

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the impact of blended learning including micro-learning on manager learning and behavior change vs. impact of classroom learning?

INTRODUCTION

Today's learning trends show that with more information and technology available, a globalized workforce, and a changing way we learn, corporate learning particularly manager training needs to meet the following criteria:

- 1) Knowledge should be on demand
- 2) Information needs to be tailored to individual's specific needs
- 3) Learning should be embedded into business processes
- 4) Employees should be able to collaborate to boost learning
- 5) There needs to be confidence in the reliability and quality of the information being used.¹

To meet these needs, successful leadership programs should have a balanced approach. **Blended Learning** programs include formal training, whether that's classroom, virtual, or micro-learning, along with informal training through on-the-job experience. A synergistic cycle between formal and informal will generate more learning as new concepts are tested in real situations.² Consider several approaches for more effective blended learning.

BLENDED LEARNING APPROACHES

Classroom Learning – The typical classroom setting allows for face-to-face interaction between managers and professional trainers. This makes use of phenomenal training expertise to hone managers' skillsets. However, the process is time-consuming and can be quite costly considering the necessary preparation and execution. In addition, participant retention of information in this environment is quite low, thus calling in to question the effectiveness of traditional classroom training alone.³ A modification on this setting is the virtual classroom, which keeps the value of formal training but allows for greater reach as learners don't have to be in the same physical space and can access the training more conveniently.⁴

Informal Learning – Many employers use the classic 70/20/10 model⁵ with 70% of learning coming on the job, 20% from mentors, and 10% on formal training. The on-the-job focus is so effective that companies have integrated this idea into their overall learning approach. The Open University of Shell International Exploration and Production (Shell EP), sought to enhance their learning effectiveness with a focus on experiential activities. This approach proved valuable as Shell EP added depth and breadth to their blended learning programs.⁶

Micro-Learning – Otherwise considered the future of training in the workplace, micro-learning can put power into the hands of the manager or employee to take charge of his or her own

learning. This creates smaller, digestible content that is within the average attention span of adults⁷ and is often delivered in video format. The optimal length for videos depends on the content, but audiences typically disengage after only a few minutes⁸ (see Appendix A) and may not complete more than six minutes⁹ of the video no matter how long it is¹⁰ (see Appendix B and C). Gamification of micro-learning, has evolved the standard video training into a more interactive approach with friendly competition, a spirit of achievement, and a bias towards action.¹¹

When developing micro-learning video content, consider three keys from the Association for Talent Development:

1. Keep it Short – between three and five minutes
2. Keep it Visual – favor pictures and infographics over talking heads
3. Aim for High Technical Standards – poor production distracts from true intent.¹²

CREATING A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The most successful training organizations operate as if their businesses are changing all the time, even if they are not.¹³ To avoid getting stuck in one approach to training, create a learning environment. One way to do this is by incorporating all types of informal learning into everyday processes. This can mean including collaborative, social learning activities; self-study or on-demand learning experiences; and embedded learning, where employees have job aids to refer to while they accomplish their work.¹³

Educational experts often refer to this concept with the FLIP acronym that can be easily translated to the work setting through blended learning:

- Flexible learning environments – offering multiple options for learners
- Learning culture – normalizing learning among employees
- Intentional content – quality, prepared videos and other training sessions
- Professional educators – external consultants or internal experts.¹⁴

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The modern learner is overwhelmed, distracted, and impatient⁷ (see Appendix D). With so many ways learning managers can spend their time, your company should create a blended approach to learning, as blended learning is better than other modalities done on their own.¹⁵ Start by partnering with IT to create high quality and valuable micro-learning content. Divide your learning segments into 15 minute videos at most, with most of your content coming in around six minutes.⁹ As you create opportunities for managers to learn, incorporate lessons learned from their trainings into their day to day activities, focusing on experiential activities that they will actually see in the course of their work. Formal classroom training as this can serve as added incentive for leadership development.

Finally, for these type of blended learning approaches to be successful, foster a learning culture in your organization. To do so, empower employees to take charge of their own development. As they do, they can support the shift in focus away from rigid trainings to the everyday learning culture.¹ When your content is prominent for employees to use and modeled by top leaders, the rest of the organization will fall in with the new learning culture.

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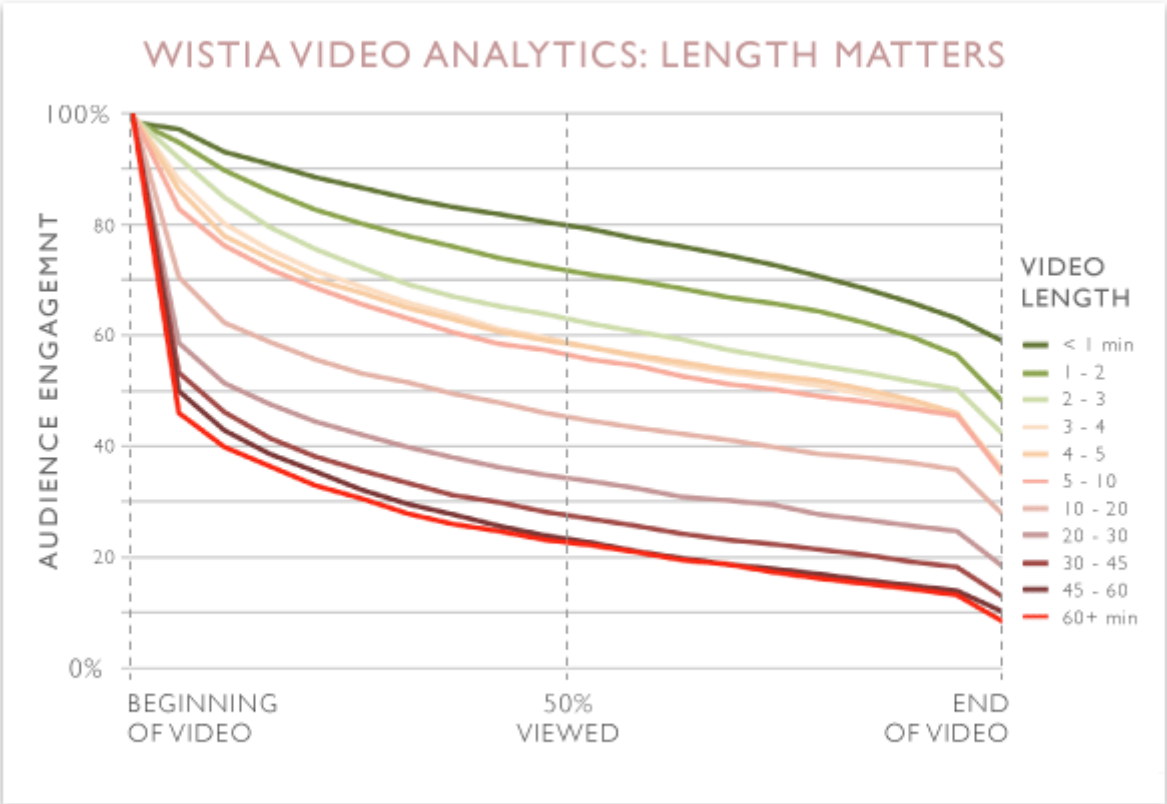
FURTHER READING

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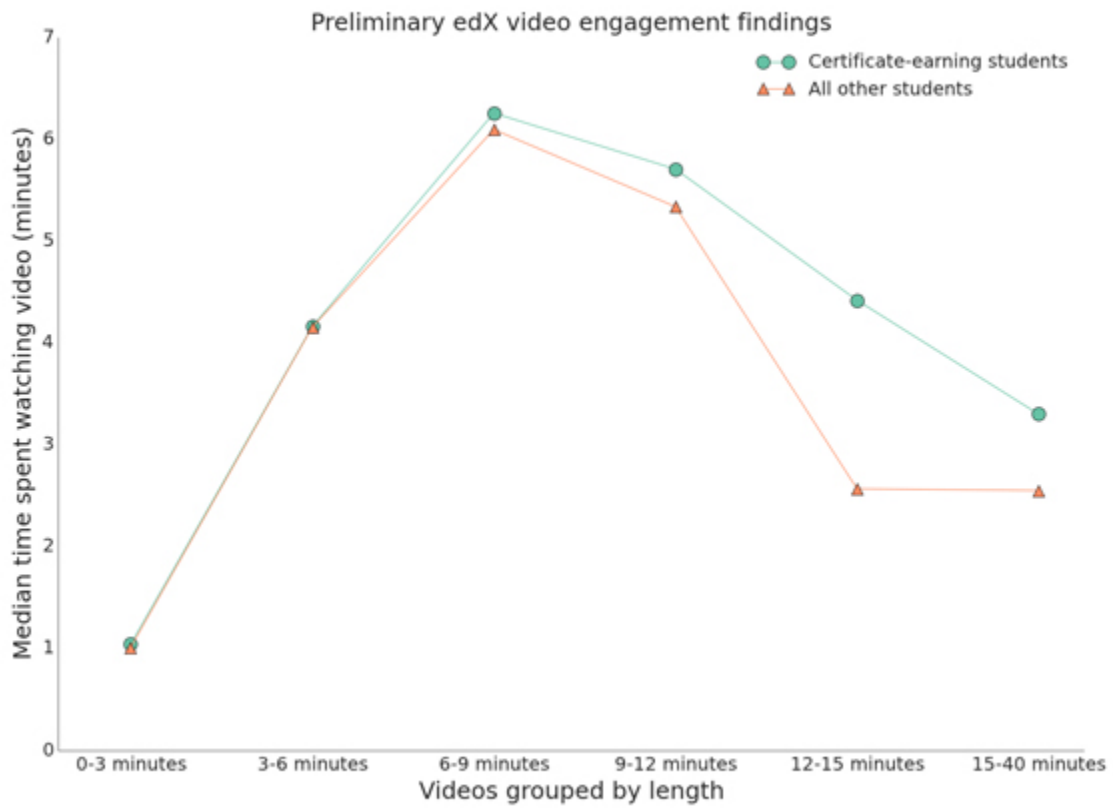
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APPENDIX A: Audience Engagement by Video Length⁸



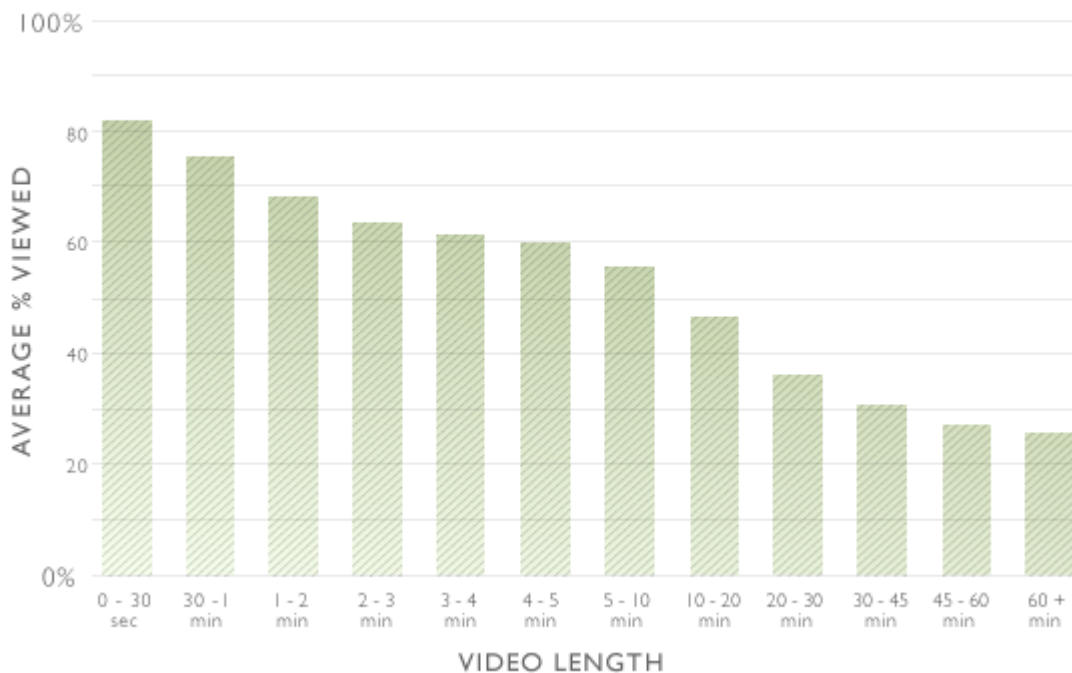
APPENDIX B: Time Spent Watching Videos by Length⁹



Analysis by Philip Guo (pg@cs.rochester.edu)

APPENDIX C: Percentage of Video Viewed by Length¹⁰

WISTIA VIDEO ANALYTICS: LENGTH MATTERS



APPENDIX D: The Modern Learner Infographic⁷

MEET THE MODERN LEARNER

As training moves to more digital formats, it's colliding with new realities in learners' jobs, behaviors, habits, and preferences.

Today's employees are overwhelmed, distracted, and impatient. Flexibility in where and how they learn is increasingly important. They want to learn from their peers and managers as much as from experts. And they're taking more control over their own development.

OVERWHELMED... 1% of a typical workweek is all that employees have to focus on training and development

DISTRACTED... 5 times early days of the week, 27 times late days of the week, 41% of time workers spend on things that offer little personal satisfaction and do not help them get work done.

4 minutes: Most learners spend 4 minutes watching videos larger than their screens.

9 times: People unlock their smartphones up to 9 times every hour.

IMPATIENT... 5 and 10 seconds: Define, designers now have between 5 and 10 seconds to grab someone's attention on business they click away.

2/3: Knowledge workers are constantly distracted with millions of websites, apps, and video clips.

2/3: of knowledge workers actually complain that they don't have time to do their jobs.

5 minutes: Workers now get interrupted 5 minutes—ironically, often by work applications and collaboration tools.

Bersin by Deloitte

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UNTETHERED

Today's employees find themselves working from several locations and structuring their work in nontraditional ways to accommodate their lifestyles. Companies are finding it difficult to reach these people consistently and even harder to develop them efficiently.



ON-DEMAND

Employees are accessing information—and learning—differently than they did just a few years ago. Most are looking for answers outside of traditional training and development channels. For example:



COLLABORATIVE

Learners are also developing and accessing personal and professional networks to obtain information about their industries and professions.



EMPOWERED

Rapid change in business and organizations means everyone needs to constantly be learning. More and more people are looking for options on their own because they aren't getting what they need from their employers.

