use advanced learning techniques that help employees retain more of what they learn over the long term. This also has the benefit of enhancing the value of in-class or eLearning sessions by ensuring employees don't forget what they learn.
- It helps reduce cognitive overload by delivering information in short, easy-to-understand chunks.
- Because microlearning breaks a topic into granular chunks, learning can be highly focussed on what the employee needs to know, eliminating the need for people to sit through irrelevant training. It also means knowledge can be pushed or pulled at the point when the employee needs it for the job.

8 Components of an ideal Microlearning Platform

While technologies exist for distributing and aggregating microlearning, they are not created equal. You can truly increase employee knowledge and achieve a higher return on investment by adopting a platform that not only delivers microlearning content, but also employs techniques to ensure that the learning is effective and has a direct impact on job performance.

1. Uses proven information retention techniques to ensure the most effective learning

The ideal microlearning platform should be based on **proven neuroscience techniques** that can have a dramatic impact on how much knowledge employees learn, plus how much of that knowledge they retain over the long term. Techniques should include:

- **The Spacing Effect.** The spacing effect⁶ is the process of repeating information over time with specific time gaps between each repetition, which strengthens long-term knowledge retention.

- **Retrieval Practice.** Retrieval practice⁷ is the act of quickly learning a concept, being tested on recall, refreshing the knowledge, and again being tested on recall. Research has proven that retrieval practice produces superior learning over conventional studying such as cramming, repeated studying, concept mapping and other study methods.
- **Confidence-Based Learning.** Research has shown that it's the combination of knowledge plus confidence that leads to appropriate behavior and empowers people to act—critical in areas like decision-making skills, safe machine operation, and crisis intervention. Based on a 2-dimensional assessment model developed by Dr. James Bruno⁸, confidence-based learning asks employees to rate their confidence in the correctness of their answer, helping evaluate not only knowledge, but confidence in knowledge. With this deeper insight, organizations can more closely identify areas of learning employees should focus on, to achieve true mastery of knowledge and skills.

2. Supports multiple content formats to suit various learning needs

It should also support **microlearning content of various types**, including video, Tin Can, SCORM, text or images; which allows you to leverage existing content and create new content more quickly, while providing the variety that your learners appreciate.

3. Embeds personalized and adaptive learning techniques for tailoring learning

The ideal microlearning platform should provide for **personalized learning** where learning content can be customized for employees based on criteria such as job function and required knowledge, department, seniority level, prior learning or benchmark knowledge, and methods of delivery. Personalized content ensures that employee attention is focussed on the knowledge needed to get the job done properly.

It should offer **adaptive learning**, which is a sophisticated learning technology that ensures employees are always progressing towards subject mastery along their own unique learning path. Adaptive learning:

- Continuously evaluates information from the learner during learning sessions (such as test and quiz answers, topics re-taken, and knowledge confidence levels, if tracked).
- Compares the learner data to initial benchmark information plus target knowledge levels programmed into the system.
- Adapts the learning path with modifications being made on the fly to subject matter and level of difficulty.



*Aberdeen Group's
Best in Class
Companies plan
ahead for employee
knowledge transfer:
91% assess current
knowledge/skill
competency levels
to determine gaps,
versus all other
companies at 39%¹.*

4. Includes gamification for increasing employee engagement

Your microlearning platform should employ **gamification techniques**, which make learning more engaging and enjoyable for people of all ages. It should offer a variety of game interfaces for delivering learning, plus offer incentives such as leaderboards, reward points and team scores that encourage participation and achievement.

5. Offers modern social elements for collaborative learning

Because modern learners not only appreciate, but also expect a social learning environment, your microlearning platform should facilitate collaborative learning using a variety of social elements, such as user-generated and curated content, newsfeed, team competitions and surveys.

6. Supports multiple devices, including mobile, to ensure employees have access to learning

Learning should be accessible when and where it makes sense for employees—in the office, on the sales or warehouse floor, at home or while traveling—via a desktop, shared terminal, point of sale system or mobile device.

With the overall adoption of mobile learning growing by 20% since 2013, and up to 85% of people carrying smartphones⁹, **mobile learning** is essential, allowing employees to learn where and when they desire. Aside from providing access over the Internet, your platform should also leverage a purpose-built app for smartphones and tablets, which meets today's modern learner preferences for speed, convenience and ease of use.



7. Offers Learning at Employees' Fingertips

The ideal microlearning platform should also offer knowledge-on-demand that allows employees to quickly and easily search for short learning chunks on topics of immediate importance. While regular microlearning delivery focuses on the information employees need to maintain in their heads, knowledge-on-demand gives them the ability to have less frequently needed information at their fingertips, ensuring they always have the knowledge they need to do their jobs well.

*Aberdeen Group's
Best in Class
Companies are 22%
more likely to provide
employees access to
a self-service learning
portal, where they can
easily find the content
they need¹.*



8. Provides a Way to Measure Learning Effectiveness and Tie it to Business Results

Without the ability to measure learning, you can't determine if it's working. The ideal microlearning platform needs to incorporate the ability to track and measure knowledge growth, identify if knowledge is being applied on the job and identify gaps to fine-tune learning that will translate into optimal employee performance. This is the only way leaders can determine if learning is having a direct impact on business objectives and can justify learning investments.

When done properly, Microlearning works

Employees prefer microlearning

Employees prefer microlearning to traditional methods and voluntarily participate more frequently than traditional learning— especially when the learning is gamified. Estimates of traditional LMS participation are less than 20%, whereas Axonify achieves participation rates of more than 80%. In addition, 80% of employees who use microlearning stated that they enjoyed learning this way and that they found it to be an effective way to learn¹⁰.

Employees become more knowledgeable through microlearning

Employees who are learning on Axonify's microlearning platform see an average knowledge lift of 20% to 79%. In surveys, they've also indicated that Axonify made them more knowledgeable in their jobs, whether it was safety knowledge, product knowledge, customer services practices or policies and procedures¹⁰. The knowledge sticks.

Microlearning impacts performance and the bottom line

Not only do employees who receive microlearning say that it helps them perform better on the job, according to the Axonify end user survey, 78% stated that Axonify made them more effective at their job (i.e. work safer, sell more).

For example:

- Bloomindale's attributed a 22.9% reduction in safety incidents for stores actively using Axonify—equating to \$2.2 million in annual savings.
- Capital BlueCross documented a 66.6% reduction in errors within their admin team.
- Sitel shortened customer service rep onboarding time by 26%, increased sales 13% above target and reduced operating costs by up to 20%.
- Walmart saw a 54% decrease in safety incidents.
- Axonify helped Toyota increase dealer rep confidence, resulting in a boost in Customer Satisfaction surveys and an increase in sales.



Microlearning in action

While the term and the hype may be fairly recent, the technique of microlearning—delivering learning content in short, bite-sized bursts multiple times per week—isn't entirely new. The following innovators have been using microlearning to augment eLearning or deliver net new learning for the past three years.

Microlearning at Bloomingdale's

Retail giant Bloomingdale's made the shift to microlearning in 2012 as a way to reduce safety incident rates, improve compliance, drive consistency of knowledge across the organization and improve learner motivation. They wanted a solution that was:

- Engaging for their four generations and multiple cultures.
- Integrated into the workday, which would leverage employee downtime and wouldn't take employees off the floor for long stretches of time.
- Measurable, identifying participation levels, knowledge growth, and impact on safety and retail shrink.

Since implementing microlearning, Bloomingdale's has seen a dramatic lift in employee confidence and has experienced a claim reduction of 41%, an annual savings of \$2.2 million per year. The company has also discovered that associates who are not using Axonify are three times more likely to have a worker's compensation claim than those who are using the system.

According to Chad McIntosh, VP of Loss Prevention & Risk Management at Bloomingdale's, *"We have four different generations in Bloomingdale's—33% of which are millennials—so personalization is a huge factor for engaging our employees in learning. We've seen knowledge lifts of up to 20% in some subjects, and have achieved a dramatic decrease in preventable safety claims."*

Microlearning at Ethicon

A subsidiary of J&J, Ethicon is the world leader in the manufacturing of surgical sutures and wound closure devices. Like many organizations in the healthcare industry, the company was experiencing several challenges related to knowledge retention that impacted the performance of its sales team. Issues around increased product complexity, intensified customer demands and additional compliance requirements were negatively impacting both rep confidence and sales.



The company felt that microlearning was the best way to keep knowledge top of mind over the long term, monitor knowledge gaps, increase sales reps confidence in their knowledge, adjust to strategic priorities on the fly, and balance the need to learn with the need to sell. It supported their environment of constant change, with multiple generations and a mobile workforce.

As a result of implementing microlearning, Ethicon has achieved the following results:

- 90% voluntary participation
- 13% knowledge lift
- 81% of reps indicated they prefer the Axonify learning method to other forms of learning
- 70% stated that they've increased their confidence in selling

According to John Knoble, Worldwide Director of Learning at Ethicon, being able to continuously reinforce major learning events to drive product knowledge every day has fundamentally changed the effectiveness of knowledge delivery to its sales professionals. *“Not only are we seeing gratifying knowledge lifts, but we’ve found the sales reps’ knowledge confidence increase, which is significant when it comes to selling our products.”*

Microlearning in Walmart Logistics

Walmart Logistics, the distribution network for Walmart’s global organization, wanted to take a fresh approach to safety awareness training that achieved high levels of voluntary participation and resulted in an improved safety culture and reduced incidents. They chose microlearning as the best way to accomplish these objectives and rolled it out to over 75,000 logistics employees. Microlearning provided Walmart Logistics with a way to drive employee knowledge, while meeting several key requirements:

- Daily learning bursts to keep safety top of mind and to enhance learning retention
- A variety of learning games to appeal to multiple generations and keep the learning fun and fresh
- Fast and easy learning to avoid time away from work
- Personalized learning so that each learner could progress along a unique learning track
- Customizable learning modules to address safety issues at each Distribution Centre

No one in Walmart Logistics was expecting the types of results that Axonify would provide. The company achieved a voluntary participation rate of more than 80%, a 54% decrease in incidents, along with a noticeable cultural shift.



According to Ken Woodlin, Vice President Logistics - Compliance, Safety and Asset Protection at Walmart, *“We have seen tremendous improvement as a result of our associates’ ownership and engagement in our safety programs, as well as leadership commitment to the program. Metrics like Lost Times have been reduced by over 50% in the past 3 years, and Incident Rates and DART rates are now well below industry average. Feedback about the Axonify system has been phenomenal, and we believe the process has been a significant contributing factor to our improved performance and engaged associate base.”*

Microlearning at Toyota Motor Sales USA

Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A. is the US sales, distribution, and marketing unit for Toyota Motor’s Toyota, Lexus, and Scion brands. Although the company produced world-class learning content, it relied on voluntary participation in training by its 25,000 dealer reps and wanted to ensure these reps had the right knowledge to effectively sell their automobiles. The company knew customers were coming into its dealerships with more information than ever before. To ensure sales reps would have even more knowledge to answer their questions and guide them through the buying process, Toyota wanted to provide reps with additional education. With the rollout of its redesigned flagship 2015 Camry, Toyota decided to leverage Axonify and microlearning to increase dealer rep knowledge:

- Dealer reps receive microlearning bursts around the new product each day.
- Each dealer rep follows a unique knowledge path that adapts and expands as knowledge grows.
- Axonify tracks participation and success rates, while identifying and closing knowledge gaps.
- Throughout the experience, participants play games and accumulate points, making learning social, engaging and fun. Points accumulated through the learning experience are converted to Toyota TrekPoints that reps cash in for valuable rewards.

Because Axonify takes a unique approach that appeals to all learners and is woven into the workday, participation rates are high and, as a result, knowledge growth and retention have surpassed Toyota’s expectations. The company has seen rep confidence and sales performance grow alongside product knowledge. Early results attributed to the Axonify rollout include an additional two vehicle sales per month per rep, and a 5% increase in Sales Satisfaction Index (SSI) for its top 50 reps. With such success on the sales side of its business, Toyota is currently rolling out the platform to 25,000 service advisors and customer satisfaction staff who had been asking when they could start participating.

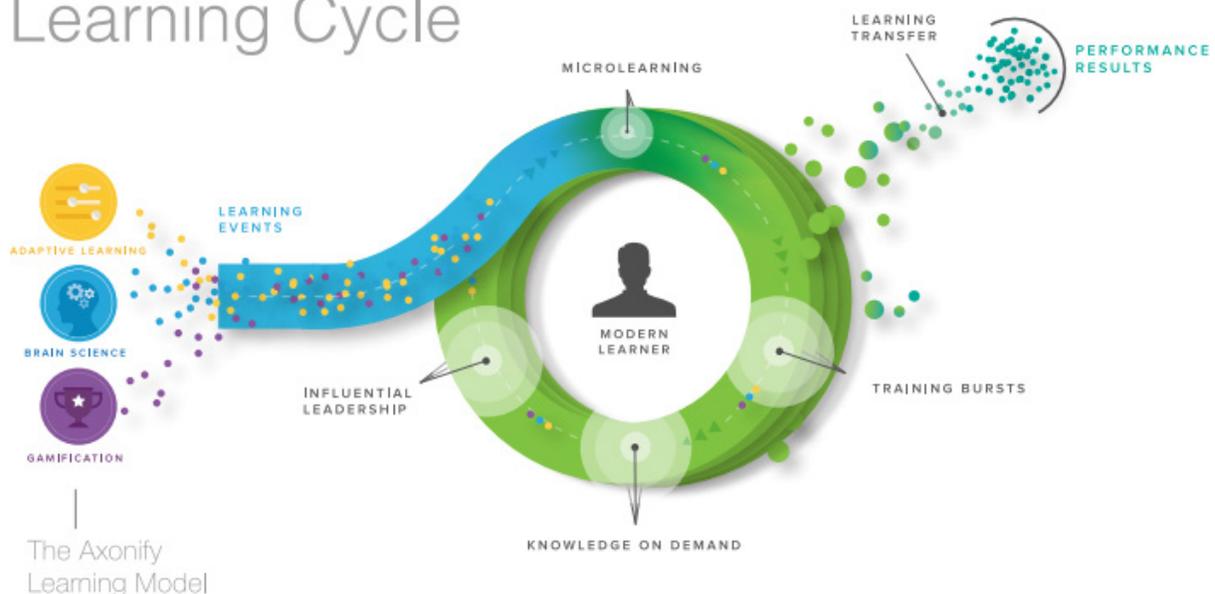
About Axonify

Axonify is the only employee knowledge solution that delivers microlearning plus a whole lot more.

Axonify helps organizations create a dynamic ecosystem where knowledge is built, sustained and shared among active and engaged participants. Unlike typical solutions that simply deliver employee training, Axonify focuses on improving employee job performance by ensuring they always have the knowledge they need. Axonify creates a continuous learning environment that:

- Delivers unique learning experiences to ensure that each employee acquires and maintains the knowledge needed for peak performance, while addressing the changing needs of today's modern learner.
- Provides additional on-demand information when employees need it for the job.
- Facilitates manager coaching and input into employee knowledge development.
- Gives organizations the measurement capability to easily link learning and development investments directly to tangible business results.

The Axonify Continuous Learning Cycle





The Axonify Platform

The cloud-based SaaS Axonify Platform is a unique approach to improving the knowledge and performance of employees. Axonify can complement your existing eLearning solution to dramatically improve knowledge retention and tie employee knowledge to on-the-job behaviors and performance; or function as a completely standalone knowledge and learning ecosystem.

Accessible using a web browser or the Axonify App, your employees have access to the learning and knowledge they need to do the job via a variety of media including video, audio, presentations and text. Supervisors and leaders can access individual or team results to provide critical coaching and support. Business managers and L&D professionals can quickly and easily access intelligence needed to establish learning program success and link specific learning programs directly to business results.

Employee knowledge. Anytime. Anywhere. With any media. With Axonify, you have the ability to create a continuous learning ecosystem that drives sustainable knowledge and performance improvements.

Call us today at 1-855-AXONIFY or visit www.axonify.com

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