THE FOUR PILLARS OF SUCCESSFUL TRAINING COURSES

eSTUDY

CrossKnowledge
A Wiley Brand

INTRODUCTION

CrossKnowledge has identified the four pillars you need to design a successful training program: the brain, the human factor, managers, and data.

We all know that learning takes time and effort. But to learn well, we need to find **meaning** in what we're doing and we need to be **motivated** to do it. Staff and team training are no different. But despite the array of learning methods on offer, we still need to think about how we can best design training courses to have a **meaningful impact** on how our team members learn new skills.

This e-Book will help you understand how you can create effective, scalable, high-performance programs by harnessing **adaptive cognitive processes used to acquire new skills** (the brain), **customized programs** (the human factor), **guidance and motivation for learners** (managers), **and information-driven insights** (data).

1 THE BRAIN

The cognitive dimension: the role of neuroscience in learning

Our brains obey rules, but they aren't one-trick ponies. They adapt, depending on the circumstances, to the goals we set them. Different skills use different parts of the brain.

Learning soft skills (cross-disciplinary behavioral skills) engages subcortical structures, while gaining new hard skills (technical expertise-based skills) stimulates the prefrontal cortex.

Expertise and hard skills

The **prefrontal cortex** is central to executive functions. It regulates cognitive planning functions and higher intellectual functions like reasoning.

This area of the brain is essential to how we acquire professional and technical skills. The prefrontal cortex stimulates our semantic and working memory. It, therefore, plays a key role in how we learn immediately useable and actionable knowledge. And we use this area of the brain when we acquire **hard skills.**

Short, repetitive, bite-sized formats that you can access at any point in the working day are particularly effective for developing hard skills. **This is the essence of microlearning.**

Microlearning involves short sessions (from 30 seconds to 3 minutes) that cover one topic per unit. The aim of these mini-sessions is to convey information that learners can almost immediately put into practice, satisfying just-in-time training needs. To do this, microlearning uses a collection of support materials such as videos and specialist articles.

With microlearning, learning is more flexible, scalable, and agile, making it especially suited for hard skills. Using this approach, you can attune and adapt your program to your employees' diverse working lives, without disturbing their productivity. However, although microlearning courses are short, they require concentration and the ability to identify and process all necessary information.

"

THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF MICROLEARNING.

Social skills and soft skills

With soft skills, you have to effect real **behavioral change** in learners (**social skills**). This necessitates a new approach to learning. To transform behaviors, you have to engage the subcortical areas of the brain and the dopaminergic pathways.

Soft skills = social skills

Communicating with other people, managing emotions, developing empathy, and stimulating creativity are all soft skills that influence employee behavior at work.

With microlearning, dopamine is released to reward positive behavior and to gradually instill it through feedback from peers, coaches, and managers. A discovery-based learning strategy, one involving trial and error, means that learners can build on each experience, its specific context, and its outcome(s) to work out appropriate behaviors.

Macrolearning

These behavioral transformations require a tailored learning method: **macrolearning**, which uses longer, customized sessions. To learn cross-disciplinary, non-technical skills, time is an important factor. Key elements include reflection, real-world exercises, interaction, and feedback.

Striking the right micro-macro balance

Even for soft skills, we recommend alternating micro- and macrolearning. For the memory to enhance and analyze the experience, it has to store knowledge (semantic memory) and guide the tasks and processes we perform (working and procedural memory).

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THE HUMAN FACTOR

No two learners are the same

The human factor—our diverse range of personalities—influences our reactions at work, guides our behavior, gives us strength in challenging times, and makes us react differently. To design a successful training program, you must take these differences into account.

Essential customization for soft skills

The human dimension is critical when it comes to learning cross-disciplinary soft skills. If you want to transform individual behavior, you have to tailor your courses to individual personalities and preferences.

In successful training programs, learners are not forced to adapt to a one-size-fits-all format. Instead, the program evaluates their needs and learning style, and delivers training adapted to each individual. Using this responsive strategy ensures that learners will not lose interest over time, because content is useful and not generic. This targeted approached has a positive effect on learner enthusiasm, engagement and motivation.

« We all have different starting points, so we think learning should be tailored to an individual's personality. Just like any trainer would do in a face-to-face session. »

Pascal El Grably, Managing Director and Co-founder of CrossKnowledge

Personality types

The objective is to understand the personality profile of each employee to offer training that is tailored and personalized. Adapting the course per individual means capitalizing on strengths, or developing areas for improvement, which makes perfect sense with soft skills.

MBTI PERSONALITY TYPES

Extraverts	Sensing	Thinking	Judging
E	**S**	**T**	**J**
I	**N**	**F**	**P**
Introverts	Intuiting	Feeling	Perceiving

3

MANAGERS

## Key figures in boosting learning engagement

MANAGERS

The most effective training courses use teaching materials tailored to each learner. But the **conditions for learning** are equally important: the environment plays a critical role. At work, no one can influence the environment more than a manager.

> ### ▶ Helping the stars align
>
> Managers are the best people to create the **perfect synergy between learners and training materials**. They have an overview of programs and can explain why learning matters, especially in terms of content, timing, and training duration. Managers make employees feel valued in their teams and within the company. Their involvement and support help the stars align, crucially engaging learners from the start.

For learners, managerial involvement motivates them like nothing else—that includes increased responsibilities, promotions and pay raises.. This is where human relationships and encouragement play key roles.

▶ Positive feedback
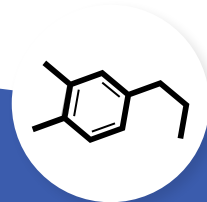
Essential to learning new soft skills, dopamine released in the subcortical areas of the brain rewards positive behavior. This sets a **virtuous learning cycle** in motion, fueled by feedback from coaches, trainers, peers, and managers.

One of a manager's key roles is to **encourage behavioral changes**, in order to create the perfect balance between a learner's feeling of cognitive reward and their receptiveness to **constructive feedback.**

Manager checklist

Here are a few tips managers can adopt to improve learner engagement:

- [ ] Clearly explain the benefits of the course
- [ ] Stipulate the schedule and deadlines
- [ ] Take the course yourself before learners do
- [ ] Encourage learners to help each other on a community platform
- [ ] Give constructive feedback to your team on a regular basis
- [ ] When ready, set up a mentoring or coaching system
- [ ] Plan formal and informal milestones with team members
- [ ] Regularly monitor their training progress
- [ ] Keep them motivated and engaged using praise

4 DATA

Collecting and analyzing data
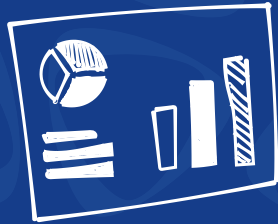
The importance of big data in training

Training is not immune to the all-encompassing influence of big data. The vast sums of information available about each user create an unprecedented windfall that you can use to feed algorithms on learning platforms.

"Every program designed, every incentive rolled out, and every organizational challenge should be informed by data."

Josh Bersin, Founder of Bersin by Deloitte and CrossKnowledge Faculty Member

Harvesting 3 main types of data

#1 Personal data: age, gender, socio-economic status, tenure in the company, seniority, job title, etc.

#2 Company data: values, skills models, existing onboarding and training programs, tests, CRM, company and industry environments, etc.

#3 Data on learner habits: attention span, availability, preferred module type, subject requirements and knowledge, favorite fields, how they take their coffee (ha!), etc.

Once you've analyzed the data (using machine learning, for example), your L&D department can use the results to proactively support staff. Rather than using a predictive model, lean towards a prescriptive model. The key is to contextualize the data so you can interpret it with as much detail as possible.

New corporate learning platforms

In terms of tools, you can use a next-generation platform that has the ability to store and categorize all kinds of content. These hybrid platforms can share all of a company's internal resources—and external resources—when they're published or created by the users themselves. These platforms also leverage AI to support the most personalized training needs by suggesting additional, relevant content that favors engagement and suits each individual's character.

Data contributes to skills development, meeting current and future needs. Using data, you can create more engaging content by harnessing its prescriptive capabilities. But you can also use data to customize learning experiences.

Combining data analysis with the human factor

Using data helps you target user-focused content. Combining data with each learner's unique personality means you can create original and highly personalized experiences. In your algorithm, you should also draw on profiles that are similar to your learners to suggest modules that other users have completed.

This way, you can build collective momentum and integrate all learners into your overall skills-development project. You'll already recognize this personal delivery method if you use YouTube or Netflix, the leaders of prescriptive analytics.

CONCLUSION

What determines whether a **learning pathway is successful**? As we have detailed above, there are four elements—or dimensions—that are essential to learning.

The first comes from the world of **neuroscience and the brain**. We've seen how effective it is to use different teaching strategies depending on the topic.

This approach ties in with the second dimension, **the human factor**, which is often overlooked but equally important.

The third element, which is no less noteworthy, exists within the company structure: **management**. The more engaged learners feel, the more meaning they'll derive from their training.

The final element gives insight on training effectiveness and helps direct future course planning: the investment in harvesting, processing, and analyzing **your data**. It's the black gold of the 21st century. Extract key insights from your data to create more intense, more immersive, more harmonious, and more exciting training courses.

Our learning solutions incorporate this four-dimensional approach, drawing inspiration from our clients to create each project.

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