

Microlearning: Essential strategy or just more content?



by Kirstie Greany

Learning managers weigh in

Microlearning - it's a buzzword that keeps on buzzing. In a recent survey, learning managers ranked it **#2 in priority**.

It's a **practical solution** for workplace learning – it fits into busy schedules, supports just-in-time needs, and offers bite-sized, accessible knowledge. But...

👉 **Is microlearning just snackable content dressed up as a strategy? Or does it deliver?**

I took these questions, and more, to a **Learning at Large Meetup** with enterprise learning managers. Here's what I found.

1. How learning teams are using microlearning

When I asked how microlearning is being used, the answers varied widely.

- **Just-in-time resources** – quick, task-specific guides, often for frontline roles.
- **Spaced learning & reinforcement** – small bursts of content to support skill retention over time.
- **Attention grabbers** – short videos or interactive content used to spark interest.
- **Modular learning journeys** – creating personalised learning paths by mixing micro-content.

For many teams, microlearning is a time-sensitive solution - employees need learning that fits into their workflow.

2. Can microlearning actually build skills?

A common frustration: microlearning is great for **surface-level knowledge** but struggles with deeper skill-building. Why? It can lack depth, naturally, but also experiential learning.

What helps?

- Pairing microlearning with reflective exercises and spaced practice.
- Blending it with group discussions and real-world application.
- Enabling personalised journeys: packaging micro-content accordingly.

"We found that layering in peer coaching between micro-modules made all the difference – it turned knowledge into action."

3. The big risks of microlearning - what to avoid

Content overload

"It's just a different kind of overwhelm."

- Use **campaign-style** approaches (e.g., monthly themes) instead of standalone micro-lessons.
- Keep content **structured, spaced, and connected**.

The engagement myth

"Microlearning isn't a magic wand for engagement. If learners don't care about the topic, they won't care if it's short or long."

- Focus on **relevance**, not just brevity.
- **Meet learners where they already are** (think Slack, Teams, or mobile-friendly moments).

Losing the experience

"The biggest issue I see is reducing everything to consumption."

- Use **microlearning strategically**, and only where it **adds value**
- Avoid thinking that short, means **passive** - be creative and build in stories, **practice** and more!

4. How to make microlearning work for you

- **Start with the problem, not the format.** Don't just 'add content' - ask what performance gap you're solving first.

- **Blend it into a bigger picture.** Use it as part of campaigns or alongside coaching, or practical tasks - not as a standalone fix.

- **Keep it accessible.** Remove login barriers, make it mobile-friendly, and integrate it into workflows.

- **Think in themes, not one-offs.** A structured rollout (e.g., monthly focus areas) drives better engagement.

Final thought

Convenient? Momentary? A mere flash in the pan? Yes.

Microlearning is a few moments long. But is *that* what makes effective learning?

Employees will likely invest in learning that they see value in. So ask yourself if you're providing good value.

And since many of you face very limited available learning time in your organisations, embrace going shorter, but find the right channels and format to fit those specific needs.

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