

# Microlearning: The New Standard For Compliance Programs





## ADAPTING IN THE AGE OF SHORT ATTENTION SPANS

There's an inherent friction between employees and compliance training. Whether training is delivered live or online, "compliance" conjures up descriptors like "dry and boring," or worse, "sleep aid." Compliance trainers still presenting traditional long-form modules know firsthand the pain of facing a disengaged audience. Neither in-person nor online audiences have the patience needed to absorb long-form training messages. As a corporate compliance professional, you must recalibrate.

Federal sentencing guidelines have long called for "effective" compliance programs. What does effective training look like in today's leading companies? Bristol-Myers Squibb, Deere & Co. and VMware are among the Compliance Wave Members who have recognized that utilizing short bursts of engaging content is necessary in keeping up with best practices.

So there is hope we can reach this short-attention-span society. Hope comes in the form of *microlearning*.

## What Is *Microlearning*?

Microlearning involves chunking content into short, stand-alone information bursts, each three to seven minutes long. This teaching style is tailored to match the brain's working memory and attention span.

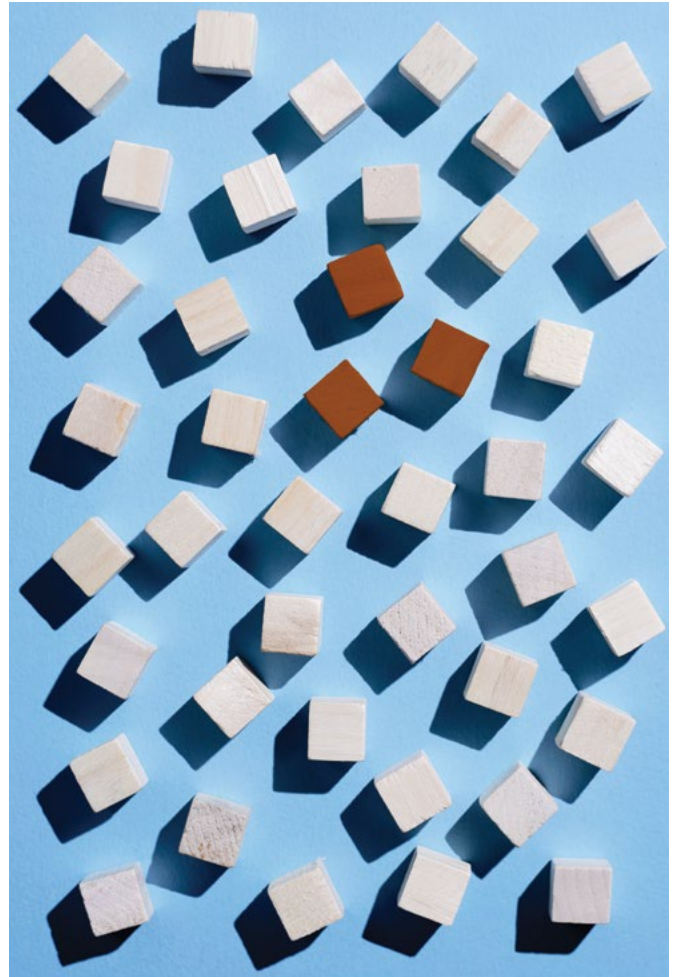
Our short-term working memory retains small amounts of information at a time. To remember a phone number, for example, we “chunk” the seven digits into two separate chunks of three and four digits (123-4567), rather than memorizing the sequence 1-2-3-4-5-6-7. To transfer a short-term memory, which will be forgotten in a minute or less, into a long-term memory, repetition is necessary.

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To optimize compliance training to match our attention spans, microlearning lessons should be three to seven minutes long. Researchers have found that after the learner settles in, attention lapses at the 30-second mark. Lapses in attention spike at 4.5 to 5.5 minutes, and then recur at 7 to 9 minutes, and again at 9 to 10 minutes, during a lecture.

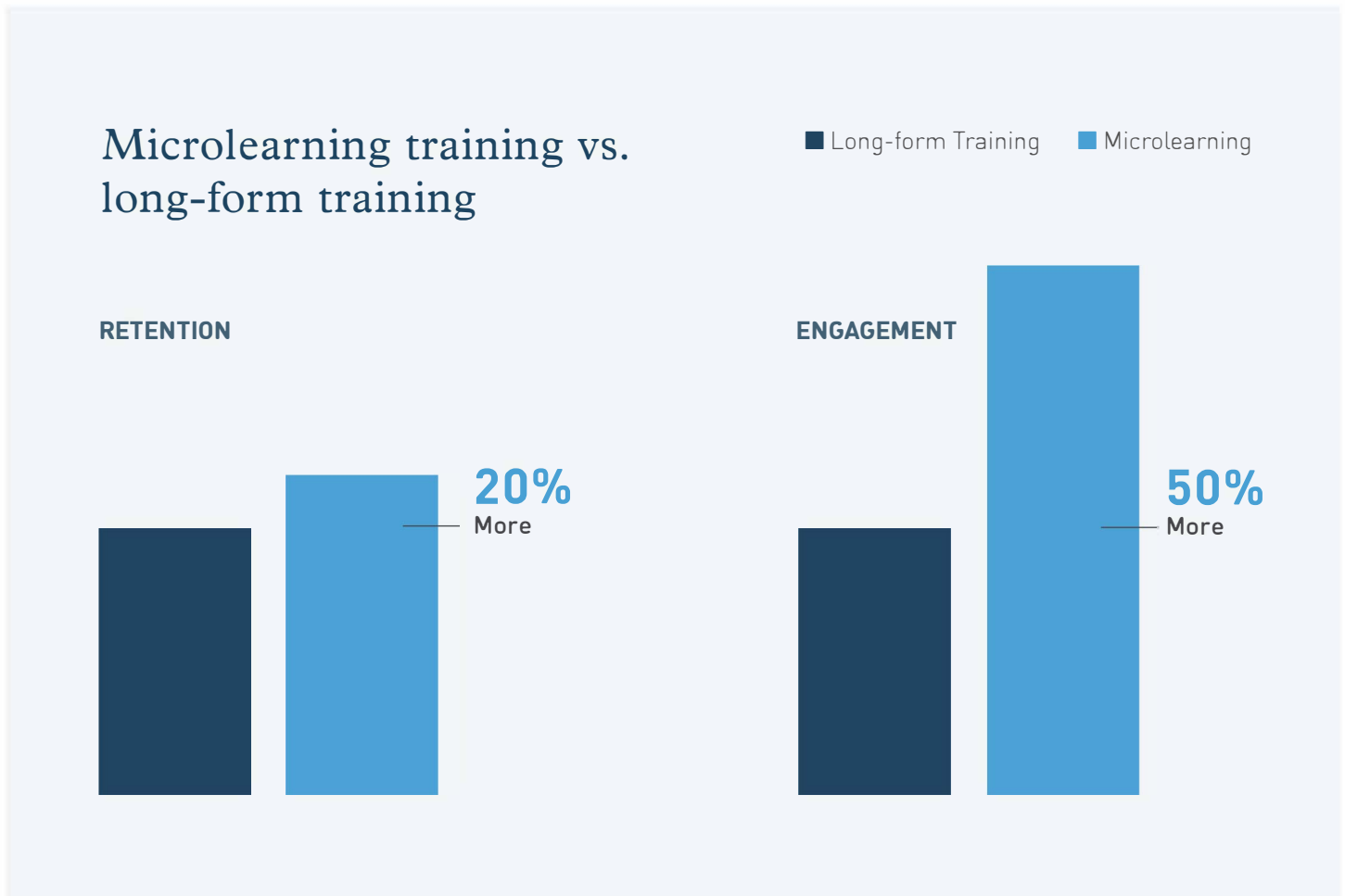
All learners can benefit from teacup-sized tutorials delivered in engaging formats. Microlearning is especially useful for moral and ethical reminders, which behavior economist and Predictably Irrational author Dan Ariely has found learners tend to forget more quickly.

Even when long-form training is necessary for deeper topics, such as bribery or fair competition rules, microlearning reminder tools can support the message.

Microlearning is used for targeted instructional design that engages your learners, improves their retention and, most importantly, drives them to change their behavior patterns.

# How Effective Is Microlearning?

A 2015 German study found that training using microlearning yields 20% more retention compared to long-form training.<sup>1</sup> It also creates 50% more employee engagement<sup>2</sup>. A recent Gallup study found 68.5% of American workers are either not engaged, or are actively disengaged, from their work<sup>3</sup>, costing companies billions of dollars. And according to Harvard professor and business management thought leader John Kotter, 70% of business transformation efforts fail due to lack of engagement<sup>4</sup>. By improving engagement, microlearning creates an enormous opportunity for compliance trainers.



1 <http://jec.sagepub.com/content/51/4/397.abstract>

2 <http://info.shiftelearning.com/blog/numbers-dont-lie-why-bite-sized-learning-is-better-for-your-learners-and-you-too>

3 <http://www.gallup.com/poll/188144/employee-engagement-stagnant-2015.aspx>

4 <http://www.kotterinternational.com/the-8-step-process-for-leading-change/>



# SEVEN TIPS FOR MICRO COMMUNICATION & LEARNING

We've distilled our successes for using microlearning down to these seven tips for compliance professionals:

## 1. It's quick

Today's employees have an extremely limited amount of time for training of any kind. Because microlearning takes just a few minutes, it acts as an effective solution for tight schedules.

**TIP:** The most effective compliance education videos using micro communication & learning are five minutes or less, scripted at 120 words per minute.

## 2. It's simple

A recent study showed that 65% of users feel that online learning modules contain too much information. Single-concept learning, which involves one learning objective per lesson, is ideal for preventing cognitive overload.

**TIP:** It's best to keep your compliance communications limited to a single concept at a time.

## 3. It's repetitive

Knowledge decay begins immediately after training. To achieve lasting, successful behavior changes, you need repeated retrieval to improve learner retention and create solid brain pathways. With repeated retrieval, compliance trainers quiz learners with two to five questions based on the current lesson. Once learners answer the questions correctly, they progress to the next module.

**TIP:** Follow compliance training sessions with short quizzes to ensure that information is being absorbed.

## 4. It's accessible

The American Society for Training and Development says that learners only retain 10% of their training<sup>5</sup>, and that the other 90% of it is gone by the time they return to work. Accessible microlearning assets make it easier for your users to revisit and relearn needed skills.

**TIP:** Make your lessons platform agnostic – equally viewable and user-friendly on a tablet, desktop computer or smartphone – so they remain as accessible as possible.



<sup>5</sup> <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204425904578072950518558328>

## 5. It's multi-modal

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You can reinforce your key message to the same employee through an integrated approach using multi-modal, multi-channel lessons with techniques such as videos, infographics, memes, intranet blog posts and newsletter articles. This ensures that regardless of the employee's unique learning style, one of your messages will connect.

**TIP:** Vary the media in which you deliver compliance lessons to ensure your employees receive information in a way that works with their learning style.



## 6. It's interruptive

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Delivering information in an unpredictable fashion helps learning retention. People are programmed for certain behaviors and ways of thinking. Your lesson must serve as a "pattern interrupt," disrupting their conditioned pattern so they're startled into paying attention. Pattern interrupt occurs when an emotionally startling element of surprise — like a moment of irreverent humor — frees up the psychological space for the learner to see a new point of view.

**TIP:** Deliver your compliance information in unexpected ways, such as humorous videos, to help employees internalize your messaging.

## 7. It meets objective standards

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When using microlearning tactics, you need to confirm that they are, in fact, effective. Luckily, SCORM standards make it easy to verify your microlearning content has integrated effectively with your compliance communication strategy.

**TIP:** Source your micro communication & learning content from a company that offers SCORM-compliant tools to ensure your compliance communications are being delivered effectively.

# CREATE A BEST PRACTICES PROGRAM WITH MICROLEARNING

You can take this opportunity to become an agent of change in your organization. Whether you replace code of conduct training as a whole with multiple short-form training interactions or use microlearning to support your long-form training, your organization will see improved employee engagement, retention and behavioral change.

Engaging videos



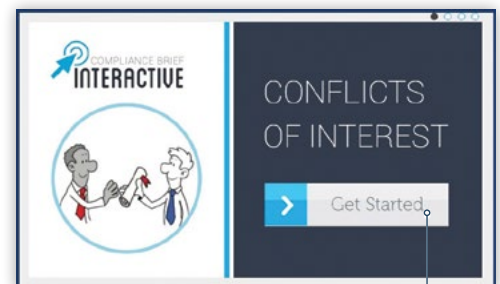
Globally adaptable with a wide range of translation offerings



Easily customizable resource material



Additional resources like sharable graphics



Interactive content

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