

BEST PRACTICE: MICROLEARNING HELPS EMPLOYEES RE-LEARN CONCEPTS QUICKLY

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→ **Zach Lahey**, Research Analyst,
Human Capital Management



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Best-in-Class companies are 43% more likely than All Others to use customer feedback to determine employee learning needs and priorities.

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Companies that offer microlearning to employees are 30% more likely to improve customer satisfaction scores on a year-over-year basis.

Nowadays with customers being more expectant than ever about time to resolution and quality service, intelligent companies support their front-line employees with exceptional resources wherever possible. One of the most important areas to focus on is employee development. More specifically, organizations must provide employees with digestible knowledge at the point of need and as quickly as possible, so they can re-learn how to resolve specific challenges, also known as microlearning. This report explores the importance of microlearning, and what it can do for your business, your employees, and your customers.

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Success nowadays demands providing all members of the workforce with the resources they need in order to effectively respond to and support customers' needs and expectations.

Aberdeen Definition:

Mobile first means that when the tool / technology was initially designed, it was done so with mobile in mind, not PCs or tablets. Alternatively, mobile responsive, which is a concept that has existed for a while now, means that the website / technology / tool changes size depending on the device used.

The Intersection of Companies Today and the Modern Employee

In an era when consumers have access to more information than ever before via smartphones and other connected devices, companies of all kinds strive to be as supportive, accessible, and as useful as possible. To effectively accomplish such endeavors, organizations need to do a lot on the back end. For starters, they should have distinguishable online, [social](#), and [search engine optimization](#) / marketing (SEO/SEM) presences. To that point, Best-in-Class companies are 28% more likely than All Others (48% vs. 37%) to align the content they produce to an SEO strategy in order to better attract and support customers.

With mobile being a 'need-to-have' now instead of a 'nice-to-have,' [everything must also be mobile first, or mobile responsive at the very least](#) (sidebar for clarification). Mobile is still on the rise, but at least Best-in-Class companies (sidebar, page 3) get why mobile is integral to their success. Notably, such organizations are 37% more likely than All Others (48% vs. 35%) to use mobile to support their businesses' strategies. Consumers expect such accessibility, so being mobile-less is essentially a shot in the foot for their satisfaction and perhaps even their patronage. After all, it's easier than ever to find replacements or alternatives for most kinds of businesses and products — just a few taps on the screen and presto, there's a new retailer, entertainment venue, restaurant, hospital, and beyond. That's why it's so important nowadays to have mobile in place.

Intelligent organizations go a step beyond mobile though. Sure, mobility and a recognizable / accessible Internet identity is beneficial to the brand and to the ongoing success of the business. But it's vital to go well beyond that. More specifically, *success nowadays demands providing all members of the workforce with the resources they need in order to effectively*

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respond to and support customers' needs and expectations. The reality is that not every employee will have an answer to a customer's question. That's why employees need accessible, digestible insights to help resolve customers' issues. After all, employees are the front-line for all customer interaction (not including any company's Internet presence).

Businesses overall are feeling the pressure to support their customers and are responding by putting a great deal of focus on learning and development (L&D) efforts that will enable their workforce to be agile, competitive, and attentive. Notably, per Figure 1 below, companies are most concerned with keeping the business efficient and effective. Other pressures pushing companies' learning and development endeavors include changes to product, process, or strategy that require re-education, increased compliance requirements, and lead to customers wanting more information to help make decisions.

Figure 1: Learning Pressures Businesses Face Today



Aberdeen's Maturity Class Framework

Aberdeen's research defines Best-in-Class performance by benchmarking organizations against several key performance metrics. In this case, three metrics were used:

- 85% of employees rated themselves “highly engaged” in the most recent engagement survey
- 15% increase in revenue per full-time equivalent (FTE)
- 16% increase in customer/patient satisfaction rates/score

By looking at organizational performance, we then break the survey respondents into three maturity classes, as described below:

- **Best-in-Class:** top 20% of performers
- **Industry Average:** middle 50% of performers
- **Laggard:** bottom 30% of performers

Sometimes, a fourth maturity class, **All Others**, is used to describe Industry Average and Laggard combined.

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Best-in-Class companies are 43% more likely than All Others to use customer feedback to determine employee learning needs and priorities.

Aberdeen Definition:

Microlearning is a method of learning that delivers content to employees in short, very specific bursts (think “bite-sized learning” or “learning nuggets”). Microlearning activities are usually completed in less than four minutes, making them digestible and manageable.

These challenges show just how important it is for companies to provide their employees with the resources they need to successfully assist customers. Sometimes customers will have questions, other times they’ll have concerns, occasionally they’ll have gripes, and often they’ll be looking for guidance and advice. No matter the customer’s situation, though, employees are expected to be readily available and supportive. In order to do that, the workforce needs information, insights, and knowledge. That’s why it’s increasingly important to provide employees with cutting-edge resources to support customers and the business as a whole. For instance, Best-in-Class companies (sidebar) are 43% more likely than All Others (57% vs. 40%) to use customer feedback to determine employee learning needs and priorities. Such particularly relevant information can ensure that employees learn what customers care / comment most about; it also means that employers have better insights into what might need to be changed moving forward to attract, let alone retain, customers.

Listening to customers is one of many effective tactics available to businesses to ensure the workforce can be helpful and valuable. But in [this age of consumerization](#) and speedy answers/resolutions, savvy companies need other methods to get a leg up with customers. One such method has been growing in popularity because of how accessible it is and what that means for employees processing information that’s particularly relevant to customers - we’re talking about microlearning.

[Enter Microlearning: A Learning Model for the Consumer Era](#)

With all the demands on employees to be quick, informed, and capable, microlearning (sidebar) enables employees to learn that much more quickly, and be that much more confident in what they need to do in order to resolve the conflict. It’s a great

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resource for organizations that need their employees to process small pieces of information and apply that information quickly thereafter. The methodology is helpful for a wide variety of industries, from retail and professional sales, to finance, insurance, and consulting, to healthcare and pharmaceuticals, to telecom and supply chain. Smart organizations understand just how valuable informative tidbits can be for an employee's knowledge retention. Notably, Best-in-Class companies are 60% more likely (88% vs. 55%) than All Others to consider microlearning to be effective for employee development.

Employees, just like their consumer counterparts, want to be in charge of their own information. The link between employees and consumers is ongoing. Employees expect modern resources - such as mobility - everywhere, fast and reliable Internet, quality, consumer-grade technology, and a whole lot more. Some of these resources are easy to implement, so don't be left behind because your organization doesn't offer such technologies to employees.

Microlearning is certainly a stark contrast from eLearning, which often requires a serious time commitment to find, consume, and determine the most valuable information. Bite-sized learning can be used to provide simple updates or even very minute details, so long as the information is presented in concise snippets and accessible by a mobile device. This is why companies that use microlearning for employee development are almost twice as likely (50% vs. 26%) to enable employees to access content from their mobile devices, as compared to non-users.

Best-in-Class companies are 60% more likely than All Others to consider microlearning to be effective for employee development.

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Companies that use microlearning for employee development are 1.9 times more likely to enable employees to access content from their mobile devices, as compared to non-users.

Steps to Help Employees Overcome Challenges on Their Own:

1. Quickly identify the problem(s).
 2. Process what possible resolutions might be available.
 3. Learn how to do resolve the challenge(s) at hand.
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Understanding What Microlearning Can Do for You

Microlearning isn't necessarily a replacement for everyday learning — whether that's classroom learning, video learning, collaborative learning, or other methods used to help the modern employee. Instead, it's used to supply quick, bite-sized, and easily accessible content. Microlearning is best used by employees when they have a challenge that needs an immediate resolution, or when they're facing an issue and they really can't remember what's what. A best practice is to enable employees to access the necessary content on their own, as opposed to being pushed by managers or the L&D team to use such a resource. Microlearning presents a wonderful opportunity for organizations / employers to more easily allow employees to resolve their challenges on their own. To help accomplish that, here are a few key action items for employees:

1. Quickly identify the problem(s).
2. Process what possible resolutions might be available.
3. Learn how to do resolve the challenge(s) at hand.

Microlearning is a powerful resource, when it's put in the right hands at the right time. Savvy companies implement microlearning so employees can access the appropriate information on demand just when they need it. It's imperative for the content within microlearning to be easily digestible. To do to that, L&D shouldn't take previously created subject matter, such as hour-long videos, classroom trainings, agendas for one-on-one meetings, lengthy guides, or detailed explanations, and try to squeeze it into bite-sized pieces. Instead, they should re-approach what they're trying to get employees to re-learn and go from there. In essence, such a learning tactic is an overhaul of knowledge management altogether. It's about starting anew.

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Starting fresh is certainly appropriate too, as adoption of the space is in its infancy. In fact, only 17% of companies from Aberdeen's 2015 Learning 3.0 survey indicated that they offer microlearning. However, as would be expected, Best-in-Class companies prioritize microlearning more than anyone else. Accordingly, Best-in-Class companies are 18% more likely than All Others (20% vs. 17%) to offer employees microlearning to support their development needs. It's a learning methodology that's on the rise, but it still requires support and a bit of understanding, especially when it comes to the difference between microlearning and other major tenets within learning.

Delineating Micro from Macro Learning

This is where we get to the crux of the difference between microlearning and macro learning. With the latter type of learning, the goal is to get employees to understand new concepts. On the other hand, the former is centered on getting employees to re-learn a very specific idea or function in a very short period of time in order to resolve a particular challenge at hand. In that way, microlearning is about reinforcing previously learned concepts, not teaching new ones. This is often a major point of confusion when using microlearning. It's imperative not to confuse the two, as cramming lengthy, more traditional content, into the microlearning format will make the entire operation ineffective at best. It can still be substantial and substantive, and it can still be informative, but it shouldn't be used as the main vessel for learning new concepts. Think of microlearning as learning reinforcement, and think of macro learning as learning new concepts.

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Best-in-Class companies are 3.2 times as likely as All Others to measure the return on investment of any learning event or activity.

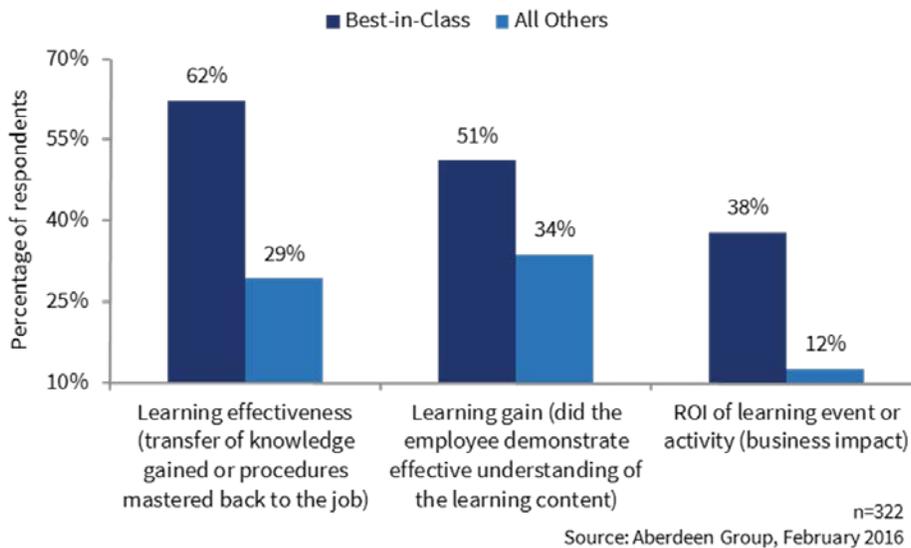
That's why prototypical microlearning content is two to three minutes long, whether that's the length of a video, or how long it takes to read an anecdote / story, for an example. It's truly about refreshing employees' knowledge about specific functions or responsibilities. Re-learning a concept or lesson previously taught is one thing, but it's imperative that they truly retain what's been taught. With 49% of organizations saying that their main challenge for rolling out learning is ensuring that what is taught is actually understood and utilized on the job, testing employees on what they just re-learned is imperative.

Assessing the Effectiveness of Learning Today

Whether you're planning to increase spending or you're looking to re-invest previously allocated resources in microlearning, it's a necessity nowadays to ensure that you measure whichever methodologies are in place. Sure, a lot of organizations are good at measuring the learning input — i.e., employees' knowledge, abilities, and deficiencies going into learning and development activities. Such organizations track previous successes and failures, which is very important. But it's not enough. Best-in-Class companies measure the output, or the analysis of what employees have actually learned. Savvy companies measure learning in multiple ways (Figure 2).

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Figure 2: Measure Employees' Knowledge Retention to Understand Microlearning's Success



Particularly, Best-in-Class companies are more than twice as likely as All Others (62% vs. 29%) to measure learning effectiveness. In addition, top companies are 50% more likely than All Others to measure the workforce's learning gain, or whether an employee successfully demonstrated an effective understanding of the learning content. Finally, Best-in-Class companies are 3.2 times as likely as All Others to measure the return on investment of any learning event or activity. In essence, top organizations prioritize learning output and ensure the effort put in results in desirable outcomes.

Measure Microlearning to Determine Future Investment

To conclude whether microlearning is truly working internally or not, a best practice includes measuring its ongoing effectiveness. Notably, when organizations measure learning

When organizations measure learning effectiveness, they're twice as likely to retain their employees on a year-over-year basis.

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effectiveness, they're twice as likely (6.3% vs. 3.1%) to retain their employees on a year-over-year basis. Employees, after all, prefer to work for a company that supports them and makes them feel like they are part of something bigger, beyond their own roles. Case in point, per Aberdeen's *[Young & Talented but Lazy? Not So Fast, Millennials are the Real Deal!](#)* (February 2015), Millennials are 2.5 times as likely to commit to working for their employers because they are challenged and intrigued by their work, compared to having a competitive salary (48% vs. 19%). In a time when companies are increasingly concerned about attracting, engaging, and retaining Millennials, it's imperative to take whatever actions are available to ensure current (and prospective) employees feel appreciated and supported.

Another method to help assess microlearning's effectiveness is to conduct employee surveys. Best-in-Class companies are 15% more likely (77% vs. 67%) than All Others to use employee surveys to measure the effectiveness of learning efforts. Such companies grasp that they can better determine what's working, what's amiss, and what's completely irrelevant to employees' ongoing success. Polls can be daily, weekly, monthly, or more infrequent (although that's not recommended), and range in number of questions. Organizations should be asking employees how they feel about the learning resources in place — the more specific they can be, the better. What works? What doesn't work?

It's imperative that such surveys don't take too much time — learning initiatives already use a lot of time — so a quick two- or three-question survey is ideal, especially one that doesn't require typing or writing. By getting a pulse from employees, you're not only hearing their feedback, but you're also demonstrating to them that their thoughts are appreciated. Top-performing companies prioritize employee feedback because of

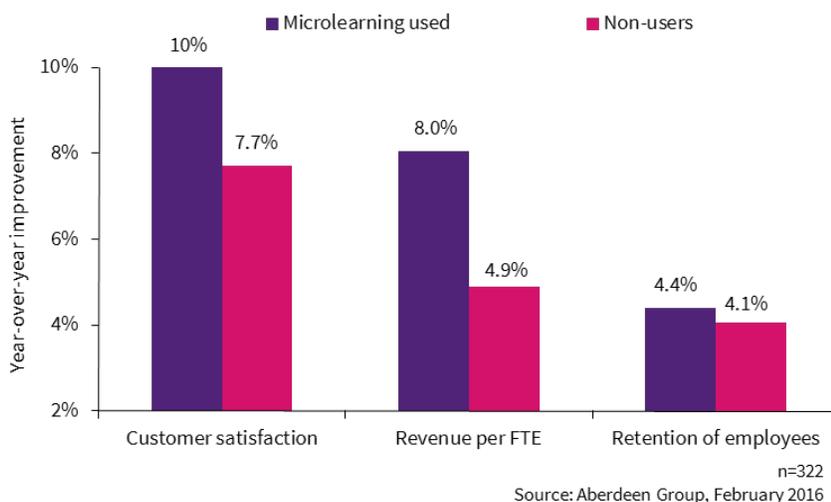
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that. In fact, per Aberdeen's [Best Practice: Identify High Potentials Before You Lose Them!](#) (August 2015), Best-in-Class companies are 2.4 times more likely (88% vs. 36%) than All Others to use employee feedback to inform decision-making. Demonstrating support and giving employees opportunities to participate is paramount to the ongoing success of learning.

Understanding the Impact of Microlearning Across the Board

Per the above processes, measuring microlearning is definitely recommended. But understanding the return on investment (ROI) of the methodology is extremely valuable for proving why such a technique is so beneficial for your employees, your company, and your customers. Accordingly, companies that implement microlearning internally experience improvements on a year-over-year basis with customer satisfaction, revenue per full-time equivalent (FTE), and employee retention (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Calculating the ROI of Microlearning



Companies that offer microlearning to employees are 30% more likely to improve customer satisfaction scores on a year-over-year basis.

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Empowering employees to re-learn concepts via microlearning truly has an impact across the board. Accordingly, companies that offer microlearning to employees are 30% more likely to improve customer satisfaction scores (10% vs. 7.7%) year over year. With bite-sized content at the ready, employees can more easily support customers, resolve their issues, and leave them satisfied with their individual experiences.

In turn, with customers more satisfied and returning for repeat business, employees can bring in a greater amount of revenue for the business. Notably, companies that use microlearning are 1.9 times more likely to improve their revenue for FTE. Capable employees can lead to greater overall revenue. Finally, on par with the notion of supporting employees and their wishes, microlearning helps businesses retain their hard-won talent. After all, employees commit to organizations that want them, listen to their perspectives, and use their feedback to make future decisions.

Conclusion: Learning Quickly Pays Off Dividends

Smart companies get that employees don't have time to process a bunch of new concepts or reinforce previously learned ideas in a short period of time. Such organizations are empowering employees with these tools, both on demand and when they need them. In this age of the consumer, when employees and consumers alike can find all the information they need with a few taps on their smartphones, not enabling the workforce to be in charge of their own learning is ignoring successful, contemporary, and powerful resources. It's also just plain foolish. Enable employees to learn quickly, and you'll soon see the value pile up for all parties involved.

Best-in-Class companies are 2.4 times more likely than All Others to use employee feedback to inform decision-making.

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For more information on this or other research topics, please visit www.aberdeen.com.

Related Research

[*From Learning to Knowledge: Best-in-Class Methods for Enabling Employees to Propel the Business Forward*](#); February 2016
[*Employees Need Modern Learning to Aid Customers and the Organization*](#); January 2016
[*Three Candidate and Employee Trends to Watch: 2015 into 2016*](#); November 2015

[*Knowledge Management in a Learning 3.0 World*](#); August 2015
[*Human Capital Trends \(2015\) – The Age of Transparency is Upon Us*](#); April 2015
[*Want That Dream Job? A Degree Might Be Your Golden Ticket*](#); February 2015
[*Mobile Learning: Moving Companies Forward*](#); April 2014

Author: Zach Lahey, Research Analyst, Human Capital Management (zach.lahey@aberdeen.com); [Twitter](#); [LinkedIn](#)

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