



Microlearning

SUMMARY: Workers will need to continually learn, but many want small, specific bursts of information tied to immediate job demands, available at a time of their choosing. New media forms will enable modules that are small, timely, and focused. Certification will need to change to allow microlearning modules to be assembled in innovative combinations for new forms of certification.

Forecasts

- Content delivery will increasingly be interactive, online, and mobile. This will require tools that make it easy for non-traditional content providers to create engaging modules on any topic.
- Classroom time, if desired or appropriate, will be devoted not to traditional lectures but to engaging in discussions or problem-solving using knowledge from microlearning modules.
- Microlearning encourages flexible learning: different times, variable locations, and a range of platforms. It may be able to support non-traditional learners and different styles of learning.
- Systems will be needed to identify the needed micro-modules in a field of study, highlight prerequisites, track completion, and incorporate the modules into sequences of certification. Sophisticated systems for learners to find and retrieve modules will also be required.

Key Uncertainties

How to compensate providers of microlearning modules

How to assess and validate skill levels

How to avoid poor teaching and make sure that information provided is credible and accurate

Whether universities, associations, and other traditional learning institutions support and engage in microlearning or push back

Degree of reciprocity and compatibility between different systems of microlearning



Supporting Trends

- **Short shelf life for digital skills.** Deloitte estimates that digital skills have a half-life of 2.5 years, so timely and easily accessible training is the only way to maintain a high level of productivity.
- **Millennials' preference for training.** According to a 2016 Deloitte Future of Corporate Learning report, 22 percent of millennials surveyed ranked training and development as their top preferred benefit.
- **Digital competencies gap.** A 2013 review of companies by Capgemini found that 90 percent lacked crucial digital capabilities—social media, performance monitoring, internal social networks, or process automation—deemed necessary for 21st-century business competency.
- **Colleges and universities under pressure.** Enrollment at U.S. colleges has been flat or falling; by one measure, enrollment peaked in 2010 and has fallen every year since, dropping fastest at for-profit colleges and community colleges.
- **Declining attention spans.** The average American's attention span in 2015 was 8.2 seconds—a serious drop from 12 seconds in 2000—seemingly due to technology-driven distraction.
- **Growth of mobile learning.** The mobile learning market is projected to be worth \$38 billion by 2020. As it grows, expect to see more social and collaborative apps in addition to gamification and videos.

Related Drivers of Change

- Mentoring 2.0
- Higher Education 3.0
- New Forms of Work
- The Next-Gen Professionals

Notable Data Points

MICROLEARNING BY THE NUMBERS

Some studies suggest that
**modular learning generates
50% more engagement.**

Source: SHIFT Disruptive Elearning

MORE EFFECTIVE LEARNING

Researchers at Dresden University of
Technology found that
**learners who used
microlearning techniques
tested 22% better**
than learners taught using more
conventional long-form learning blocks.

Source: Journal of Educational Computing Research

MAKING TIME

More than 50% of full-time
employees said they would be
**more likely to use
online training if it were
broken into multiple,
shorter lessons.**

Source: Software Advice



Strategic Insights

- Associations have an important role in defining, developing, and delivering microlearning content. Initial modules might be focused on more well-defined, discrete topics for building specific skills, such as new technical skills. Broader and more challenging content could be added as expertise in microlearning module-development builds and awareness of microlearning's value increases.
- The ability to quickly deliver new information to members in the form of microlearning modules could position associations as an early source of new techniques and information, creating competitive value.
- Many kinds of learning modules may appeal to the general public or lay individuals. Associations may consider a different level of membership or access that allows broader access to information.
- Larger associations and learning-technology companies may consider providing tools that can be used to easily create content, enabling individuals or smaller associations to generate content based on their expertise.
- Universities and other learning providers are actively developing microlearning modules for certifications and other postgraduate education. Associations may want to work with them on microlearning structure and content.
- Microlearning modules can be developed for many non-traditional learning venues such as conferences, meetings, or online discussions.
- In addition to shorter and more convenient forms of learning, microlearning provides the opportunity to develop tailored learning modules for an individual's specific needs.

Timing

- **Stage:** Growth stage, in a period of rapid expansion
- **Speed:** Should move rapidly, especially for niche education and training

Potential Alternative Futures

- **Walled gardens:** Incompatible learning systems compete for reputation and credentialing.
- **Informal dominates:** Formal credit becomes too difficult and onerous, so individuals use informal systems and forego credit.
- **Universities discredit microlearning:** Defending their institutional status, traditional universities undermine systems of microlearning.
- **Everyone a teacher:** Experience with social media encourages widespread participation, flooding the system with good and bad learning modules.



Take Action

- **Find the micro-sized opportunities in your current knowledge and education portfolio.** Tactical, skill development courses may be ideal for microlearning. You might also repurpose and repackage some conference presentations into bite-sized experiences.
- **Have a content strategy before you go micro.** Microlearning multiplies the potential experiences you can offer, so you will need a learning management system to manage the complexity. You may convert more content into short videos and podcasts. You need a different revenue model and pricing strategy than you use for major conferences and long courses. Bundling products and offering subscriptions are viable alternatives. Moving into microlearning is more difficult if your content experts own the content that drives your education programming.
- **Promote peer-to-peer learning exchange.** Content experts may jump at the chance to showcase their expertise because the time demand is less if you can plug them into an easy-to-use format and channel. People may be willing to share findings from work-in-progress and pilot programs.
- **Tie microlearning into microcredentialing.** These brief learning experiences may not comply with current continuing medical or professional education and licensing requirements. If these systems prove difficult to restructure, develop microcredentials that are stackable to earn full credentials.
- **Target the learners and markets open to microlearning.** Not everyone will prefer to learn this way. Some employers may welcome on-demand targeted learning modules. Younger members may find digital formats familiar and convenient. Mixing micro sessions into larger conferences can be challenging and confusing. Exhibitors and business partners may want to try this in the exhibit hall or as a content marketing strategy. People who might never join or attend conferences might be new markets for microlearning.

Keyword Search

To continue researching this change driver, use these search terms:

microlearning, learning, e-learning, education, training, elearning, educational technology, microcontent, instructional technology, microlecture, just-in-time learning

Who Will Be Affected

Professional associations with robust professional development programs and associations with skills training may find microlearning fits into their strategy. Technology-oriented associations are likely to be early adopters. Ultimately all industries and professions will incorporate microlearning into their workforce education and training efforts.

About ASAE ForesightWorks

ASAE ForesightWorks is a deliberate, evidence-based research program and emerging line of products to provide association professionals with a continual stream of intelligence about the changes facing the association industry, including:

- regularly updated action briefs;
- tools for applying insights from the research in your association;
- guidance in performing environmental scans; and
- opportunities to engage with peers around the research.

Ultimately, the program's mission is to empower association leaders to create a culture of foresight.

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