

Nano-Learning

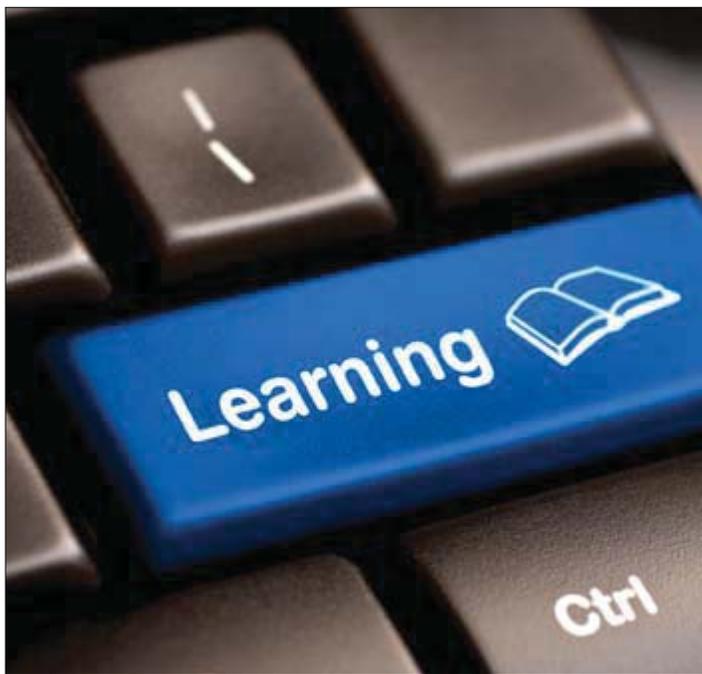
10 things you should know

By Kerri Simmons

As learning and performance improvement consultants and developers, we see trends emerge across the landscape of our client base, despite vast differences in the products and services they offer. We see workforces becoming more dispersed, and virtual teams an acceptable norm.

We see organizations looking to reduce training costs and accelerate new-hire orientation through online and social learning, as opposed to formal classroom learning. And we see a recognition that we don't need to force learners to know everything right now; instead, we need to give them the tools and resources to access learning on-demand, when they need it.

In today's busy world, often less is more. It is from that edict that we've seen the rise of **nano-learning** as a core, strategic learning solution.



Here are 10 things you should know about nano-learning:

1. Typically range from 2 to 15 minutes, making them “quick hits” of information.
2. Typically cover only one learning objective and, as such, provide targeted learning on a particular topic.
3. Are self-contained and can be taken independently, allowing them to be used for just-in-time learning when the audience needs a quick refresher that applies to the task at hand; typically free from pre-requisites, allowing them to stand on their own.
4. Are best designed with reusability in mind and can be leveraged for multiple uses; that is, they may be part of a larger course and also able to be accessed independently.
5. Are often designed to be delivered on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets, making them convenient for employees on the go (such as sales associates) or on the retail floor.

6. Are most useful when provided in an environment that can be searched or indexed, depending on the number of nano-learnings available; again, this helps provide just-in-time training quickly to the learners in need.

7. May include different types of media or a combination of multimedia — whatever is most-effective for the audience, their environment, the content, and the technology — including (but not limited to) audio, video, avatars, scenario examples, simple or complex activities, and knowledge checks.

8. Are often effective when they provide links to additional, related training materials, such as other nano-learnings, practice aids, performance support tools, more in-depth training modules, or other resources.

9. Can be provided in a number of ways, either through the LMS (if tracking and reporting is essential for evaluation of the solution) or through an intranet or portal that the audience has access to (which may provide the advantage of being able to consolidate relevant materials on a single page, or having them pop-up together based on common search terms).

10. Can be part of an internal communications plan to “market” training to a particular audience.

To wrap up, let me share with you a real-world example of how we used nano-learning as a solution for one of our clients. This client, a large financial institution, was merging with another large organization, which needed to bring its existing 10,000 customers onto our client's online business banking tools. To be scalable and cost-effective, our client wanted to shift from a hands-on trainer model to a customer self-sufficiency model that could support both new and experienced users.

Some learners needed to know very specific things (what button do I push now?), while others needed the soup-to-nuts approach. We created more than 200 one-to three-minute nano-learnings on specific system topics. Some were also combined to form whole courses, with an avatar coach providing the context and “aha!” moments for the learners.

The net result of this approach was that our client can provide the same training in multiple modalities, and the customer can select a mode-based on the way she learns best or her immediate needs. It also means that when our client needs to go back and make updates (which we know will happen with these systems as they evolve), the updates can be easily re-embedded into the different modalities.

Short, scalable, cost-effective, mobile and on-demand. In the case of nano-learning, less is truly a whole lot more. **TEL**



With a master's degree in instructional design, **Kerri Simmons** brings a strong background in adult learning, solution design and development, learning management systems, project management, vendor relations, performance management, learning programs, and working in and designing for virtual environments. Kerri knows every side of the training business: she's been the client, the vendor, the business owner, and the independent consultant. Her energy and passion for helping others succeed shines through in every conversation and every proposal.

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