

Design your Microtraining session in only half an hour

Microtraining for effective learning

GUIDE FOR MICROTRAINERS

Microtraining is a smart way of conveying information between people in only 15 minutes. It is a time-saving method for sharing knowledge and using the expertise of everyone in the organization. Microtraining does not replace formal learning but works as an updater and knowledge enhancer.

Microtraining can take place **anywhere** in the organisation, **anytime** and with **anyone**.

Microtraining

The Microtrainer

Microtraining can be done by any one! The Microtrainer can be any person in an organisation who feels the need to share knowledge, improve communication and learn from his or her employees or colleagues. The Microtrainer is not necessarily a professional trainer. Every non-professional trainer will be able to be an effective Microtrainer.

The Microtrainer develops company-specific content for the Microtraining session and applies it to small groups. Through this guide, you will learn how to do so in half an hour.

The content

You can apply Microtraining to communicate, share knowledge, address a particular issue or collect ideas on important issues.

Examples

The environmental manager has to implement a pile of new regulation of the separation waste. Everyone in the company has to deal with these regulations. How will you make sure that they understand what the laws are about and are motivated to apply them?

Although your colleagues are familiar with the new environmental guidelines, they are unhappy when it comes to applying them. They have ideas on how to improve things. You lack the time for proper knowledge transfer. How will you make sure everyone understand what needs to be done and feels rewarded for their ideas?

The Microtraining session

A Microtraining session is a short gathering of about 15 minutes. Such a session starts actively by presenting, questioning or showing the issue at stake followed by an exercise or demonstration, a short discussion and feedback. The session is concluded with a discussion on how to retain the knowledge and learn more (see figure 1).



Figure 1: An individual Microtraining session

The Microtraining cycle

Sometimes you need more than one session to deal with the topic in a suitable way. Such a Microtraining cycle then consists of several sessions focusing on sub-topics with which the complete topic can be covered. The introductory session is designed to get the discussion started. The final session connects to the next cycle of sessions focusing on a new topic (see figure 2).

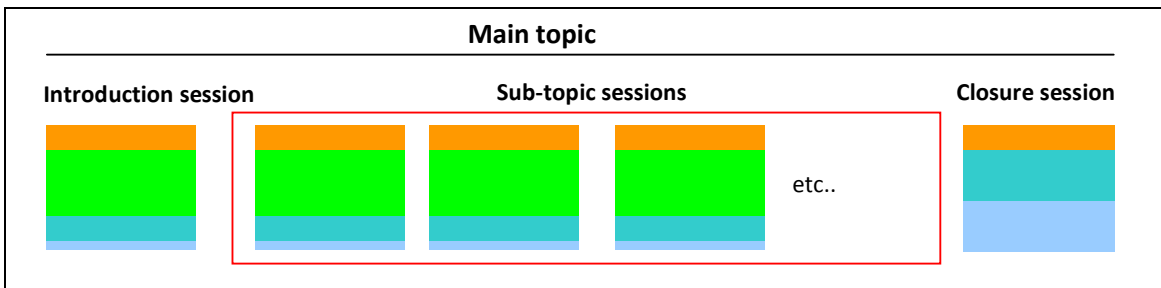


Figure 2: The overall structure of a Microtraining cycle

Group and group size

People learn from each other by being part of a group. Make sure that people with different knowledge and insights are present in the group. Knowledge that is lacking can be gathered during or in between the sessions and mistakes can be dealt with through the heterogeneity of the group. The group has to be large enough to create a good discussion, but should not be more than five to seven people to avoid passiveness.

Timing

Microtraining sessions can take place at the time of need, due to the limited time for preparation and execution. It is best to choose a time that fits the working schedule of your organisation (for example in the morning, when people are still fit fresh).

Get started

Invite the participants to the Microtraining sessions

Select and invite the target group. In the invitation explain both the subject and the Microtraining way of communication.

Choose the sub-topics

The main topic is divided into sub-topics, one for each session. Sub-topics can be chosen by the Microtrainer and can be discussed during the introduction session, to involve the participants.

Try to cover only one sub-topic in each session. If the topic becomes too big to discuss within 10 minutes, split it up into smaller parts. Place yourself in the participants' position and divide the session into understandable pieces.

Examples

Topic: How to deal with the new regulation on waste separation?

Introductory session (15 min)	Why is waste separation important for us?
1st Sub-topic session (15 min)	How do we deal with waste in our department?
2nd Sub-topic session (15 min)	What do we need to know about regulation on waste separation?
3rd Sub-topic session (15 min)	Difficulties with the new regulation.
4th Sub-topic session (15 min)	Ideas for improving the waste separation.
Rounding off session (15 min)	Evaluation and follow up.

Make sure your Microtraining is SMART

<i>Specific:</i>	Choosing single issues guarantees a sharp focus during the sessions.
<i>Measurable:</i>	For some sub-topics, it can be good to formulate measurable objectives.
<i>Achievable:</i>	Formulate an achievable goal for each session.
<i>Relevant:</i>	The topic should be directly relevant to of the work of the participants.
<i>Timely:</i>	The sessions are designed to last 15 minutes.

The introductory session

The introductory session is the first of a cycle of Microtraining sessions. The aim is to make the participants familiar with the subject and to motivate them to participate actively. In case the sub-topics have not yet been determined, the introductory session can be used to discuss and determine them.

Although the introductory session follows the same overall design, there are certain issues that have to be addressed.

<i>Example</i>	
WHAT is the topic:	“How will we implement the new regulation on the separation of waste?”
WHY is the topic important:	“What in this new regulation concerns us and why?”
MOTIVATE the participants:	“What does this imply for you? How will we meet the demands?”
WHEN will the sessions take place:	“The sessions will be held weekly on Wednesdays after the coffee break.”

Designing a Microtraining session

Outline of the design

The target group has been selected and the topics and sub-topic have been determined. Now it is time to design a session. The design follows the outline presented in table 1.

Active start
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate the goal of the session. • Start with a mental activity e.g. thinking, reflecting, organizing and comparing.
Exercise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with different learning styles by using a combination of pictures, sounds and text. • Stimulate the learning process by giving concrete examples.
Discussion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check if all participants really understand the content by asking questions. • Stimulate discussions and knowledge-sharing between the participants. • Make sure there is effective, direct and positive feedback. • Let the participants ask questions.
How to continue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how to retain the knowledge. • What are the topics we will discuss during the next session(s)? • Stimulate involvement and ensure participants leave with a clear goal.

Table 1. Design of an individual Microtraining session

Make an active start

Activate the participants by choosing an inspiring and stimulating active start. Get them to reflect or compare by asking a question or put forward a proposition. It is important to link this active start with the goal of the session.

Examples

- “Do you know that our company wastes 1000 Euros per month by not being able to separate waste in a correct way.”

Or more actively:

- “How much money do you think our company wastes by not being able to separate our waste in a correct way?”

Or asking a question while showing a picture of some waste at your company:

- “Do you think this waste has been found in our company or elsewhere?”

Or show the headline of a recent newspaper: *Companies spoil hundreds of Euros by not separating their waste.*

- “Is this also an issue in our company?”

Design your exercise

Think about an exercise that will encourage the participants to share knowledge on the sup-topic. Choose a form that works for you and the participants. Be inspired and creative, and have the courage to try something new. Prepare yourself well!

Examples

- Design a fill in assignment.
- Look for a picture (a problem with a product or in the process) to start the discussion.
- Describe a short role play.
- Think about the issue for mind mapping.
- Ask an open-ended question and invite the participants to write their answers on post-its.
- Invite the participants to interview each other in pairs on a certain question.
- Stand beside a machine and ask an employee to demonstrate a certain action.

Facilitate discussion

By asking questions, you can check whether the participants have understood the aim of the exercise. Allow all the participants to take the floor. Give feedback during the discussion. Make it easy for all the participants to be actively involved. By receiving positive feedback the participants will feel rewarded. Think in advance what questions can be raised and how you will deal with new issues being addressed in the discussion.

Examples

- Sometimes it is difficult for people to ask questions. Offer the floor to all the participants one by one.
- Ask participants who are usually in the background some questions to make them feel at ease. Ask for their opinion, and their experiences.

How to continue

What are you going to do with the results of the exercise and the discussion? Prepare yourself with some ideas. Invite participants during the session to come up with new ideas on how to retain the knowledge and learn more about on the sup-topic.

Examples

- Invite one of the participants to make a mind map of all ideas to put on the wall.
- Agree when to continue the discussion on some issues.
- Print the filled in exercise and have it plasticised for all participants as a checklist.
- Explain where to find back ground information or who to ask if there is any question.

The closure session

Reflect on the main topic and collect new ideas

In the closure session, you round up the Microtraining cycle by focusing mainly on discussion and feedback. The participants and you reflect on the main topic, the knowledge gained and the overall experience of Microtraining. The aim of the final session is also to come up with ideas for a new cycle of sessions. Be sure that the participants leave with a positive feeling.

Examples

- Ask questions like: "What can you apply in your work, how can you apply this in your work, what is the relevance?"
- Prepare a summary of all the sessions into the aim of the main topic. Ask the participants: "Let us summerize what we have done and achieved."

- Discuss how to retain the knowledge, for example by presenting a folder with the summary (to be handed out to the participants or displayed publicly), or collect other ideas on doing so.
- Allow people to come up with ideas for a new cycle of sessions. Let them write down the two most important issues to be considered.

Evaluation

The session cycle should be evaluated to improve knowledge-sharing and the quality of Microtraining, for instance on the basis of some questions. Direct feedback from the participants is the most honest and accurate feedback and can be performed during or directly after the final session. Make sure to ask open-ended questions and pay attention to what the participants have to say.

Examples

- What did you learn?
- What did you think of the information? What was very useful?
- What can you implement in your working situation?
- What do you think of the Microtrainer?

Monitoring

Sometimes it is good to check whether the Microtraining has actually led to changes within the company. What are the effects for the participants and the organisation in three or six months after the Microtraining? To monitor the effects of the Microtraining, you can use the evaluation of effectiveness method presented in the handbook, which is not described here.

Style sheet to develop a Microtraining session <i>(Please use a new sheet for each session that you develop)</i>	
Initiator	
Microtrainer	
Main topic	
Sub-topic 1/2/3/4/5	
Goal	<p><i>After the session the participant will be able to:</i></p> <p>...</p>
Active start <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate the goal of the session. Start with a mental activity e.g. <i>thinking, reflecting, ordering, or comparing.</i> 	<p><i>Examples: Thinking, reflecting, ordering, or comparing.</i></p>
Exercise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect with different learning styles by using a combination of pictures, sound and text. Stimulate the learning process by giving concrete examples. 	<p>Describe how you will make sure that participants will reflect on the sub-topic.</p> <p><i>Examples: Brainstorming, role play, fill in a table, questionnaire, interviewing, drawing on yellow notes, etc.</i></p>
Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check if all participants really understand the content by asking questions. Stimulate discussion and knowledge sharing between participants. Make sure there is effective, direct and positive feedback. Let the participants ask questions. 	<p>How will you facilitate discussion and feedback?</p> <p><i>Examples: By questioning, making a mind map on a flip-chart, etc.</i></p>
How to continue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss how to retain the knowledge. What are the topics we will discuss at the next session(s)? Stimulate involvement and ensure participants leave with a clear goal. 	<p>Explain what will happen with the results of this session.</p> <p><i>Examples: Advise to other department, change of working procedures, etc.</i></p> <p>How will you facilitate that the knowledge will retain? (follow-up)</p> <p><i>Examples: Poster in the canteen, individual training, planning of time for exercises, etc.</i></p>

Evaluation of Microtraining													
Main topic													
Date													
<p>In order to improve the Microtraining method it is important that you fill out this evaluation. To the right of each question is a scale 1-7, where 1 represents "not at all" and 7 "very much". In addition, there is space for your own comments below each question. To what extent do you agree with the following statements:</p>													
1. I enjoyed the sessions.						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Comments:													
2. I have learned something during the sessions.						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Comments:													
3. I can put what I have learned into practice.						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Comments:													
4. What I learned can bring benefits to the company / organization.						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Comments:													
5. Microtraining has met my expectations as a learning method.						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Comments:													
6. What would you like to change in the Microtraining method?													
Comments:													