Microlearning Solutions

Custom Learning & Performance Group

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What is Microlearning?

Microlearning refers to learning delivered through small, instructional units or learning activities that are focused on a single goal or concept. These learning objects, sometimes referred to as *learning nuggets*, can be organized into topics and courses similar to a traditional curriculum. The power of microlearning, however, comes from the ability to deploy learning nuggets on a standalone basis through an easily accessible portal to support just-in-time learning and performance support. Learners can use well-designed learning nuggets to:

- Develop new knowledge and skills in succinct interactions that fit into busy schedules
- Explore new concepts or procedures at the point of need
- Refresh knowledge and skills previously learned
- Engage in practice activities to enhance and reinforce formal learning
- Perform periodic tasks, such as answering questions from customers or colleagues, more accurately and efficiently
- Pursue individualized plans to enhance performance, based on personal and professional interests

Is Microlearning New?

While the term *microlearning* is fairly recent, the concept is not. Application and technology support sites have long used short tutorials and step-by-step procedures to assist users of their products. Product demonstrations in stores can be a form of microlearning, as is the concept of an elevator pitch. You might recall some forms of microlearning from your childhood: *Schoolhouse Rock* was an excellent example of engaging, effective microlearning, and flashcards and similar classroom tools demonstrate characteristics common in effective microlearning. What has changed in recent years, though, is access to an abundance of learning content through websites, such as YouTube, Ted, and various social media networks. As a result, much of your workforce may have developed an appetite for engaging, concise learning, which in turn, can make traditional organizational learning approaches seem stale and dated.

Why Should Organizations Consider Microlearning Solutions?

According to research from Bersin by Deloitte[i], learners in organizations are overwhelmed, distracted, and impatient, with only 1% of their time available to focus on training in a typical workweek. In other words, modern workers have only 16 minutes per week to focus on learning activities. The research also indicates that many work in non-traditional ways from multiple locations; nearly 40% of them are mobile, using tablets and smartphones to perform activities. Search engines or online courses accessed on demand are the way that 70% of these learners obtain information to do their jobs, and 80% report also learning through collaborative, on-the-job interactions with their colleagues.

Traditional classroom training, webinars, and lengthy online courses, while valuable in many situations, cannot address all the needs of the modern learner. Microlearning can expand and enhance traditional learning offerings to drive continuous learning throughout the organization.

What Benefits does Microlearning Offer?

Microlearning addresses the needs of busy workers. Microlearning solutions, when deployed on easily accessible, searchable platforms, can provide a way for workers to engage in learning, wherever and whenever they need it. Inclusion of social learning and gaming features can entice workers to actively engage in learning, encouraging continual knowledge acquisition and skills development to produce long-term performance gains.

What are Potential Pitfalls in Adoption of a Microlearning Strategy?

Adoption of new approaches can be difficult for most organizations. Introducing microlearning requires change management, with champions who are willing to drive acceptance of the approach to maximize participation.

Embracing microlearning may be most difficult for your learning professionals, the instructional designers and developers involved in producing learning solutions for your organization. Microlearning is not simply a manner of taking existing courses and breaking them into smaller units; designing effective microlearning requires a different design mindset. Your learning professionals need to be open to new ways of engaging learners to generate interest and excitement about your microlearning offerings.

You also need to work closely with your information technology team to gain their endorsement for a deployment strategy that makes microlearning accessible while meeting organizational data security standards.

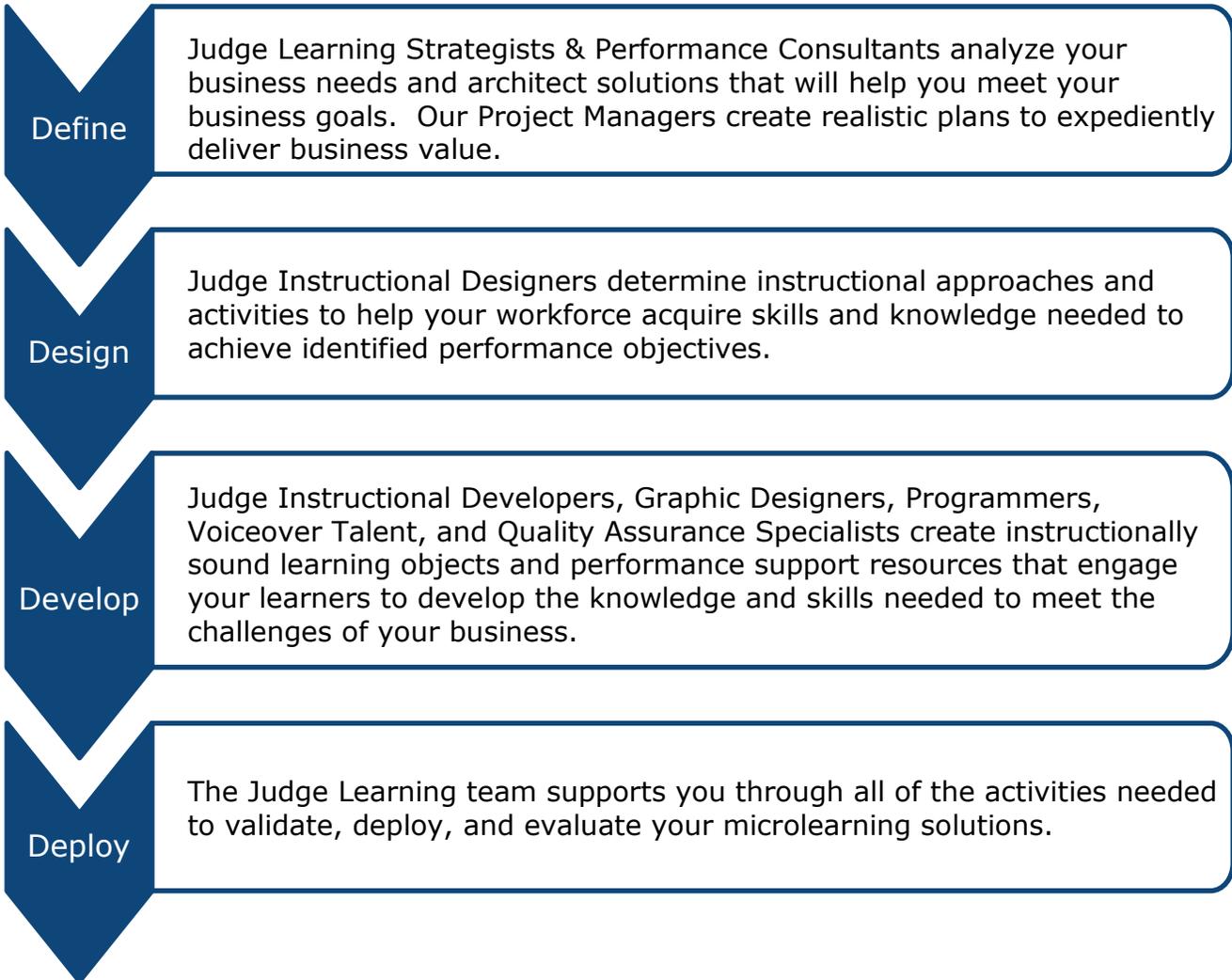## What are Elements of Effective Microlearning Design?

Design guidelines for microlearning incorporate the same techniques used in design of any effective learning programs. Microlearning needs to be learner-centered, with a strong focus on performance, and actively engage learners in the content. When designing microlearning, though, it is important to think about how a series of learning nuggets might be used to accomplish your learning goals. Here are some things to consider while designing microlearning:

- ➢ As with all effective learning, pay close attention to the target audience; identify approaches that best address the needs of various segments of the workforce.
- ➢ Write concrete learning objectives for each topic area; restrict each microlearning nugget to <u>one</u> learning objective.
- ➢ Judiciously curate content to focus on information that is concise, cohesive, and completely relevant to learners.
- ➢ Keep each learning nugget brief, no more than 5 – 10 minutes.
- ➢ Design for mobile learners; consider how each element will look on tablets and smartphones, as well as on desktop computers.
- ➢ Use animation, videos, motion graphics, and infographics, where appropriate.
- ➢ Provide links to supplemental content and other microlearning nuggets for learners who want a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

➢ Integrate a high use of powerful visuals; design effective graphics, such as flow charts, graphs, tables, and labeled diagrams to simplify complex information.

➢ Use consistent styles, templates, and icons to help learners interpret information without excessive text.

➢ Use gaming elements, such as badges and challenges, to keep learners engaged and motivated.

➢ Create small assessments, separate from the content nuggets, that learners can take to either test out of some topics or check understanding of completed topics.

➢ Give learners control over their own learning; allow them to choose how frequently they practice their new skills and knowledge.

➢ Pull together a series of microlearning nuggets into a cohesive topic that provides context, content, activities, and assessments, sometimes referred to as *learning arcs*[ii]; this approach will facilitate both standalone usage and repackaging nuggets for different audiences or purposes.

➢ Incorporate spaced repetition and reinforcement strategies into learning arcs to facilitate long-term knowledge retention and transfer of skills to the workplace.

➢ Deploy microlearning in an environment that is easily accessible and searchable, and that also produces analytics that provide true feedback of how frequently learners access the content.

How Can Judge Help You Create Effective Microlearning Solutions?

Judge Learning Solutions has highly experienced learning professionals who can help you create effective microlearning solutions for your organization.

Define

Judge Learning Strategists & Performance Consultants analyze your business needs and architect solutions that will help you meet your business goals. Our Project Managers create realistic plans to expediently deliver business value.

Design

Judge Instructional Designers determine instructional approaches and activities to help your workforce acquire skills and knowledge needed to achieve identified performance objectives.

Develop

Judge Instructional Developers, Graphic Designers, Programmers, Voiceover Talent, and Quality Assurance Specialists create instructionally sound learning objects and performance support resources that engage your learners to develop the knowledge and skills needed to meet the challenges of your business.

Deploy

The Judge Learning team supports you through all of the activities needed to validate, deploy, and evaluate your microlearning solutions.

For more information, call us today at 800-650-0035 or visit our website at https://www.judge.com/services/learning-solutions.

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[i] http://www.bersin.com/Lib/Rs/ShowDocument.aspx?docid=18071
[ii] https://elearningindustry.com/learning-arcs-fastest-way-microlearning