MICROTRAINING IN CONTEXT:

The Path to Faster Technology Adoption

VisualSP®

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Benjamin Franklin once said, "an investment in knowledge pays the best interest". He also said, "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn". Taking the two quotes together, you could conclude that investing in knowledge acquisition is a good thing, but return on that investment depends on the way that knowledge is transferred.

Organizations are faced with a common hurdle these days: how to train employees on new technology and various compliance policies effectively and efficiently. Knowledge transfer is tricky and doesn't always get the same results. Delays in getting employees to learn and adopt a new system can be costly.

No matter what the reason is for migrating to a new or updated system, adopting technology can disrupt operations significantly. For example, when you're introducing a content management system, ineffective training and slow or nonexistent adoption can negatively impact productivity organization-wide.

Other complex topics such as corporate policies, regulatory requirements and governance restrictions are even more critical. Inadequate training for these issues leads to costly mistakes, damaged corporate credibility, lost revenue and heavy fines.

Nowhere is the pain of poor training more evident than during an employee's onboarding process. New hires bring with them the risk that the training that you provide will be wasted if they leave shortly after being hired.

According to PricewaterhouseCoopers, "Nearly one in three newly hired employees leave the company voluntarily or involuntarily before the end of their first year. Companies typically have little opportunity to recoup their investment in new employees who leave".

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Train Like A Champion

The number of employees leaving before the first year is complete has been steadily climbing. This is creating a huge loss for companies. Saratoga, the human capital consulting service of PricewaterhouseCoopers, estimates that costs can be 50 percent to 150 percent of the annual salary for the job.

While there may be a number of possible reasons employees might leave, frustration with their responsibilities is a big one. Many times, that frustration is due to a lack of clear understanding of how to do their work.

There is a growing gap between the training that organizations provide and what learners need in order to be successful in their jobs. According to the Association for Talent Development, 92 percent of learning professionals believe the most popular tool is traditional classroom training, but only 38 percent believe that [it] meets their learners' needs." Clearly there is a real need to reduce the time + cost of new hire training – while also increasing it's effectiveness.

Training Challenges

CHALLENGE #1. KNOWLEDGE RETENTION

Imagine for a moment that in two months you're planning to travel to a location that's unfamiliar. You decide to attend a lecture about the region you'll be visiting. The lecture will be your primary introduction to the area. This lecture turns out to be very informative, revealing some great spots to visit, and leaving you with several things to think about.

When you touch down at your destination two months later, how much of that lecture do you think you'll recall? You likely shifted your focus to work and family issues, everyday tasks, events, and more which popped up during the period prior to departure. Now that you've arrived, would you benefit from some guidebooks, maps,

etc. to help make the most of your trip?

This example points out a critical issue when it comes to training employees. Many times, they aren't ready to apply the knowledge they acquired immediately following the training session. So what happens to that knowledge?

More formal learning environments, such as instructor-led training classes, can, indeed, provide in-depth information about a new system. Organizations spent an average of $1,208 per employee on training and development, according to Training Magazine. But, according to various reports, most people forget 45 percent to 60 percent of the information they receive within 24 to 48 hours. Would Ben Franklin say that was money well spent?

Research by Microsoft and Time magazine in Canada surveyed 2,000 participants and studied the brain activity of 112 others using electroencephalograms (EEGs). Microsoft found that since the year 2000, around the time we started using mobile devices, the average attention span dropped from 12 seconds to eight seconds. It was reported in the same Time article, that goldfish have an attention span of 9 seconds, one whole second greater than humans!

Consider the hugely successful TED talks, they focus on presentations with limits to 18 minutes and report that sessions over 15 minutes lose the student's attention dramatically.

Thus many authors would make the case that a lecture session should last no more than 10–15 min to accommodate the biological set point of a student's attention span.

CHALLENGE #2. LACK OF EFFECTIVE TRAINING AND SUPPORT TOOLS

Despite growing into a multi-billion dollar industry, employee training hasn't been able to adequately transfer knowledge in many cases. For example, an AIIM survey showed that almost 50 percent of enterprises reported that "lack of expertise" was the top ongoing issue with digital adoption.

Task expertise among end users is typically low when new systems are installed, and traditional classroom training or a "Google it" approach doesn't quickly provide

the necessary task competency levels that companies are looking for. The primary reason is that employees need training – more specifically, performance support – when they have a moment of need, not at a predetermined time.

They also need clear and accurate instruction that is easily accessible from a reliable source. Search engines, help files, and video channels can be challenging to get the best answer efficiently and may lead to confusion among workers. Most current training or knowledge sharing solutions don't get the job done effectively and efficiently.

> **59% of Millennial workers have indicated that organizations must provide state-of-the-art training to convince them to accept a position**

Employers are feeling the strain of poor training outcomes, and traditional methods aren't living up to expectations. A recent survey of hundreds of employees from multiple industries revealed that more than one-third said their company's techniques aren't a productive use of time and another third said they weren't interesting or engaging.

Unfortunately, once a trainer leaves the training environment and employees try to apply their new skills, there are few efficient and effective resources available to support the application at the workspace. Workers routinely wish they could be able to review training content at a later time.

Consider this: Millennials are a key employment group these days. By 2022, this group will form 50 percent of the workforce, and they are driving the way companies instruct their employees. Fifty-nine percent of millennial workers have indicated that organizations must provide state-of-the-art training to convince them to accept a position.

Solution To Training Challenges

The solution to improving digital adoption and compliance training is to leverage the strength of an increasingly popular self-directed e-learning model. This model puts the learning tools for a new work task within the work setting in which they perform the task. The concept behind the development of these tools is performance support, the enablement of workers to learn new tasks by engaging with training content *while they work.*

On-demand, contextual, microlearning performance support provided in the user workspace enables workers to get the training support they need, when and where they need it. Training delivered in this way helps new technology users perform better and build task competency faster.

In the e-book Performance Support: Insights From Jane Hart, organizational learning expert Jane Hart made several core observations about these critical employee training needs:

1. Employees prefer to learn on demand

"Often, [when] people are faced with learning or performance problems, they tend to look for quick and easy on-demand solutions, which they can just pull down as required. Rather than processing a package of eLearning courses…people prefer to pick out things as and when they need them."

2. Employees prefer short bursts of learning

"The time spent on learning is shortening. In fact, research shows that the average viewer's attention span for videos on YouTube is around just a minute! In other words, people get what they want or need from the resource and then leave it. If it doesn't deliver what they want in the first few seconds, they leave very quickly."

3. Employees prefer to learn in the flow of work

"Learning [takes] place…in the workflow, as people do their jobs. Traditionally, people stepped out of the workflow to go to a classroom or use a platform for training. Now, they'll only do that if it's necessary. What they want to is find help

when they need it, as they're doing their jobs, and then just get on with their work. They don't want to spend time adding to the workflow unless they need to."

Two Components to Maximize Technology Training

MICROTRAINING

Microtraining provides learning in short, digestible, focused segments. In a SkillSoft survey, 40% of workers surveyed said they didn't have time to complete the training they needed. Add to that: 24x7Learning.com tells us that two-thirds of information workers "believe that small snippets of information are easy to retain and make for more interesting learning" Microtraining works better because it's sticky – the principles get absorbed and retained instead of overwhelming learners.

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skillsoft©

TRAINING IN CONTEXT

Contextual learning has been defined as "learning [that] takes place when teachers… present information in a way that students are able to construct meaning, based on their own experiences." Applying this principle to the workplace means that training must be delivered in a manner that allows the worker to learn through the experience of completing a task in real life. When workers learn in the context of performing their jobs, performance will be better. They get an immersive experience, where they are presented with real-world opportunities to connect learning with their work tasks.

WORKERS PREFER CONTEXTUAL LEARNING

According to Training Journal, "Companies are instituting informal ways of learning in which content with best practices and benchmarks for employees are available when and where the opportunity to use it arises."

Entrepreneur Magazine cited a SkillSoft survey of over 1,000 office workers that revealed "33 percent said they prefer to learn by feeling or experiencing what they're learning about. Hands-on training gives employees the opportunity to apply what they're learning directly to their job".

> Training content can be created in a short form that's easily digestible, and then provided where they need it, when they need it, how they need it.

Contextualized learning has several advantages. First, it minimizes knowledge transfer distance. The learner doesn't need to recall training from an hour, day, week, or month earlier. They're able to gain knowledge at the moment of need. As a consequence, they also don't need to cover on as much training content as they would during a full training session. The training content can be created in a short form that's easily digestible, and then provided where they need it, when they need it, how they need it.

Along with improving the process of applying what has been learned, there is a significant organizational benefit to contextual microtraining: scalability. Unlike classroom training, which may be limited by budget constraints, there are no limits to how many people can use the system for training purposes. In a world of distributed workforces, information can be made available to everyone in the company in a cost-effective way.

The Contextual Microtraining Approach

The objective for training workers is to improve on-the-job competency. In order to facilitate deep digital adoption and real-world compliance, the approach must be well-defined and address the key points of need that workers will have.

LEAD WITH STRATEGY

Improving your organization's digital adoption and compliance has to begin with a clear strategy for onboarding and training. You must become a problem-solving organization. Focus team leaders on ways to address the challenges that inhibit performance. A problem-solving organization looks for solutions that reduce the resistance that occurs when new technology is introduced.

When considering a new training technology, talk to team members about existing knowledge-transfer challenges and user frustrations. Then look for a solution that will directly address those challenges and frustrations. By taking a solution-oriented approach and integrating technology that meets employee needs, it will be easier to integrate the technology into daily workflows.

Introduce a training solution to key stakeholders first: administrators, developers, designers, etc. Once they are comfortable, you can roll it out to your broader employee population. Educate team members on the value of the new technology, and highlight how it will make their work faster or easier.

This new strategy has to start at the top. Executives and leaders must understand and accept how new learning models will help improve productivity and reduce wasteful costs.

ADDRESS THE FIVE MOMENTS OF LEARNING NEED

Dr. Conrad Gottfredson, an expert on performance support in the workplace, coined the term "five moments of need" to describe the framework used to map the multiple learning and performance support opportunities in any organization:

1. When people are learning how to do something for the first time (New)

2. When people are expanding the breadth and depth of what they have learned (More).

3. When they need to act upon what they have learned; this includes planning what they will do, remembering what they may have forgotten, or adapting their performance to a unique situation. (Apply)

4. When problems arise, or things break or don't work the way they were intended. (Solve)

5. When people need to learn a new way of doing something; which requires them to change skills that are deeply ingrained in their performance practices. (Change)

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In order to foster successful learning/training, end users have to be engaged at these moments of need. They'll improve task competency if they are able to learn how to do their work in real time. This delivery of real-time guidance is called Just-in-Time Learning.

Just-in-Time Learning®

According to Training Magazine, "An [integrated training] portal can be created providing pre-populated, highly relevant content from the industry's most respected thought leaders. It can be customized and integrated into an existing portal, learning management system (LMS), enterprise intranets, mobile devices, and more. This… brings learning into the workflow, providing context-based learning opportunities."

That is what VisualSP has created in their web-based help system.

One of the advantages of providing Just-in-Time Learning, rather than allowing workers to rely on a web search, is that the employee can be confident that the answers are the most updated, valuable and from leading resources. Searching produces less reliable and less authoritative information. There are risk and cost factors connected to workers aimlessly searching the web for guidance. Searching through myriad potential sources wastes time and leads to inconsistent learning outcomes.

ABSTRACT LEARNING VERSUS JUST-IN-TIME LEARNING

Abstract learning, which takes place during training sessions, doesn't transfer easily to work situations. Learners are able to immediately perform on abstract problems, but are not necessarily able to apply the acquired knowledge in specific contexts – at the moment of need.

Abstract learning can be beneficial, but will workers be able to recall that information when they need it most? Just-in-Time Learning leverages context and microtraining to impart knowledge in the user work space.

BETTER TRAINING OUTCOMES

A report titled "Building Staff Engagement" revealed that learning innovation through a performance support system (such as VisualSP solutions) results in a 23% improvement in the speed of a new system rollout, and a 12% reduction in time to proven competency.

Among the key performance indicators for learning that have been improved are:

▸ Reduced time to competence for using new systems
▸ Increased productivity
▸ Reduced errors

INCREASED CAPABILITY TO DEAL EFFICIENTLY WITH PROBLEMS WITHOUT ESCALATION

For information workers, the training experience is critical to strong adoption and faster time to value. From the workers' perspective, the goal when they are learning a new system is typically to get the job done.

"It simply isn't acceptable to throw learners over the classroom…wall into the workflow, and then hope that what we did during the online or class event will magically transfer to successful job performance. It doesn't. We know full well that learning doesn't stick unless you put in place provisions that support performance in the workflow." Dr. Conrad Gottfredson & Bob Mosher

By enabling workers to get training in microlearning modules on demand

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and in context, a number of tangible emotional benefits may be experienced including:

- Reduced frustration
- Improved confidence
- Better job loyalty

Information workers are increasingly faced with the challenge of adopting new systems in a sustainable way. Most traditional technology training approaches don't accomplish this effectively and efficiently. With performance support, workers learn and work at the same time, creating better technology adoption outcomes.

GET STARTED TODAY

Visit **VisualSP** for more information on what Contextual Microlearning is all about and how it can help Your organization.

Join over 2 million active users worldwide who are already experiencing the benefits of VisualSP in their environment. **Reach out to us** and let's schedule a private demo for your team to see how we can help unfrustrate your users by helping you provide them learning and important communication at the moment-of-need, in the flow of their work and in context of their environment.