



Training the Trainer:

How to Create Microlearning

Why Microlearning Matters

Microlearning is a way to solve the problems facing educators and trainers of today: dwindling attention spans, knowledge workers with less time, shrinking budgets, and perhaps most challenging, the rapid evolution of technology that outdates skills as soon as they're learned.

Microlearning is a new kind of training for the digital age. This playbook offers strategies for applying this methodology to your own curriculum – a positive step in gaining back lost productivity and finding affordable, effective training for a more digitally capable workforce.



Microlearning helps solve the digital skills gap. For more information, check out our white paper:

**“Bite Size is the Right Size:
Closing the Skills Gap with
Microlearning”**

Or request access to our online video course based on this playbook:

**“Training the Trainer on Creative
Microlearning”**

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What is Microlearning?

Microlearning is a method of training that takes place in short, bite-sized units and aims to teach content in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

The principle of learning in small, repetitive chunks has long been acknowledged as an effective method of learning, say, a new language, or a musical instrument. Yet microlearning as a scientifically-studied practice has only existed since the early 2000s, when computers and the Internet presented a new opportunity to support learners. This is a new form of technology-enhanced training – and an essential strategy that serves a growing digital audience.

Microlearning isn't simply dumbing down information, putting pages of classroom training online, or splitting an entire 8-hour classroom experience into 2-3 minute chunks. In fact, it doesn't follow traditional or classroom training at all. Microlearning is:

- **Accessible** from a variety of devices such as phones, laptops, and tablets so that learning can take place at anytime and from anywhere.
- **Flexible and learner-driven** so that a trainee can skip or review course content as needed instead of moving at the pace of the slowest learner (traditional training, on the other hand, is structured, linear, and trainer-driven).
- **Modular** so that content is easy to design, produce, and update in the future. This makes microlearning an exceptionally cost-effective training method.
- **Holistic**, offering a 360° view of a topic in order to deepen one's understanding in a meaningful and varied way.
- **Recursive** (i.e. repeatable and formulaic), allowing for a broad view first before focusing on the less important, individual parts.

How “Micro” is Microlearning?

There’s no “right” length for microlearning. However, if you need immediate, on-the-job training, you don’t want to interrupt your workflow for long.

In other words, it’s SHORT (really short).

- Grovo’s micro lessons average only 60-90 seconds
- Learning can even take place in just a few seconds – check out basic science videos (example: 6secondscience.tumblr.com) or lessons online that direct you to a certain feature or tool
- Or, if you must, we recommend content that’s never longer than an hour
- If a single piece of content must be longer than an hour, use a supplement that helps the learner break the content up themselves for ease of retention

“In terms of time, the range goes from less than a second up to more than an hour.”

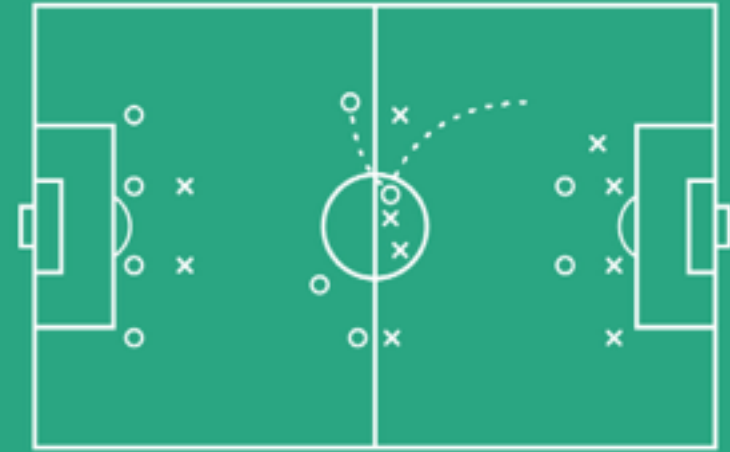
Theo Hugg

Professor of Educational Sciences at the
Institute of Psychosocial Intervention and
Communication Studies

Play #1:

Determine Learning Objective

Know where you're going before you begin



Move 1: Employ an Instructional Design Methodology

Instructional design is a process that consists of determining the current state and needs of the learner, defining the end goal of instruction, and creating interventions to assist in the transition. Before you begin, decide to approach your content from an instructional design model, which will aid in bringing structure and intention to designing your course.

Move 2: Work Backwards From Your End Goal

Next, and most importantly, determine the learning objective – what you hope your learners will achieve by the end. This helps identify what to include (or exclude) in the course content, and aids in selecting a design and format to meet both the needs of the learners, and of the organization.

“The eLearning program must be easy to access and navigate or you will lose the learner before they can even start.”

Don Eppert

Director, Corporate Learning
Sara Lee

“Keep it simple... Too many bells and whistles may cloud the message you are trying to convey.”

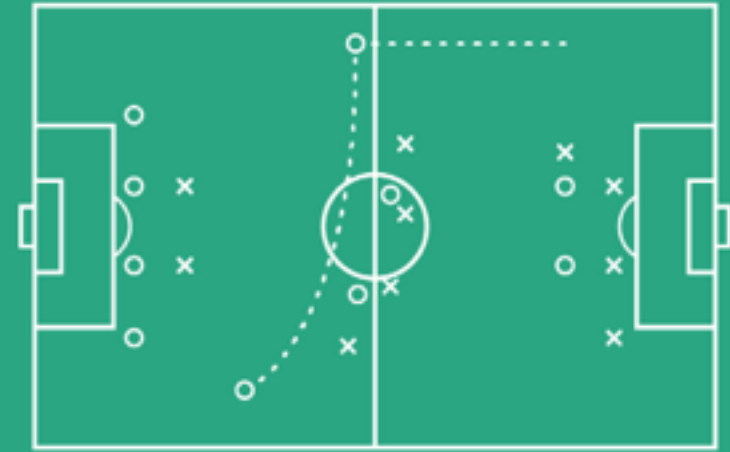
Brian Lauer

Customer Education Product Specialist
Freddie Mac

Play #2:

Choose a Rapid Creation Format

Build it fast and they will come



Move 1: Opt for Rapid Creation

Training in the digital age needs to be created and updated quickly because today's technologies and platforms regenerate fast. Select and use a rapid development software such as Adobe's Captivate, Blackboard, or your own proprietary CMS or LMS like Grovo's, and you'll be able to manage your content's modules with ease. Or, use an already established content repository like Youtube, Grovo, Coursmos, etc. – searching for specific topics or lesson lengths to meet your organization's needs.

Move 2: Choose a Format

Choose an appropriate format – such as a video, game or quiz – in order to meet the needs of the content, the technological infrastructure available, the target audience, and as always, time and budget. Some formats, like emails or slides, are relatively simple while others are more complex and interactive.

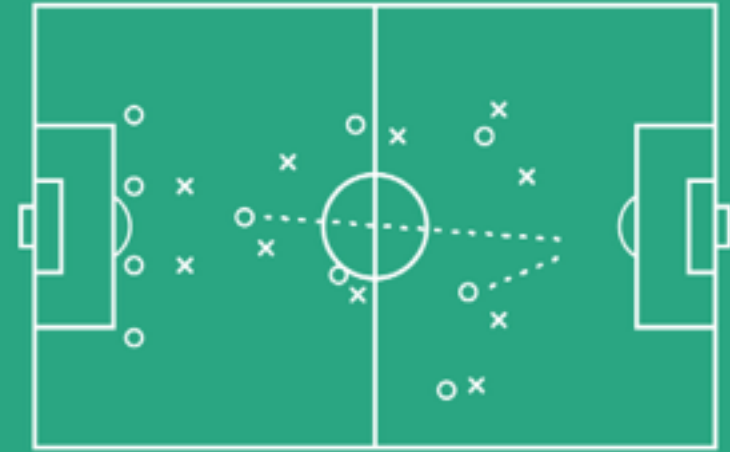
**“Don’t just PowerPoint. [Or]
transform your existing PowerPoint
slide into eLearning content.”**

Mustafa Barton
Technical Consultant
Hewlett-Packard

Play #3:

Organize & Analyze the Content

Always think, 'Less is More'



Move 1: Create an Outline

Conduct a content audit, determining, prioritizing, and outlining the hierarchy of your course – i.e. how modules, lessons, and topics will be organized into a logical and progressive order. You want to clearly separate the essential, “must-be-learned” items from secondary or supporting content (like optional links, exercises, forms, references, examples, illustrations, etc.) You will want to prioritize and position the essential content first.

Move 2: Do a Working Memory Check

Think in terms of working memory (4-5 items). Decide if you really need to include all the content you have in front of you, noting that visuals are an excellent example of a way to lessen the demands on working memory. It’s also critical that the content – and all its related activities – are meaningful and relevant.

**“Don’t bite off more than you can chew.
Ensure learning is in bite size pieces so it
can be easily consumed.”**

Danielle Colton
Human Resources
MJCROS Systems, Inc.

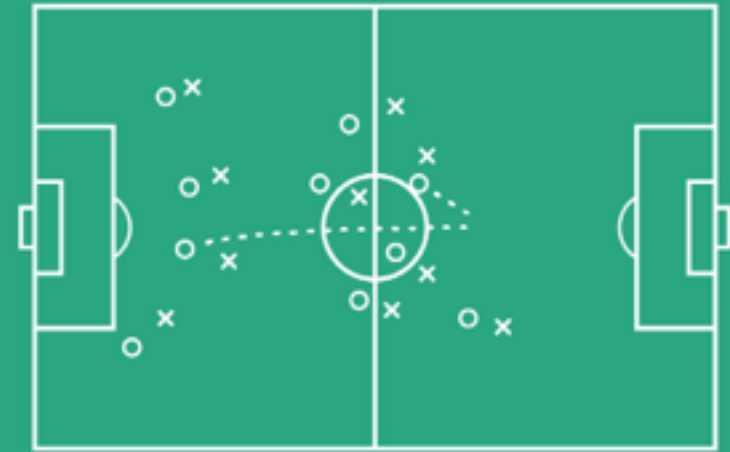
**“Avoid corporate-ese... speak the
language of your audience and use the
least amount of words possible
to make the point.”**

Nancy Heiser
Writer, eLearning
Kimberly-Clark

Play #4:

Make it Granular

A micro lesson is both a grain of sand and a beach



Move 1: Chunk Your Content

Break content into units that are small, granular, and self-contained compared to your overall learning objective. This reduces complexity, and allows it to fit into a timeslot appropriate for application. Your audience should be able to watch any lesson in any order, all the while gaining a broader, holistic perspective of a larger, more complicated skill.

Move 2: Keep the Goal in Mind

Ensure that these single units are objective-oriented and based on a detected or experienced need (e.g. a company acquires new equipment, and identifies that it needs to train employees on this new equipment).

Examples of granular, holistic content include:

- **Concepts**
- **Best practices**
- **Principles**
- **Procedures**
- **Tutorials**
- **Demonstrations**
- **Metacognitive strategies**

Play #5:

Make it Engaging (Part 1)

Using Spin

“You Spin Me Right ‘Round, Baby”



Move 1: Use Context

Aim to forge a strong connection between micro content and context, allowing learners to fill in the blanks and provide examples from their own lives (we call this “spin”).

Move 2: Use Visuals

Bullets and numbered lists are useful for presenting your information in a clear and concise way.

Move 3: Use Story

Stories can be told with as little as a single picture, a short animation, or just a few words. All of these grab a trainee’s attention and assist in “instant learning.” Story also adds “stickiness” to content, adding real-world and cultural context to material that aids in learning.



Use a 1:3 ratio of “tell” to
“show” and “do”

“Context takes precedence
over content.”

Ray Jimenez

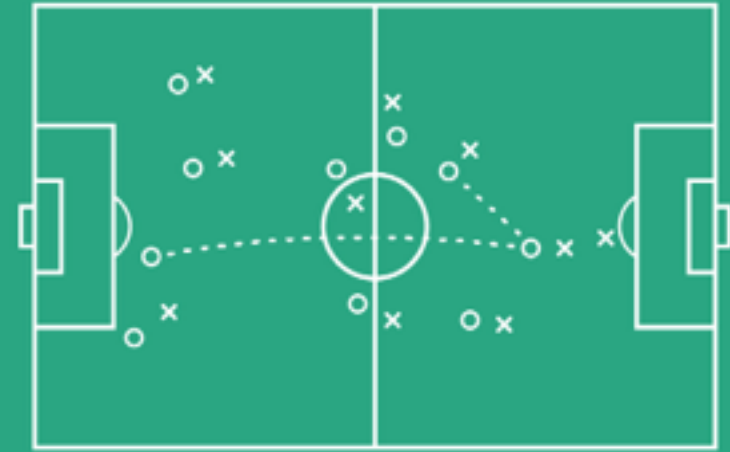
Learning Architect & Founder
VignettesLearning.com

Play #5:

Make it Engaging (Part 2)

Making it “Sticky”

Your story, my story, our story



Move 4: Select a Small Idea

From each micro lesson, identify a small piece of an idea you want learners to learn.

Move 5: Add an Event

Next, think of a relevant event or scenario; then describe it as an example.

Move 6: Embed the Idea

When you play out the event, look for opportunities to embed the idea to be learned in the example (i.e. remind the learner what the “small idea” is).

Move 7: Make it Spin

Finally, build your lesson in a way that facilitates connections, allowing the content to “spin” into new scenarios and related information in the learner’s mind. In a group setting this could end up as conversation, comments, or stories. For a solo or online course, you might ask the trainees to think of their own examples related to the content.

Definition:

“Stickiness” is a basic principle of effective learning and encourages transfer by giving the real world application and a cultural or social context to your content.

“Don’t be seduced by aesthetics. [Instead] use visual elements wisely to enhance the student’s learning experience.”

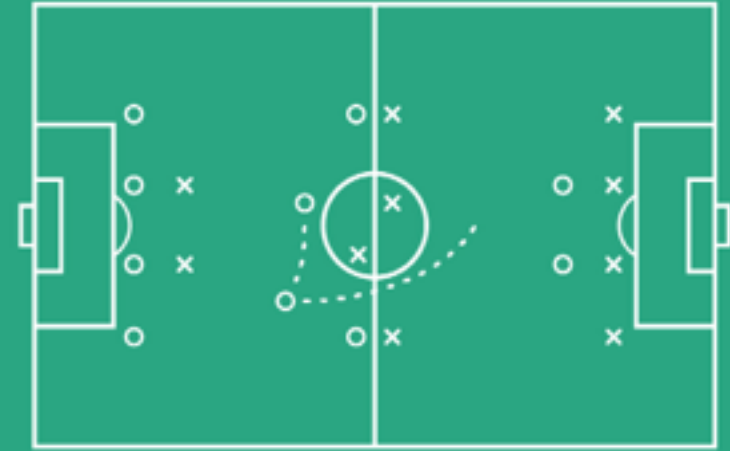
Jkuko Kawasaki

eLearning Design Specialist
Randstad North America

Play #6:

Make it Effective

“Better, Faster, Stronger”



Move 1: Add Reference Tools

Add the ability to reference your content on-the-go, in-the-field, on-the-job and in-the-moment with easy-to-navigate reference tools. Consider a clickable table of contents or a user-friendly mobile app to aid learners in finding what they want to learn, when they want to learn it.

Move 2: Use Gamification

Gamify your content, leveraging the satisfaction derived from creating actionable learning goals coupled with assignment completion.

Move 3: Use Attention Formulas

Research varies, but there's a clear ebb and flow to human attention, energy and alertness. For example, the 90/20/8 rule recommends never letting any module run longer than 90 minutes, changing the pace at least every 20 minutes, and getting trainees actively involved in the content at least every 8 minutes⁹. Grovo's method is even shorter: we aim to keep content under 90 seconds while changing the pace every 30-40 seconds.

“To me, gamification is finding a way to incent[ivize] the behaviors that you want your team to have.”

Dave McDermott

Director of Sales Enablement
Kelly Services

“Our business culture is ruled by short attention spans and time-gulping demands.”

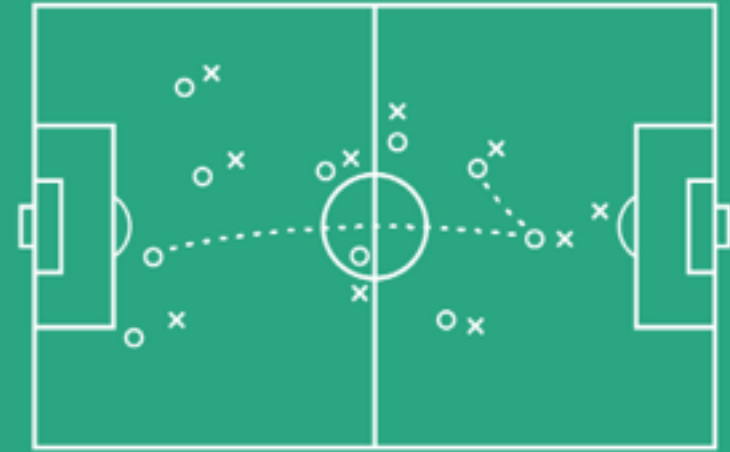
Mitch Thrower

Author, The Attention
Deficit Workplace

Play #7:

Test & Retest

“Testing, Testing, 1, 2, 3”



Move 1: Test & Retest Your Learners

Use a method to quickly generate exams, assessments, surveys and branded certificates for your learners. Deliver these at the point of need, such as immediately following a lesson to ensure they're getting the most out of your learning program. Tracking participation, engagement, and completion rates also helps you and your users see the impact training is having on job performance.

Move 2: Test & Retest Your System

Microlearning allows for the easy piloting of lessons and the ability to gather feedback, iterate, and plan the next training slice without slowing down production. In addition, make sure to use an LMS with a full suite of reports and data analytics to create data-driven learning, while correlating performance metrics. You may also choose to add eCommerce capabilities or other features to your product.

**“Sustaining high business performance
is a product of continuous strategic
alignment.”**

Med Yones

President
International Institute of Management

**“The greatest value of a picture is when it
forces us to notice what we never
expected to see.”**

John Tukey (1915 – 2000)

Mathematician
Princeton & Bell Labs



Case Study:

Creating a Micro Lesson, The Grovo Way

A systematic, yet iterative production approach has allowed Grovo to create effective, quality content rapidly and efficiently for a growing digital audience.

Pre-Production

- **DETERMINE LEARNING OBJECTIVE:** We have in-house instructional designers who help us approach our topic from a design and development perspective, assisting in identifying the content and learning objective.
- **SELECT A RAPID DEVELOPMENT FORMAT:** Grovo's chosen format is 60-90 second videos, managed in our own proprietary CMS which allows us to produce lessons in fewer than 8 hours, and entire tracks of content in a single day.
- **ORGANIZE & ANALYZE THE CONTENT:** We script the language, tone, and flow to optimize learning. Then the lesson goes into an iterative pre-production process where we go screen-by-screen, detailing the visual assets needed such as animations, screen-grabs, on-screen instructor direction, supplemental footage like B-roll, and any interaction between these assets.



Case Study:

Creating a Micro Lesson, The Grovo Way (cont.)

Production

- **MAKE IT GRANULAR:** We ensure our micro lessons stand alone, yet fit into learning tracks detailing a larger skill or topic.
- **MAKE IT ENGAGING:** Grovo uses a combination of highly engaging visuals such as original animations, screen-grabs and graphics, with hosted stand-ups that are used as the backbone over which to build the final product. At this point in the process the instructor-driven portion of the lesson is filmed in-studio, while additional live action footage (such as B-roll) is shot, screen captures are obtained, and our animators begin building assets.

Post Production

- **MAKE IT EFFECTIVE:** Our instructional designers and producers prepare mini-assessments to follow each lesson, testing the learner's knowledge. These are loaded into the CMS while all video elements are combined and made to interact during the editing process. Finally, an export of the final product is uploaded into our content management system and goes live on Grovo.com.
- **TEST & RETEST:** We encourage our users to take advantage of their ability to assign lessons to specific users, track participation and engagement, as well as make use of our full suite of reports.

Summary & Conclusion

Microlearning – an essential strategy for creating content that appeals to a digital audience – must follow an iterative, structured design process in order to achieve the most efficient, engaging, and effective results.

Create Microlearning with the Following Options:

Determine Your Learning Objective:

- ✓ Employ an Instructional Design Methodology
- ✓ Work backwards from your end goal

Choose a Rapid Creation Format:

- ✓ Opt for Rapid Creation
- ✓ Choose Your Format

Organize & Analyze the Content:

- ✓ Create an Outline
- ✓ Do a Working Memory Check

Make it Granular:

- ✓ Chunk Your Content
- ✓ Keep Your Goal in Mind

Make it Engaging:

- ✓ Use Context
- ✓ Use Visuals
- ✓ Use Story
- ✓ Make it Sticky: Select a Small Idea, Add an Event, Embed the Idea, Make it Spin

Make it Effective:

- ✓ Add Reference Tools
- ✓ Use Gamification
- ✓ Use Attention Formulas

Test & Retest:

- ✓ Test & Retest Your Learners
- ✓ Test & Retest Your System



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What we do...

Grovo teaches Internet and modern professional skills with over 4,700, 60-90 second video lessons and assessments covering 150 Internet tools, cloud services, and professional topics.

Learn more at:

www.grovo.com

(212) 924-2579

contact@grovo.com

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