MICROLEARNING TO BOOST THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

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Printed in the United States of America.

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You've probably heard it said that the only constant in this world is change. This is certainly true in today's workplace, which continues to evolve rapidly, resulting in an ever-changing set of capabilities employees and organizations need to succeed. To be effective and competitive in their roles, employees have to keep up.

In the midst of all this change, employees are also seeking an environment in which they feel valued and supported. If they're not finding this in their current workplace, many employees will find a new place where they do feel appreciated. One significant factor in employee satisfaction is having learning opportunities that will encourage their growth.

To feel empowered in their roles, employees need to obtain new knowledge on a regular basis and to be able to access it quickly. They must be proficient with technology and able to interact and collaborate with others using a variety of communication tools. Employers need to support their employees and provide them with the necessary tools and knowledge.

Organizations often turn to their learning departments for help with this. After all, that is the function of a learning and development group. But many L&D departments struggle to stay up-to-date themselves. Learning initiatives need to be progressive in helping employees find success; however, L&D professionals often find it difficult to keep up with the digital revolution. Instead, they hold onto traditional methods that prove clunky in today’s market—not to mention that more traditional learning takes longer to develop and is often more expensive than newer forms.

While traditional, in-depth training solutions still have their place, organizations should consider offering learning solutions that give them the ability to respond at the point of need. Microlearning—training delivered in small, short bursts—enables organizations to be more agile because they can respond quickly to their employees’ immediate needs. Further, microlearning can improve training results, both for employees and for the leaders who manage them. It also puts employees in control of what they're learning, which leads to a more fulfilling employee experience.

In this issue of TD at Work, you will learn:
- how the ever-changing marketplace is affecting learners
- how focusing on the employee experience is a competitive differentiator for organizations
- how using microlearning improves the employee experience
- the importance of using solid instructional design concepts to build microlearning assets
- the dos and don'ts of building microlearning assets.

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Focus on the Employee Experience

Whether a company finds and retains top talent is among the strongest predictors of its success. But despite the plethora of job seekers, companies still struggle to find the right people for their positions. Candidates simply lack the skills and experience to perform the job.

Additionally, many employees already working in an organization are unengaged in their jobs. According to Gallup, a mere 32 percent of U.S. employees are engaged, “meaning they are involved in, enthusiastic about, and committed to their work and workplace.” This disengagement has tremendous implications for the bottom line, costing billions in lost productivity.

If the biggest competitive differentiator companies have today is their people, then organizations must foster work environments where people actually want to work. One way to do this is to focus on improving the employee experience.
The employee experience refers to the many different interactions an employee has with an organization. Think of it as the life cycle of your employees, from when they first interact with the company through the recruiting and interviewing process, all the way through the end of their career with the organization.

Employees need a consistent experience. Many argue that the employee experience is as important as that of the customer, because having happy employees often equals having happy customers. As Doug Conant, former CEO of Campbell’s Soup, is often quoted as saying, “To win in the marketplace you must first win in the workplace.”

**The Employee Experience and Learning**

While there are many components needed to foster a positive employee experience, learning is a critical one. Access to quality learning promotes employee engagement because it enables them to perform at a high level.

Employees want to feel challenged and inspired. They want to feel like they’re adding value to the organization. They strive to grow and develop. If done well, learning addresses these needs and helps create an environment where people actually want to show up, not just where they are required to show up. Josh Bersin, founder of Bersin by Deloitte, sums it up, saying, “The research data we’ve compiled on characteristics for some of the most highly engaged organizations shows one of the most important factors in a
highly engaged company is the strength of its learning programs."

Successful learning programs help employees feel supported throughout their career with an organization. A few elements of such a program include:

- **New hire orientation:** Helping a new employee onboard to the company by gaining understanding of the company’s brand and culture, as well as expectations and who to go to for help.
- **Leadership conversions:** Providing skills training on how to transition from being an individual contributor to leading others.
- **Skills development:** Helping employees navigate their careers by acquiring needed skills.

When employees have access to quality learning programs, they are more engaged with the company and, as a result, more productive.

**EMPLOYEES WANT TO FEEL CHALLENGED AND INSPIRED. THEY WANT TO FEEL LIKE THEY’RE ADDING VALUE TO THE ORGANIZATION.**

### Getting to Know the Modern Learner

According to research by Deloitte, today’s employees are overwhelmed, distracted, and impatient. We’re busy meeting deadlines and trying to figure out our ever-changing roles and responsibilities. We are faced with continuous interruptions and require quick ways to build skills. In fact, modern learners have only 1 percent of the work week to devote to training. How can we improve the employee experience when this is the environment in which we work?

This culture of distraction is taking its toll on our ability to concentrate. Research from Microsoft in Canada found that we now have shorter attention spans than goldfish! The company reported that attention spans have fallen from 12 to eight seconds during the last few years.

The Guardian article, “Say it Quick, Say it Well—The Attention Span of a Modern Internet Consumer,” states that the current generation of Internet consumers live in a world of “instant gratification and quick fixes,” which leads to a “loss of patience and a lack of deep thinking.” The article cites a study by Pew Internet that found that although students benefit from the instantaneous information on the Internet, “their attention span and desire for in-depth analysis is consequently diminished.” A world that relies on immediate responsiveness increases the interference in our brain, severely impairing our ability to learn in traditional manners.

Furthermore, we’re faced with a perpetual shift in demographics. We continue to watch the exodus of Baby Boomers while Millennials and Gen Xers represent the growing majority of the workforce, and Gen Z is entering the workplace for the first time. These younger generations view education and technology as going hand-in-hand, and they seek quick bursts of digital content. They want information to be concise and available in multiple media formats. They also are very social, but not necessarily in the traditional water-cooler way. Instead, they tend to socialize on social media and via online collaboration and networking.

While there are multiple generations in the workforce, another interesting phenomenon is occurring, referred to as Generation C. This “generation” is the YouTube culture and has less to do with age than it does with people seeking out content “across multiple platforms and screens whenever and wherever they want,” according to a Think With Google article. The C in Generation C stands for connection, community, creation, and curation.

Gen C is representative of the digital lifestyle we’ve all become accustomed to. Technology has become a way of life, with both young and old adapting to new offerings. Our culture thrives on forming connections and being linked to others digitally. We search for and look to create information that is inspiring and entertaining through vehicles such as YouTube where we can actively engage in the experience.

The growth of Gen C is generating different ways to process and learn information, as well as challenging corporate policies on bringing your

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