LearningQ: Turning Accessible Microlearning Into Real-World Skills

Building Learning Around the Person Who Needs to Use It

The learning and development industry has become exceptionally good at delivering information. Organizations can distribute courses to thousands of people, track completions, administer assessments, and generate reports showing exactly who participated. The more difficult challenge is determining whether learners can take that information and use it when it matters.

For LearningQ, that question is particularly important because its learners often need education to accomplish highly practical goals. They may be preparing for employment, developing independent living skills, learning healthier routines, or building capabilities that allow them to navigate everyday life with greater independence. Many have intellectual disabilities and may benefit from additional time, lower literacy requirements, shorter learning experiences, and repetition to retain and apply what they have learned.

The training approach has been built around those realities. Rather than taking a conventional online course and simply making it shorter, the organization starts with the learner and designs the experience around how that person will ultimately use the skill. Short videos isolate specific concepts or activities, assessments evaluate knowledge and understanding, application questions encourage learners to put lessons into practice, and repetition allows important information to remain accessible when reinforcement is needed.

This learner-centered philosophy makes LearningQ an interesting model not only for accessible learning, but for the broader learning and development industry. If training is supposed to improve what people can actually do, the distance between learning and application should be as short as possible.

From Education and Healthcare to Accessible Learning

The organization grew from decades of experience spanning educational publishing, healthcare education, population health management, disability services, and programs designed to address real-world challenges through

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education. Those experiences eventually converged around a more specific opportunity: using microlearning to help people with disabilities develop practical life skills.

LearningQ was launched by three co-founders and received early support through Small Business Innovation Research funding, with nearly half a million dollars in grant funding contributing to development of the platform.

The purpose was not simply to create another online course library. The organization saw an opportunity to build learning specifically for people with disabilities, particularly those with intellectual disabilities who could benefit from an experience designed around accessibility, repetition, practical skills, and measurable outcomes.

That purpose also shaped who sits at the center of the learning environment. Platforms serving disability organizations can naturally become oriented toward administrators and support professionals. This model intentionally places the learner at the center instead, influencing everything from lesson length and literacy requirements to assessments, reporting, repetition, and the ability to return to content when a skill actually needs to be performed.

Serving Learners Across Education, Workforce Development, and Independent Living

The client environment is diverse, but its different applications share a common objective: helping people acquire knowledge that can be translated into practical capability.

Educational and transitional programs represent an important part of that environment. These programs help young people prepare for employment, independent living, and the transition from school into adult life. Depending on the program, services can begin with learners as young as 14. The primary learner population generally falls between approximately ages 15 and 40, although the platform has also been successfully used by adults over 50 with lifelong cognitive disabilities.

Other applications extend into disability services, workforce development, health and wellness, manufacturing and warehousing, day programs, and behavioral health. The organization is also exploring applications involving aging populations and practical skills that could support greater independence later in life.

Although these settings differ considerably, the underlying training challenge remains consistent. Organizations need learners to acquire information,

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understand what it means, retain it, and ultimately use it in an actual situation.

That challenge extends well beyond disability services. Organizations building customer training need external audiences to successfully use products and services. Scalable franchise training must translate brand and operational knowledge into consistent performance across locations. More broadly, extended enterprise training requires organizations to make relevant learning accessible to people who frequently sit outside traditional employee structures.

The audiences may differ, but the progression is similar: provide access to relevant information, help learners acquire it, reinforce what matters, and connect learning with what people are expected to do.

How LearningQ Moves Beyond Course Completion

A successful LearningQ experience may help someone prepare for employment, complete a household routine, improve a wellness practice, develop problem-solving capabilities, or become more independent. Because the desired outcomes are practical, the program deliberately distinguishes among knowing something, understanding something, and applying it.

That distinction matters because learners can know the correct answer without consistently performing the corresponding behavior.

Consider the practical example of safely locking up a house at night. A learner could demonstrate knowledge by identifying which doors and windows should be secured and recognizing that appliances should be turned off. A conventional assessment might establish that the learner understands those concepts, but the actual objective is for the person to walk through the home, check the doors and windows, verify appliances are off, and complete the routine before going to bed.

The program connects those stages by incorporating application-oriented questions into the learning experience. In addition to determining whether learners know what should be done, the platform can ask whether they actually completed the activity.

This form of self-verification creates a simple connection between learning and action. It can also provide useful visibility for support professionals responsible for helping someone live more independently. The training environment becomes more than a mechanism for delivering information. It

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becomes an educational resource, reinforcement mechanism, and practical support tool.

Microlearning, Repetition, and Point-of-Need Support

Many of the people served by LearningQ have intellectual disabilities that influence how training should be structured. Some may require lower literacy levels, additional time to understand a task, shorter learning experiences, or greater repetition to retain a skill.

A lengthy online course containing numerous concepts can therefore create unnecessary cognitive demands. The alternative is to break learning into small, highly specific units that concentrate attention on one practical activity.

The home-safety example demonstrates how this works. Instead of creating a broad course covering numerous aspects of independent living, a roughly 90-second video can focus specifically on preparing a home safely for the night. The learner sees the sequence and can access the lesson immediately before performing it.

The value comes not only from brevity, but from proximity to application. The learner does not have to retrieve information presented several weeks earlier. The learning resource is available at the point of need and can become part of the routine itself.

Repetition is equally important. If the learner needs the same lesson the following evening, it remains available. Repetition does not indicate that training has failed. It is part of the instructional strategy, giving learners repeated opportunities to strengthen the connection between information and action.

This is what makes the microlearning model more significant than simply producing shorter courses. A focused unit can function as instruction during initial learning, reinforcement after completion, and performance support when the learner needs to act.

How LearningQ Uses Learner Performance to Improve Content

Smaller learning units also create advantages for continuous improvement because a problem can be isolated and corrected without rebuilding an entire course.

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That became evident during a manufacturing and warehousing project in which learners consistently performed poorly on an assessment question involving warning-sign colors. Instead of concluding that the learners were failing, the organization reviewed the question and determined that the assessment itself was not functioning as intended.

The learning experience could then be revised and a better way of teaching and assessing the concept introduced.

This creates a valuable instructional cycle. Content is developed and delivered, learner performance is observed, problems are identified, and individual units can be improved based on evidence. Poor results are not automatically treated as learner deficiencies. They can also reveal weaknesses in instructional design.

Content quality is further supported through the involvement of subject matter experts and people with lived experience. Subject matter expertise helps establish accuracy, while lived experience provides insight into whether the language, pacing, assumptions, examples, and presentation make sense for the people expected to use the material.

Together, these practices create an iterative model in which content is developed, reviewed, measured, and continuously improved.

Stage 2 Knowledge Acquisition Built on Strong Foundations

Viewed through the LatitudeLearning Training Program Roadmap, the program most closely aligns with Stage 2, Knowledge Acquisition, while incorporating practices that begin moving toward application and skill development.

Stage 2 moves beyond simply making resources available. A defined body of knowledge is established, structured learning is provided, and assessment determines whether learners have acquired that knowledge.

LearningQ demonstrates those characteristics through structured microlearning, assessments, certifications, and pre- and post-training measurement. A certification may contain approximately 25 microlearning units representing about an hour of total learning. Before beginning, a learner can receive a ten-question assessment drawing from topics across the certification. This establishes a baseline that can later be compared with post-training performance.

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Course completion answers whether someone finished the activity. Pre- and post-assessment begin answering the more important question of whether learning occurred.

The program then extends the model through application questions that ask whether learners performed relevant activities. This does not constitute a complete Stage 3 Skill Development program, which would generally require more formalized practice, coaching, skill assessment, and demonstrated proficiency. It does, however, create an important bridge between knowledge acquisition and skill development.

Strong Stage 1 practices remain underneath that structure. Learners have self-paced access to relevant resources, can return to content when needed, and benefit from an experience designed to reduce friction. The platform organizes and tracks the learning, while the microlearning architecture supports regular updates and continuous improvement.

Stage 2 therefore does not replace Stage 1. It builds on it by adding defined expectations, assessment, certifications, and meaningful measurement of knowledge change.

Project Reset and the Power of Reinforcement

One of the more ambitious applications of this approach is Project Reset, a six-month pilot designed for 500 teenagers in addiction treatment. Approximately 100 participants had progressed through about six weeks of training at the point documented in the source material.

Addiction presents a considerably more complex challenge than teaching a household or workplace task. Trauma, lifestyle, social determinants of health, personal circumstances, and other influences can affect behavior, particularly among teenagers. An online learning program cannot reasonably address all of those factors and is not intended to replace counseling, therapy, addiction treatment, or professional support.

Instead, Project Reset narrows its objective to one specific behavior: helping participants create a moment of pause before acting.

The concept is similar to taking a breath, counting to ten, and reassessing a situation before deciding what to do next. In an environment where staff may encounter anger, self-harm, fights, and other difficult situations, creating even a small amount of space between an impulse and the action that follows could become a meaningful capability.

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The program is also exploring how often learning should be reinforced. Participants can receive refreshers based on material they have already encountered, but the appropriate cadence remains an open question. Daily reinforcement may work for some material, while weekly or monthly reinforcement may be more appropriate elsewhere.

This experimentation is significant because traditional training concentrates most instructional effort before completion. The reinforcement model asks a different question: when does the learner need to encounter the information again?

How LearningQ Measures Training Impact

Measurement is one of the strongest characteristics of the model. LearningQ reports an average 127 percent skills increase across participating organizations as well as an 85 percent completion rate.

The skills-increase figure should be understood within the organization's measurement framework. It combines knowledge, understanding, and application rather than representing an external standardized measure of occupational proficiency. Even with that qualification, the approach demonstrates an important progression away from relying solely on activity metrics.

Pre-assessment establishes the learner's starting point. Post-assessment measures change. Application questions add another layer by connecting knowledge with action. Completion remains valuable because a program cannot create much impact when learners consistently abandon it, but completion becomes the beginning of the measurement conversation rather than the end.

The 85 percent completion rate is also notable because the organization has not attributed it to one factor. Short learning experiences may contribute. Content quality may matter. Subject matter expertise and lived-experience review may improve relevance. Continuous improvement may remove content that creates unnecessary difficulty.

The stronger conclusion is that engagement emerges from the overall learning architecture rather than any single technique. Accessibility, relevance, microlearning, repetition, assessment, and improvement work together to create an environment in which learners have a realistic opportunity to succeed.

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Access Remains an Essential Part of Learning Design

Even strong instructional design cannot create an impact when learners cannot reach the training.

The organization has found that learners themselves can be highly interested in the material while barriers around them prevent participation. Support staff may decide there is not enough time to use the platform, parents may limit computer access, or login difficulties may stop learners before the experience begins.

This provides an important lesson for the broader training industry. Accessibility cannot be limited to reading level, captions, interface design, or technical compliance. It must also include the operational experience surrounding the learner.

The best course produces little value when accessing it is difficult. Learner-centered design therefore requires instructional quality and operational accessibility to work together.

Extending Learner-Centered Design Into the Future

The same learning architecture may have applications across different stages of life. The organization has begun exploring aging and cognitive decline, where practical learning could reinforce activities such as preventing falls, avoiding scams, maintaining hygiene, supporting healthy eating, and remaining safe at home.

Other potential areas include physical exercise, addiction, and emotional wellness. Artificial intelligence is also under consideration, although the organization has taken a measured approach rather than introducing AI simply because the technology is receiving attention.

As the model expands, the strategic challenge will be preserving its learner-centered philosophy. Growth can create pressure to standardize content and optimize administration around organizational convenience. The strength of this approach comes from the opposite instinct: begin with what the learner needs to understand and do, then design the experience around that requirement.

Conclusion: Turning Learning Into Capability

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Case Study

LearningQ provides a compelling example of what happens when a training program begins with the learner rather than the course.

Its model is built around a straightforward premise: information becomes valuable when people can use it. Microlearning reduces activities into focused experiences. Repetition keeps important concepts accessible. Pre- and post-assessment provide evidence of knowledge change. Application questions connect understanding with action. Subject matter expertise and lived experience strengthen content quality, while learner performance creates an ongoing feedback loop for improvement.

Viewed through the Training Program Roadmap, the program represents a strong Stage 2 Knowledge Acquisition model built on Stage 1 foundations, with application and reinforcement beginning to move the experience toward skill development.

The reported 85 percent completion rate and 127 percent average skills increase provide measurable evidence of impact within the organization's measurement framework. Initiatives such as Project Reset also demonstrate a willingness to test how learning can contribute to more complex environments without overstating what training alone can accomplish.

The broader lesson applies across learning and development. Effective training is not defined by how much content an organization creates or how many courses learners complete. Its value emerges when people acquire useful knowledge, retain it, apply it, and become more capable because of the experience.

By shortening the distance between learning and doing, LearningQ provides a valuable model for making that objective more achievable.

For more information on LearningQ, visit their website
https://www.learningq.org/

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