



THE CASE FOR AGILE MICROLEARNING™

**A Workflow Learning Approach to Training,
Knowledge Retention, and Performance Support**

ottolearn®
AGILE MICROLEARNING

A PRODUCT OF NEOVATION LEARNING SOLUTIONS

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Dan, the founder of Neovation Learning Solutions, is obsessed with improving digital learning and training. A frequent and engaging speaker at eLearning events, Dan is sure to make learners and L&D professionals alike question long-held beliefs and stretch their thinking about how people learn and retain information.

Pam is a research junkie who enjoys sharing her eLearning expertise to help you make sense of learning science and technology. She has a knack for explaining technical solutions and providing data-driven articles and white papers that you can use to improve learner experience and create eLearning that sticks.

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CHOOSE YOUR OWN TRAINING EXPERIENCE

If you could create an ideal training experience, what would that look like?

	EXPERIENCE A	EXPERIENCE B
Developing and deploying training...	Takes several months	Takes a few days or weeks
Updating training...	Is costly, slow, and rarely done	Is a simple, ongoing process
Training success means...	Learners score at least 80 percent on a 10-question quiz that randomly touches on 10 out of 60 key concepts covered in the training	Learners demonstrate 98 percent mastery of all concepts covered in training
Training is...	Something learners do once a year for a set amount of time	Continuous and interleaved with practice that identifies and eliminates learners' weak spots and knowledge gaps
The best training...	Delivers the same content to all learners	Personalizes each learner's content to what they need to know
The desired result of training is...	100 percent completion and "pass" rate	Measurable improvement in specific, targeted business goals or outcomes
Ideally, employees will...	Spend a fixed amount of time on training (such as a 1-hour module) regardless of prior experience	Spend as little time as possible doing training while mastering all needed information without interrupting their workflow
Modern learners generally prefer to...	Spend 60 minutes completing comprehensive training modules	Spend 2 minutes a day practicing skills and knowledge they need to know for their jobs

CHOOSE YOUR OWN TRAINING EXPERIENCE

If you could create an ideal training experience, what would that look like?

DID YOU CHOOSE TRAINING EXPERIENCE A?

Experience A describes typical eLearning. Your L&D team or eLearning vendor spends several months designing, storyboarding, and developing an eLearning course. This course, typically a SCORM module, is uploaded to your LMS and delivered, often annually, to all employees.

Managers mandate their employees complete the training by a certain date. They send out reminders, perhaps offer incentives, and might need to hound individual learners to ensure that everyone completes their training before the deadline.

Learners dread the annual training; they feel it takes too long and repeats too much material, year after year. Most procrastinate, waiting until the last minute to look at it. They click through the training as quickly as they can (or pay their kids to!) and take the quiz, which is designed to be easy to pass or allow unlimited attempts.

At the end of the training period, managers proudly show that 100 percent of their learners have completed and “passed” the training. But there’s a problem: They cannot show any improvement in KPIs or be sure that their employees remember anything from the training.

Behavior hasn’t changed. Performance hasn’t changed.

Often the only analytics the managers have are completion rates, quiz scores, and perhaps learner feedback. Learner feedback, if measured often, says the training was “too long” if “not engaging.” But learners always say that. Ultimately, managers have done what they had to do – they got everyone to finish training. So, all is well, at least on the surface.

Millions of employees in thousands of companies worldwide participate in annual training that follows this model.

It isn’t enough. You can get better long-term results from a more engaging training experience: Changed behavior, increased efficiency, and measurable improvement.

WOULD YOUR IDEAL TRAINING RESEMBLE EXPERIENCE B?

Experience B describes the future of training and performance enhancement: Agile Microlearning.

This revolutionary approach to training and knowledge retention improves employee training effectiveness and eliminates knowledge gaps.

To get there, though, let’s first explore the point of training.

THE TRAINING INTENT CONTINUUM™

Why do you invest in training your employees?

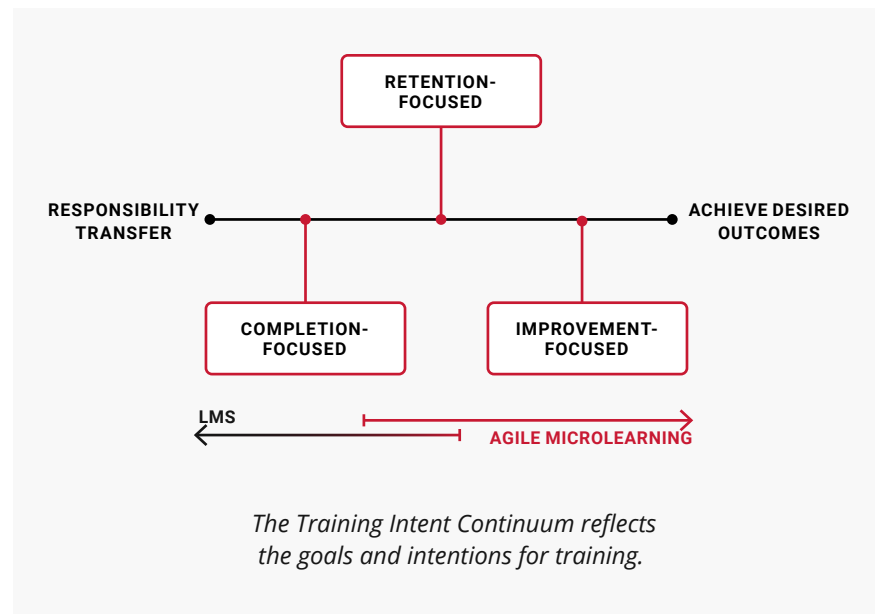
It's not a silly question. In fact, if more managers thought through their answer to that question, there'd be far less click-and-complete eLearning in the corporate world.

Traditional eLearning tends to measure things that ultimately don't matter, like completions. Therefore, most training efforts are focused on **responsibility transfer**.

What's responsibility transfer? If you have learners acknowledge that they've "read and understood" training materials, you've ostensibly made the learners responsible for changing their behavior. Thus the organization has "transferred responsibility" from itself to the learners.

But will employees' behavior change? Do they remember what they read? This is like asking whether consumers who "agree" to the privacy policies and terms of use when they download an app have actually read and understood the voluminous legalese.

Chances are ... No. Exposure to information, and even completion of training, cannot ensure comprehension or retention of information or growth of skills.



Any training goal lands somewhere on this continuum between responsibility transfer and achieving desired outcomes.

Completion-focused training – most SCORM courses, and too much typical eLearning – is at the responsibility transfer end of the continuum.

Farther along the continuum, you'll find **retention-focused** training. Now you're getting somewhere. This training aims to drill knowledge into learners, to make it stick.

THE TRAINING INTENT CONTINUUM™

Unfortunately, though, most companies use an annual training cadence to deliver compliance training and other important information, in hopes that the annual repetition will aid retention. They often assign learners a mandatory training program, allowing learners 30 days to complete the training.

That approach often doesn't achieve desired outcomes because:

- › Learners are likely to forget the material over the intervening 11 months.
- › Learners who have done the annual training before resent the repetition and skip quickly through the course, often missing important new content.
- › The course does not identify or address knowledge gaps, which persist year after year.

Too many learners are still stuck taking annual training or one-size-fits-all eLearning courses. These courses have well-known limitations. Neither the completion-focused nor the retention-focused approach does a reliable job of assessing learners' mastery of the material at the completion of training (much less building long-term retention).

With a misplaced emphasis on getting as many learners as possible to finish training, these courses tend to end with a final "assessment" that asks 10 or 20 multiple-choice questions — even though the course might have introduced or covered dozens of concepts!

It's common to make these quizzes easy or to allow learners multiple attempts to achieve a passing score. This guarantees good results in the analytics being measured: Completions and pass rates.

But if a course covered 60 knowledge points, the quiz posed 10 questions, and learners needed to know only 8 to pass, that is a passing grade based on recall of only 13 percent of the material! And that is immediately after the learner has clicked through the course. How much will they recall two days or a week later?

Traditional 1-hour compliance course
Out of 60 knowledge points, how many are validated?

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A typical course tests learners on only a small fraction of the material covered.

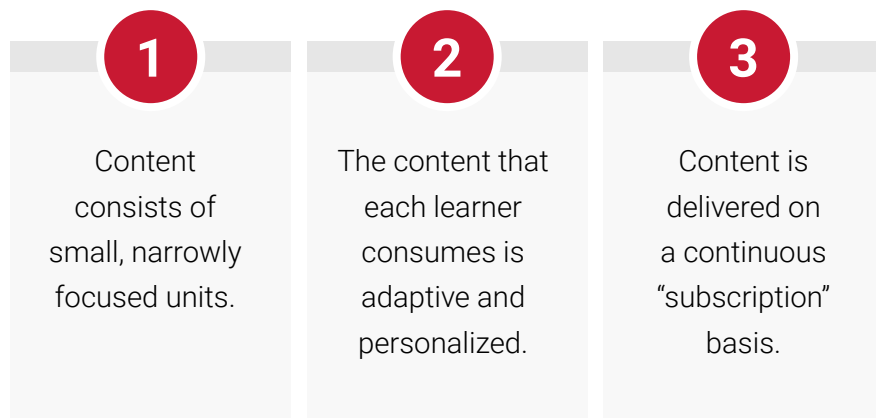
OFFER LEARNERS THE TRAINING OF THE FUTURE: AGILE MICROLEARNING

Improvement-focused training moves you toward the “outcome achievement” end of the Training Intent Continuum. This training targets specific, business-related goals and outcomes. These will vary depending on the type of training and the learner population, of course. Some examples are a reduced number of safety incidents or decreasing average handle time for customer-service calls.

The point is to create training that relates directly to – and drives improvement in – specific job functions that directly tie into business goals. This, in a nutshell, is Agile Microlearning.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF AGILE MICROLEARNING

Agile Microlearning rests on three pillars:



These three elements combine to create a knowledge retention strategy that **improves specific, measurable KPIs**. The development process for Agile Microlearning echoes the Agile methodology as applied to software design and project management: It is iterative. Developers solicit and respond to frequent feedback, creating new iterations or versions with each short development cycle. It focuses on what learners need.

Content developers can create Agile Microlearning quickly and update it easily. But Agile isn’t only about speed. It’s an approach that seeks to improve the entire lifecycle of the training process, with a specific emphasis on achieving desired outcomes.

Rather than focusing on a goal of delivering a training module or getting a specific numbers of employees to complete that training, the Agile Microlearning approach shifts emphasis to ongoing support of employee performance and outcomes. Content is designed around the topics learners need to master.

Knowledge gaps are eliminated through consistent practice and reinforcement. Daily training or knowledge reinforcement becomes an ingrained habit that learners find engaging and enjoyable. Best of all, **Agile Microlearning moves learning into the workflow**. Employees learn, recall, and use content at the moment of need, minimizing performance disruptions.

THREE PILLARS OF AGILE MICROLEARNING

CONTENT WANTS TO BE SMALL

In its natural state, content exists in small chunks: The definition of a term, a step in a process. When people have a question, they turn to Google for an immediate, specific solution — they do not take an hour-long eLearning course.

Even in traditional eLearning courses, content starts small. Courses have chapters or sections and subsections. But learners are expected to consume, digest, and **remember** a huge amount of content in a single sitting in a conventional eLearning course.

The Agile Microlearning approach recognizes that expecting people to master a large amount of content in a single sitting leads to very little recall, to knowledge gaps, and to inefficiency. In Agile Microlearning, content remains in its natural state of small, discrete chunks.

Learners are exposed to the content repeatedly over time and given opportunities to practice applying it. They can access the content easily, on demand, so the microlearning supports their job performance long after they've completed their training.

The small content units are easy to add and update, enhancing the agility of the training and performance support. Content is always kept up to date, easily, without costly annual course redesigns.


ADAPTIVE AND PERSONALIZED

Learners don't care that you've spent hours selecting the perfect stock photos and designing beautiful navigation buttons for their eLearning course. Mostly, they just want to get done with the training and get back to work. They especially hate being required to go through every screen of training they did last year and being "taught" things they could do in their sleep.

Adaptive training respects learners' time and their knowledge. If a learner consistently, confidently, and accurately completes activities on a particular concept or topic, Agile Microlearning intuitively adjusts the content, moving to new topics or more complex activities. It adapts to each learner by targeting their weak areas and eliminating their knowledge gaps. Adaptive algorithms and integrated analytics track learners' performance and confidence to measure mastery, track progress toward their goals, and ensure that learners aren't wasting their time on content they already know.

Personalized training allows choice: Learners can choose when to do Adaptive Microlearning and on what device. They can engage for a 2-minute session or undertake longer practice. Managers can choose the mastery goals most appropriate for each learner's role and advancement path. Personalization boosts engagement and ensures that learners are not spending time on content that is not relevant to them.

THREE PILLARS OF AGILE MICROLEARNING

Agile Microlearning is grounded in **evidence-based cognitive science** , applying theories on instructional scaffolding, spaced repetition, and more to boost learning and retention.

SUBSCRIPTION DELIVERY

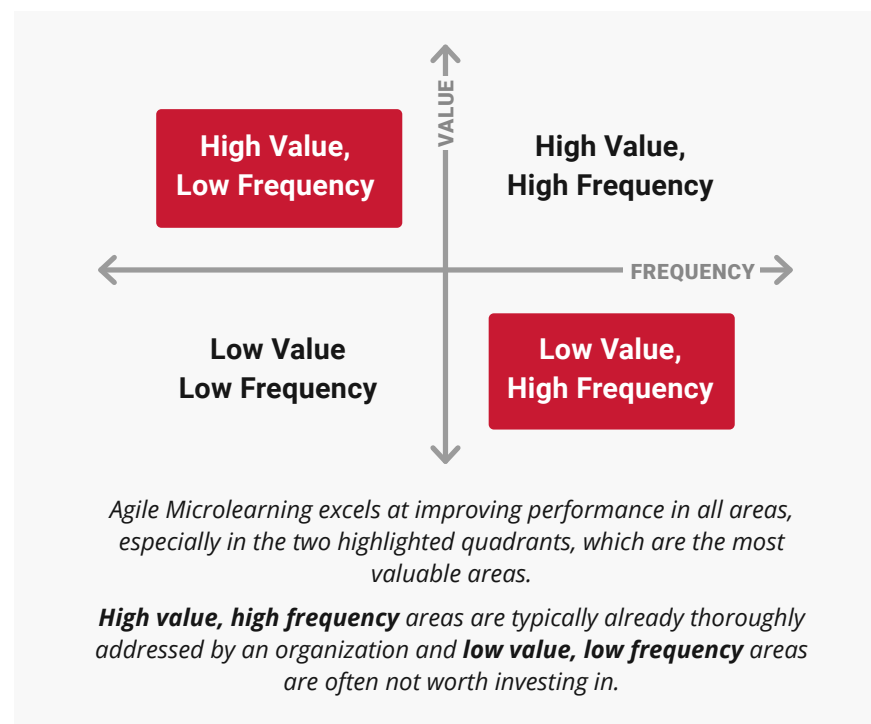
Much eLearning, whether annual compliance training, professional development, or new skills training, is one-and-done. The learner completes an eLearning course and is finished with training. But that's not how people learn. Exposing learners to a concept or process once is generally insufficient to teach it to them or to change their behavior. The way to build mastery is through repeated, deliberate practice over time.

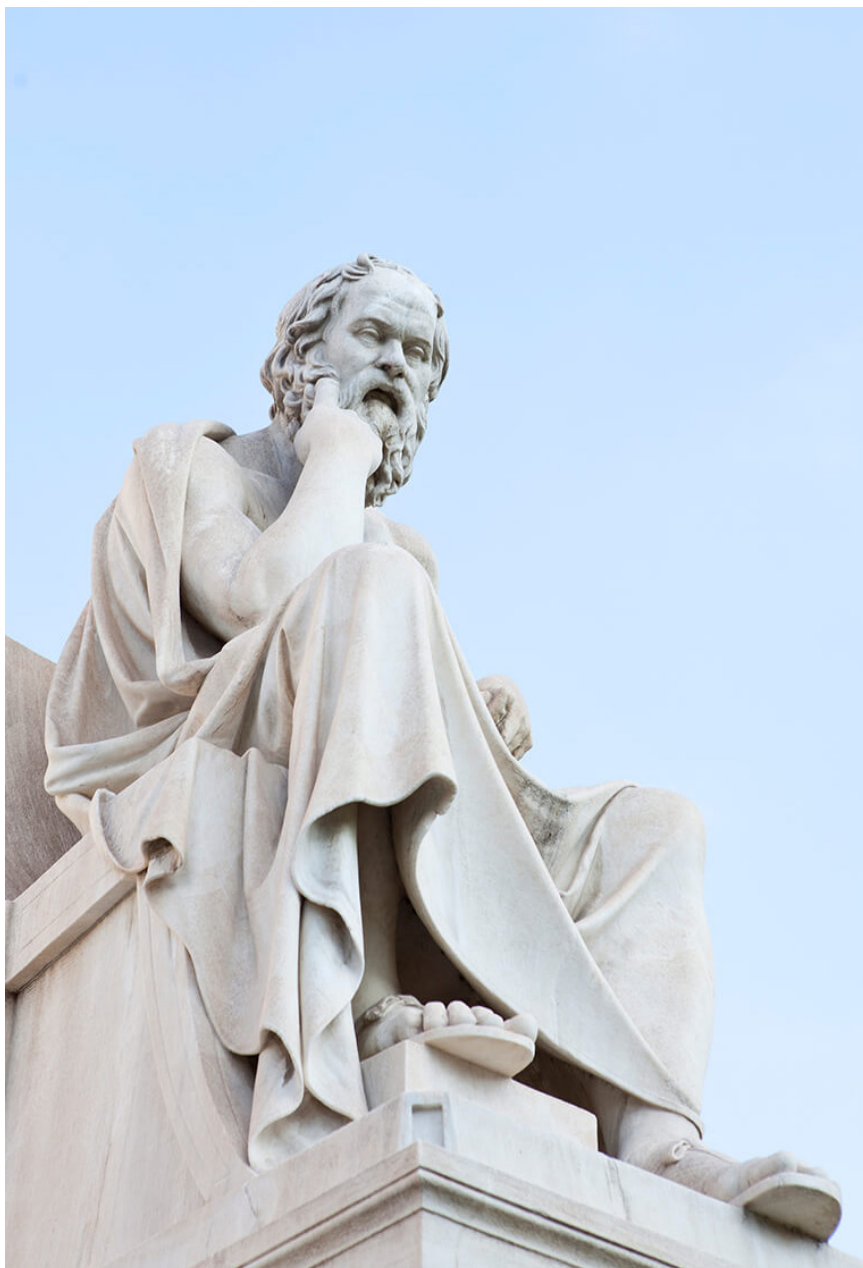
Agile Microlearning provides that deliberate practice. The subscription delivery model “drips” training content – or content that reinforces the training they've recently completed – to learners. In two minutes a day, learners practice recalling information or applying their knowledge. They engage in activities on different topics and concepts each day. They don't need to schedule training or practice. Instead, they develop a cadence: Two minutes of microlearning at the start of their day. As they achieve mastery of some topics, their practice shifts to different topic areas, but the cadence remains consistent.

Most employees have some job tasks that they do frequently – and others, including critical tasks, that they do rarely. For instance, they might perform annual reviews of direct reports during a specific month each year or only rarely deal with an accident or emergency situation.

Continuous, adaptive Agile Microlearning, delivered regularly, ensures that employees know how to do these “high-value, low-frequency” tasks, flawlessly, when the need arises by refreshing and sustaining that knowledge over time.

The same employees might also have tasks that are easy to overlook, but that should be done frequently and accurately, such as greeting a customer promptly. Agile Microlearning can drill them in these areas as well, helping them build correct performance of those low-value, high-frequency tasks into their workflow.





TENETS OF THE AGILE MICROLEARNING PHILOSOPHY

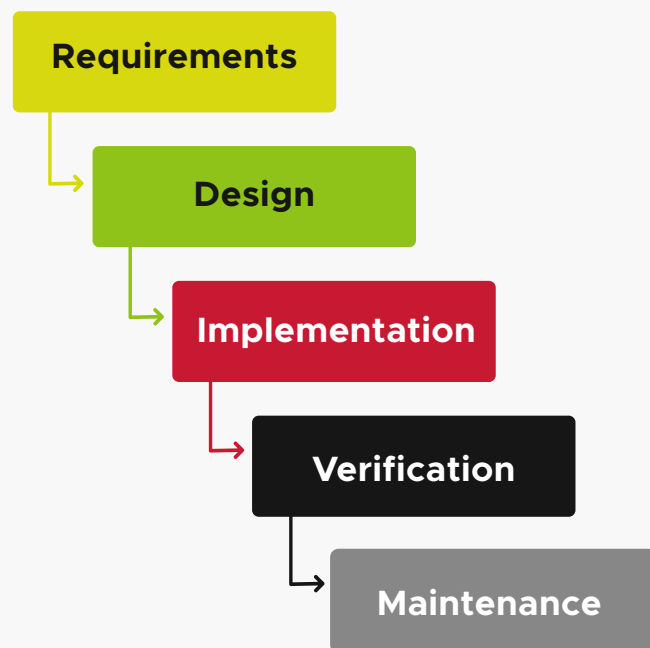
Agile Microlearning supports an approach to learning, knowledge retention, and mastery that follows a simple, learner-focused philosophy:

- › Deliver the right training to the right learners at the right depth. Make it available on the device best suited to their learning environment and needs.
- › Design training around specific, measurable goals and outcomes that tie into clear strategic business objectives. Integrate analytics to drive and evolve the knowledge mastery and retention campaign and track improvement in KPIs.
- › Deliver continuous, adaptive reinforcement training that targets each learner's areas of strength and weakness to focus on eliminating each individual's knowledge gaps — not on delivering the same content to all learners.
- › Design training using evidence-based methods grounded in cognitive science. Minimize the amount of time learners spend on training, and maximize their mastery of the content. Drive knowledge retention and transfer by requiring learners to practice recalling and applying what they've learned and providing meaningful feedback.
- › Pair training with performance support mechanisms to enable on-demand access to information, facilitate learning retention and transfer, and promote behavior change.

THE AGILE MICROLEARNING DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Creating Agile Microlearning follows a very different process from conventional training development.

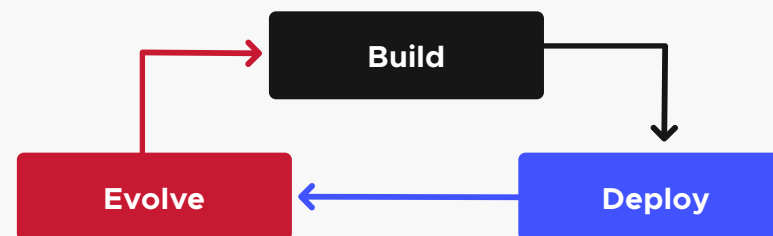
Conventional eLearning course development uses what is called a “waterfall” model.



The waterfall approach to eLearning course development

Each step is completed before the next phase begins. It's not possible to go back up the waterfall or go back to a previous step or phase. If something doesn't work as expected, if content is confusing or becomes outdated, making changes is cumbersome, time-consuming, and expensive. And often, these issues are only discovered once training has been deployed to learners.

Agile development is iterative, based on multiple short, flexible cycles of development, testing, and feedback.



The agile approach to eLearning course development

Evolution in each cycle is the result of collecting feedback and analytics on each release. This drives improvement in the next build or iteration. Iterative development gets a product out to learners quickly while also making it easy to identify and fix problems and update content.

OTTOLEARN: THE FUTURE OF TRAINING IS HERE

OttoLearn, the prototypical Agile Microlearning platform, is available today, only from Neovation Learning Solutions.

OTTOLEARN IS BUILT FOR LEARNERS

OttoLearn engages learners in short, relevant, fun content. Spending only 2 minutes a day on training, learners master content faster, **and remember it longer**, than with conventional eLearning courses. Learners can use OttoLearn anywhere, on any device. Many learners love OttoLearn so much that they voluntarily do additional Mini Moments!

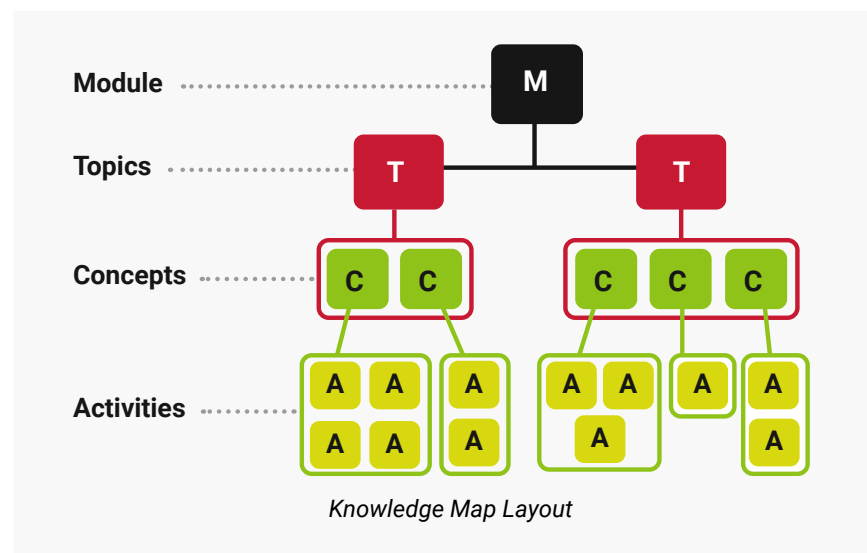
OTTOLEARN IS BUILT FOR MANAGERS

Managers don't have to hound their employees to complete training. The learners develop a 2-minute-a-day habit, and training seamlessly becomes part of their workflow. The managers personalize training, easily setting and adjusting goals for each learner, and OttoLearn takes care of the rest. Best of all, managers can easily check on learners' progress.

OTTOLEARN IS BUILT FOR CONTENT DEVELOPERS

It's easy to build, deploy, and maintain an OttoLearn learning or retention program. Adding new content and retiring outdated content takes just minutes, so developers can add new topic areas and update training continually. Agile development thrives on feedback and constant improvement.

OttoLearn content is structured as a **knowledge map** that shows the relationships between topics, concepts, and activities. This allows for instructional scaffolding. OttoLearn uses these relationships to step learners through content in a logical progression, building and solidifying their mastery. As learners' knowledge grows, they can move to higher levels of mastery and add new topic areas.



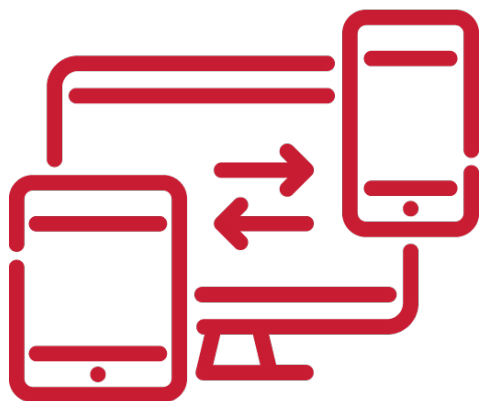
Managers will realize an unprecedented ROI from training with OttoLearn: Employee behavior will align with best practices, and KPIs will improve. Once employees have developed the learning habit, it's easy to drip out new training to them. Knowledge acquisition and retention occurs naturally, easily and sustainably – in 2 minutes a day.

OTTOLEARN: THE FUTURE OF TRAINING IS HERE

The steps in an OttoLearn development cycle: Build. Deploy. Evolve.

BUILD

1. Create a knowledge map identifying broad topic areas that learners need to study. Each topic area might cover multiple concepts. Highlight the most critical topics for the initial OttoLearn deployment or pilot.
2. Create Knowledge Cards and Activities. Knowledge Cards provide a reference and performance support, whereas Activities are interactions that exercise the knowledge.
3. Build a mobile-first, laptop-friendly module that automatically records key analytics data on learner engagement and performance data.



DEPLOY


1. Deploy the initial module with a subset of the most critical content to a pilot group of learners. Use their feedback to revise and tune content.
2. Expand the deployment to larger groups of learners. Condition learners to incorporate a daily 2-minute training cadence into their workdays.
3. Collect analytics data and feedback from the learners. Learners will provide excellent feedback due to the focused learning they receive in the OttoLearn format.

EVOLVE

1. Use analytics data to identify knowledge gaps and areas of misinformation, especially areas where learners hold confident misinformation or misconceptions. Build additional content in these areas.
2. Measure real-world outcomes and correlate with training mastery. Add content for areas where outcomes are not being met. Retire content that becomes outdated or unnecessary.
3. Expand the knowledge map with new content or add new areas of training, repeating the steps in Build and Deploy as needed.

NEXT STEPS

OttoLearn — Agile Microlearning — is the knowledge retention platform that organizations need to realize the full benefits of the training their employees already do. It's the training approach of the future.

To learn more about how OttoLearn works, visit our [Demo Center](#)  for videos and other helpful resources.



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AGILE MICROLEARNING