

Channel Learning Is Broken and Microlearning Can Fix It



Whistle Systems Inc
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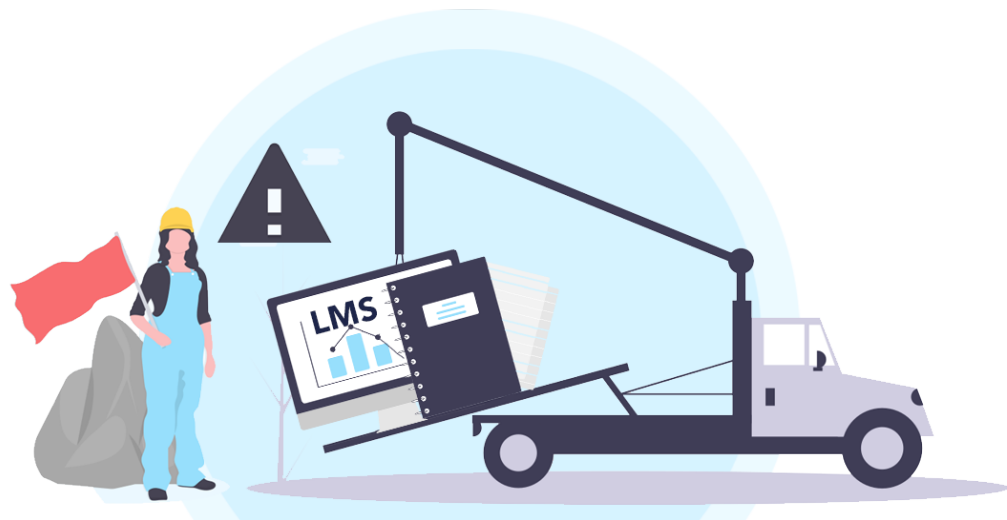
Channel learning is broken

In a Whistle survey of 250 sales channel professionals, 75.6% said they are more effective at selling when they are well informed about the product, and more than half wanted better training programs. Clearly, learning is a critical pillar for a successful sales channel, yet this element is totally broken in most businesses.

Current learning formats center around long format lectures or videos, passive content distribution (an online

library) or conference workshops where most information is forgotten within a few days. According to Harvard researcher Daniel Schacter, people typically forget about 80% of what they learn within 30 days. This “forgetting curve” can be improved by learning information in small quantities to improve retention, also known as the “retention curve”.

The US spends about \$82 billion each year on workplace training and it appears most of that investment is wasted. The answer to this challenge could be microlearning.



About Whistle

Whistle is the first company to combine the benefits of microlearning with the other key elements of behavior change – motivation (micropayments and recognition), cues (AI informed nudges and recommendations) and removed friction (user centric design and mobile centric approach). Together these multiply the impacts of microlearning to maximize the impact on business outcomes.

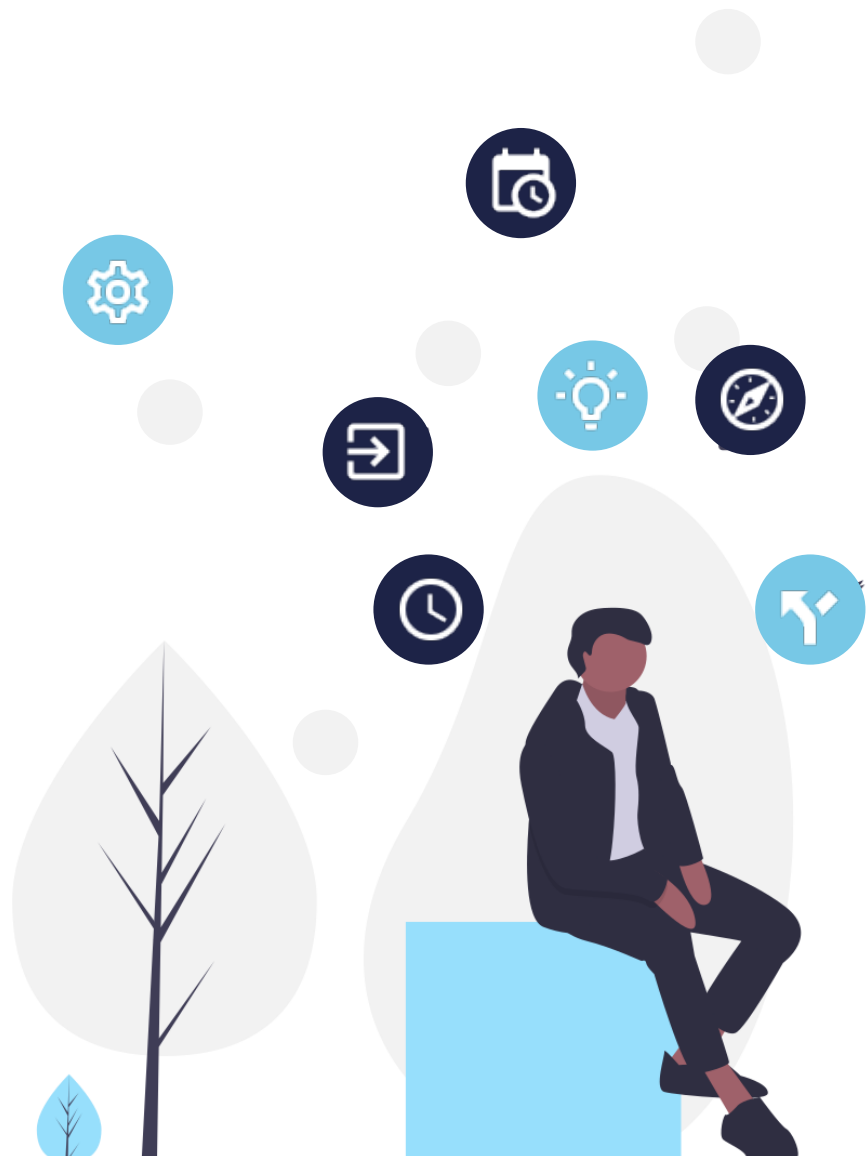
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What is microlearning?

Microlearning is the concept of breaking down learning into small pieces of information that only require a few minutes to consume making it is easier for our brains to process and understand.

Microlearning is gaining in popularity due to growing research that suggests it is a better learning format than a lecture, presentation or more traditional longer-form learning methods, and because it more closely resembles the patterns of how we consume other content on mobile devices and websites, such as social media platforms, text messaging, etc.



Advantages of the microlearning format

1. Improved knowledge retention

There are a number of studies going back to the 1950s evaluating the ability of our brains to retain information. Harvard University cognitive psychologist George Miller argued in 1956 that the average person can hold about 7 to 9 objects in short-term memory. Most people can relate to this phenomenon in our ability to remember numbers. It is much easier to remember 10 phone numbers that are seven digits long, than it is to remember a single, seventy-digit number. The format of information is relevant to how our brains hold information in memory.

Breaking down information into a smaller format increases our ability to remember that information. A recent microlearning-specific study by the University of Dresden tested students and compared test results for the same information presented in two different learning formats: traditional (long format) and microlearning. **Students who learned in small chunks answered questions in 28% less time and did 20% better on answers than the student learning in a more traditional format!** ¹

2. Increased convenience and content delivery is better suited to mobile consumption preferences

Each day five billion people around the globe spend 4.2 hours on their mobile device, a platform commanding more attention than any other type of media device or technology. The most popular forms of media consumed on these devices are short videos (example: Youtube,) or very-short format videos (TikTok, Facebook, LinkedIn). **Research shows the most popular video lengths are 4.3 minutes ² and 15.6 seconds ³ respectively.**

Creating learning content that mimics the consumption patterns and format of our daily patterns increases the likelihood people will engage with the content. Having constant access to that content allows a participant to consume learning at any convenient time.

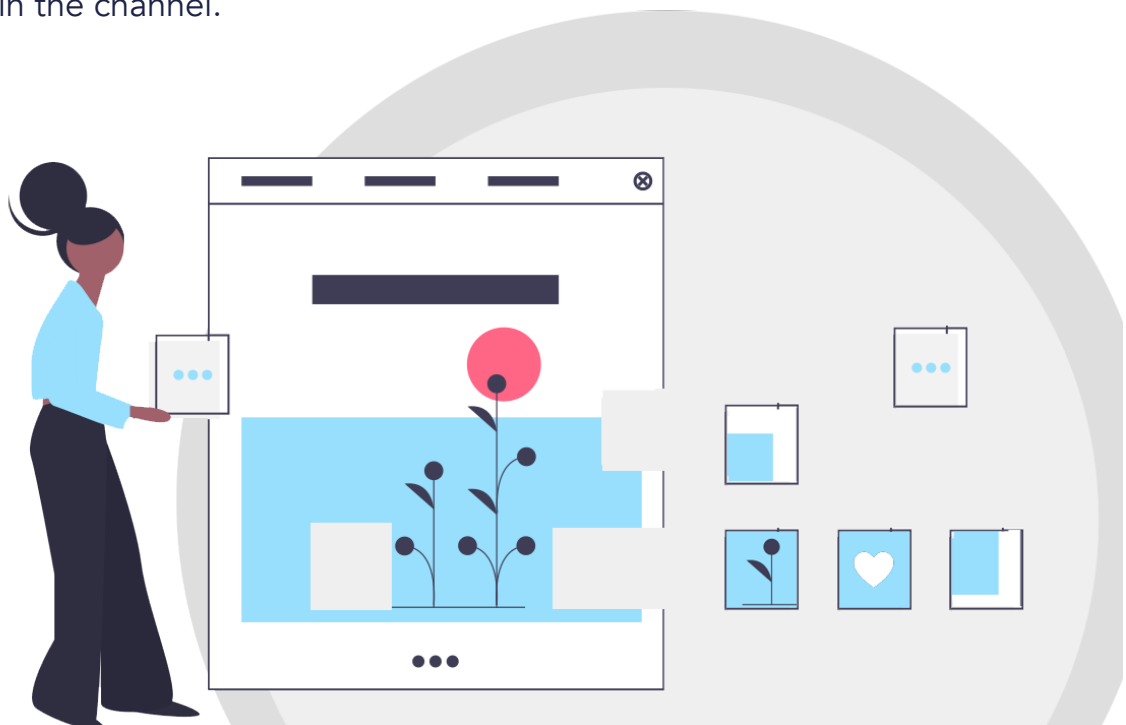
The typical process of logging into a desktop computer, going to and logging into a learning website, finding the appropriate learning content and then trying to maintain focus for an extended period of time (while also competing with the phone for attention) is becoming less and less attractive.

3. Keeping content up to date is more efficient

As technology continues to race forward, the lifecycle of products continues to shrink. More efficient design and manufacturing processes, super-efficient global distribution, increasing competitive pressures and a consumer appetite for more advanced technology are all contributing to lifecycle change.

Companies have also realized that making a less durable, but also less expensive product means that people will often upgrade to a new model vs repair on old one. Companies are also producing multiple versions of a similar product to better align with different buyer preferences in the marketplace. All these factors create more products - changing more quickly in the channel.

With a larger portfolio of changing products, information about new products and features needs to be constantly updated. Learning is becoming more important at the same time keeping someone's attention is getting harder. Microlearning components can be more easily reused because many sub-systems are reused and repacked for new, or different components. The microlearning format not only saves a great deal of time and money, but also easier to focus attention on the new learning elements for people consuming the learning content.



4. Integrating and combining content to make learning more customized

Most people have a preference of learning modality, written vs visual for example. Microlearning provides more flexibility in curriculum design because it is easy to customize different pieces of content without having to customize an entire learning module. This customization value also extends to cultural or linguistic preferences.

For example, if a microlearning curriculum is made of five chapters, that are each composed of 10 learning elements, it would not be difficult to create custom versions of the same learning curriculum because only a small portion of the 50 learning elements would need to be customized to address a learning style or maybe an introduction video is produced in several geographies while the balance of the learning elements are standardized. To the participant, the entire experience would feel customized to their situation and possibly learning preferences increasing engagement and learning impact.

5. Easier reinforcement and mastery

One of the key findings from recent microlearning research is that small, frequent quizzes improve retention by 20% compared to learning through a traditional long format video or lecture with one test at the end. Measuring mastery in this way also more clearly highlights retention problems that could exist because of curriculum design – ensuring the information is being communicated in a way that makes it easy for people to comprehend.

Microlearning also allows flexibility of information reinforcement because focus can be given to very specific areas that need attention. For example, if someone struggled with one or two micro-learning topics, it is easy to revisit those topics without having to consume an entire chapter of content.

Microlearning and frequent small quizzes improved retention by 20%

6. Increased motivation opportunities

Research clearly shows time plays an important role in learning and motivation. The shorter format of microlearning creates more immediate opportunities to recognize success and increase motivation of the participant. This is important because **giving small, immediate incentives is 3x more effective than one large reward at the end.** For example, giving three \$10 rewards for completing each third of a task, has the same impact as a \$90 incentive for a whole task!

This behavior science principal “temporal discounting” is true if the reward is money or something as simple as being recognized by a peer or earning a badge. The more frequent and immediate the reinforcement, the greater the impact.

7. Managing learning friction points

Microlearning is made up of many individual elements that provide clear lines between learning components and distinct concepts. This allows the person designing or administering a learning program to identify friction points impacting the program. As a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, the same is true for a learning program and its respective learning elements. If someone is frustrated because a concept is not clear, it can demotivate people and leave them frustrated with the entire learning program.

The faster these friction points can be identified, the faster the overall effectiveness of the learning program can be increased. And because microlearning is divided into discrete learning elements, its easier and more efficient to update and smooth these friction points.



Better business outcomes

Companies invest in learning to produce better business outcomes: increased productivity, better employee or customer retention, improved satisfaction and engagement – all drivers of better revenue and profit. Yet, in our survey, sales channel professionals say that most learning is still done in antiquated formats. The most common learning programs are still in-person, classroom-type programs. Mobile, microlearning programs are provided to less than 1/3 of channel sales people surveyed.

According to several research efforts, microlearning has a significant impact on business outcomes and key metrics. Johnson & Johnson Vision Care shifted to a microlearning format from traditional training programs for eye care professionals and recorded an increase in online course completion by 740%! ⁴

Another study conducted by the Aberdeen Group ^{5,6} showed companies that offer microlearning had significantly better business outcomes over the course of a year when compared to companies not leveraging microlearning:

- **Customer satisfaction improved 21%**
- **Revenue per full time employee improved 39%**
- **Employee retention improved 7%**

Regardless of program type, having the knowledge and skills to be successful is critical. Microlearning can multiply the impact of the investments you are already making in your employees, partners and customers. It represents an opportunity to grow both your top and bottom line by getting more out of what you are already doing.



Endnotes

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Contributors



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President

For over two decades Chris has built high performing organizations at the intersection of innovative technology and a people centric approach. With a background spanning start-up companies, global corporations, higher education and as the CIO for the City of St. Louis – Chris has a unique vantage point to understand how technology and culture shape our ever-changing work experience. He has spoken at conferences around the country, universities and contributed to numerous publications on employee experience, people analytics and building entrepreneurial organizations.

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Drew Carter

Chief Executive Officer

Drew brings a combination of executive leadership, business strategy, technical software experience and data analytics to his work. He has worked in large and small corporations, worked in industry building software products enjoyed by millions and served as a consultant helping companies better compete in the digital age. Throughout his career he has thread a keen understanding of commercial strategy with contemporary technology to deliver hundreds of millions of dollars of incremental value.

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Learn more

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Visit our website to find additional blog posts, white papers and research on microlearning, micropayments, behavioral science and other ways to improve your channel ecosystem.

www.weWhistle.com

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