18 Amazing Microlearning Formats for Employee Training That Will Help You Enhance Your Training Strategy

by Asha Pandey

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About the Author

Asha Pandey is the Chief Learning Strategist at EI Design. She heads the organization's Solution Architecting and Innovation Team and brings her rich 16 years' experience into play to help EI Design customers transform their learning and keep pace with the changing dynamics in the learning industry. A regular writer for various Global Learning forums, Asha is one of the most recognized thought leaders in the industry. She also shares her insights regularly on a range of topics on her blog at **www.eidesign.net/blog.**

About EI Design

EI Design is a leading **Learning and Performance Support solutions provider** that thrives on **transforming learning**—keeping it alive, relevant, impactful, and continuous.

- ✅ A thought leader in **innovation**, EI Design keeps enhancing its solutions to create the right **learner engagement** and spark **behavioral change.**
- ✅ In 2018, EI Design won GOLD by sustaining a high level of performance and creating a remarkable impact on the eLearning landscape. Prior to this, it has been ranked as #2 for three years in a row (2015, 2016, and 2017) in eLearning Industry's list of Top 10 e-Learning Content Development Companies.

EI Design specializes in transforming learning for our customers and learners with approaches that:

- Provide "sticky" learning.
- Provide predictive learnability or learning effectiveness.
- Offer "just-in-time" learning (Performance Support Tools) to push knowledge from acquisition to application on the job.
- Create high-impact learning experiences and a positive ROI.
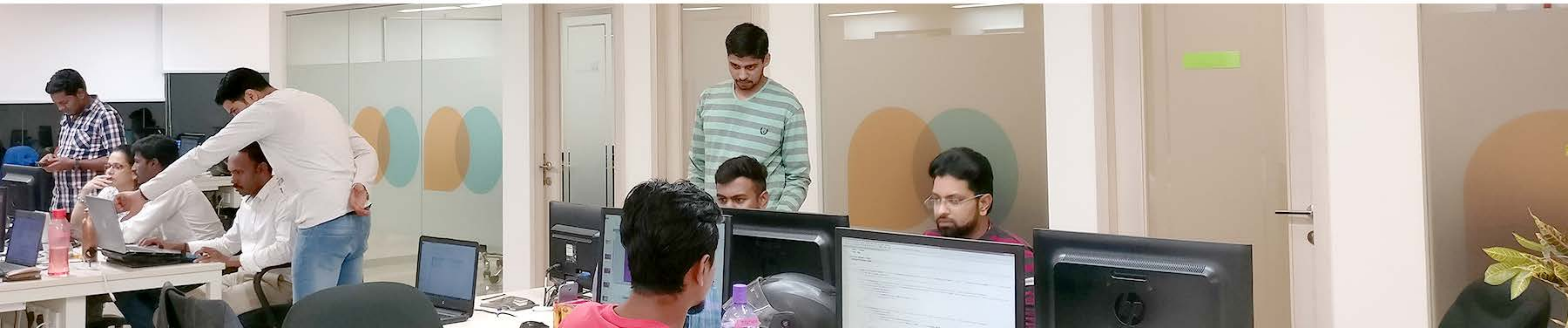
Preface

A lot has been said about the challenge of dwindling attention spans. In fact, a recent study by Microsoft pegs the human attention span at 8 seconds in contrast to a goldfish whose attention span stands at 9 seconds.

While I don't necessarily buy the data of this report, the fact is that we all need to multi-task, we live in a world of distractions, and we have a finite attention span. Alongside high pressure at work (often with long hours that compete with our personal time), we need to find time and do justice to training.

In the last 2–3 years, **Microlearning** has emerged as an effective approach that L&D teams can use to address some of these challenges. Today, you are spoilt for choice on various types of Microlearning that you can use for both Formal and Informal Trainings.

This eBook showcases 18 Microlearning formats that you can use (for both Formal and Informal Training) to meet this mandate.

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Section 1

What is Microlearning?

As the name suggests, it is a short, focused training. It is normally 2–5 mins in run length (normally not exceeding 7 mins). Although it is short, it is designed to meet a specific learning outcome.

It has the following key characteristics. It:

- Features multi-device support (runs seamlessly on smartphones, tablets, as well as laptops/desktops).
- Uses rich media formats (notably videos and apps).
- Is action-oriented (wherein learners can use various types of Microlearning to learn, practice, or apply on the job).

What is not Microlearning?

Microlearning is more than splitting the larger eLearning course into shorter nuggets. As I have highlighted, it must meet a specific learning outcome and should trigger the learner to the desired action.

How "micro" can you go with Microlearning?

The idea behind creating effective Microlearning nuggets is to keep them as crisp as possible while ensuring that they are long enough to adequately cover a learning objective. While there's no perfect length as such for Microlearning, ideally they should be:

1. **Easy to internalize:** They should be short enough for learners to consume them easily in one go.
2. **Available to learners precisely at the time of their need:** The Microlearning experience should be such that it helps learners on the job at the moment of their need.
3. **Designed to enable learners to act and practice:** The Microlearning experience should be action-oriented and help learners practice what they're learning.

What are the benefits of Microlearning?

There are several benefits of Microlearning. Let's take a look at these from both learner as well as business perspectives.

Benefits for Learners

1. **Learner-centric:** Microlearning nuggets can be used in a flexible learning path and can be used to provide learners with a personalized learning experience. The flexibility they offer in terms of packaging them in the device of learners' choice helps them address varied learning styles.

2. **Just-in-time:** Microlearning nuggets can be offered to learners packaged as just-in-time Performance Support Tools (PSTs). They can be designed to meet a specific learning outcome and help learners apply the learning on the job.

3. **Accessible:** More than 1.2 billion learners have access to devices such as smartphones and tablets. Microlearning nuggets can be accessed on the device of learners' choice (including smartphones and tablets) making them easily accessible for learners.

4. **Rich media:** Microlearning is an ideal fit for modern-day learners who appreciate information packaged in rich media formats.

5. **Less time consuming:** With time, the average human attention span is decreasing. According to a study, the average human attention span was 12 seconds in the year 2000. Just a decade and a half has passed by since then and the average attention span has dropped to 8 seconds. This makes Microlearning an ideal format for today's learners.

What are the benefits of Microlearning?

Benefits for Business

1. **Affordable and agile:** Microlearning is relatively lighter on training budgets and gives organizations a cost advantage. Numbers suggest that Microlearning can bring down production costs by 50% and increase development speed by 300%.

2. **Shorter development cycle:** Shorter the learning nugget, shorter the development cycle. Microlearning nuggets can be developed quickly and, therefore, have a short development cycle, helping organizations not just spend less but also ship the product with a quicker turnaround time.

3. **Easy to update:** In case there are any updates to be made, Microlearning nuggets can be updated quickly, again proving beneficial for organizations in terms of the cost and turnaround time.

4. **Wider application:** Microlearning can be used for Formal as well as Informal Training needs. They can be used as Performance Support Tools (PSTs), as standalone learning nuggets or as part of a series of courses. They can also be deployed through LMS or weaved in the learning path of a learning portal.

5. **High impact:** Microlearning nuggets are designed to meet a specific learning outcome. This helps create a high impact as the learner gets exactly what he/she was looking for.

Section 2

What is the relevance of Microlearning today, and why is It the flavor of the season?

We live in a world full of distractions and dwindling attention spans. Both these raise questions on how your learning strategy should be updated to offset these challenges. Let's take a look at this and some of the related facets more closely to determine what approach would offset them.

Challenge 1: Limited Attention Spans

The proponents of the 90/20/8 rule have made interesting observations about human attention spans. According to them:

- People are completely alert and attentive in the first 8 minutes.
- Once 20 minutes go by, the attention level starts showing a dip.
- Once they hit the 60–120-minute range, the alertness level completely drops.

What is the relevance of Microlearning today, and why is It the flavor of the season?

Challenge 2: Dwindling Attention Spans

If the findings of the study by Microsoft are to be believed, the human attention span (8 seconds) is lesser than that of a goldfish (9 seconds).

Challenge 3: The Forgetting Curve

Then, there's the "Forgetting curve" too that postulates that we forget nearly 80% of what we learn in 30 days if there is no reinforcement (Ref diagram by Hermann Ebbinghaus).
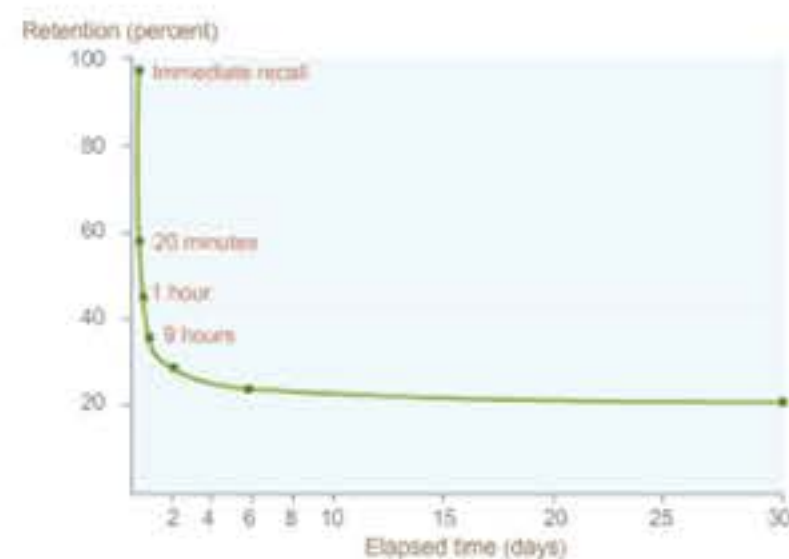
What is the relevance of Microlearning today, and why is It the flavor of the season?

These three challenges are very real and need to be addressed for learning to be sticky, easy to apply on the job, and show a demonstrable gain that businesses want to see.

Let us see how **Microlearning** can come to your rescue:

- ✅ To begin with, you can use Microlearning to supplement your Formal Trainings. This way, you can ensure that the reinforcement provided in the form of Microlearning helps learners retain the learning you offered them through the Formal Training.

- ✅ A key feature of Microlearning is that it is short, and learners would usually finish going through a Microlearning nugget within a 3–5-minute window. This way, it helps you negate the impact of the "Forgetting Curve" and offset the attention span challenge.

- ✅ Short trainings then translate into faster completions, thereby fetching you better completion rates. Results from a survey reveal that of the 385 employees, over 50% of them expressed their willingness to use their company's learning program if the courses are shorter.

On account of all these factors, Microlearning is an approach that is here to stay.

Why is Microlearning gaining momentum?

Microlearning addresses the challenge of short attention spans very effectively and helps you maximize the impact through short, focused learning nuggets.

There is an interesting 90/20/8 rule, according to which:

- We pay complete attention/demonstrate complete alertness in the first 8 minutes.
- There is a drop in attention/alertness after 20 minutes.
- Alertness/attention goes down completely once we are in the range of 60–120 minutes.

This very succinctly summarizes why it makes business sense to adopt Microlearning based training.

Other reasons that help Microlearning based training gain momentum are as follows:

1. Increase in the use of Mobile Learning.
2. Its ability to be developed and updated quickly.
3. The flexibility it offers to be used for Formal as well as Informal Learning.
4. The higher completion rates that it leads to, thereby creating a higher impact.
5. Its ability to negate the attention span challenge.
6. Its capability to attract the millennial workforce.
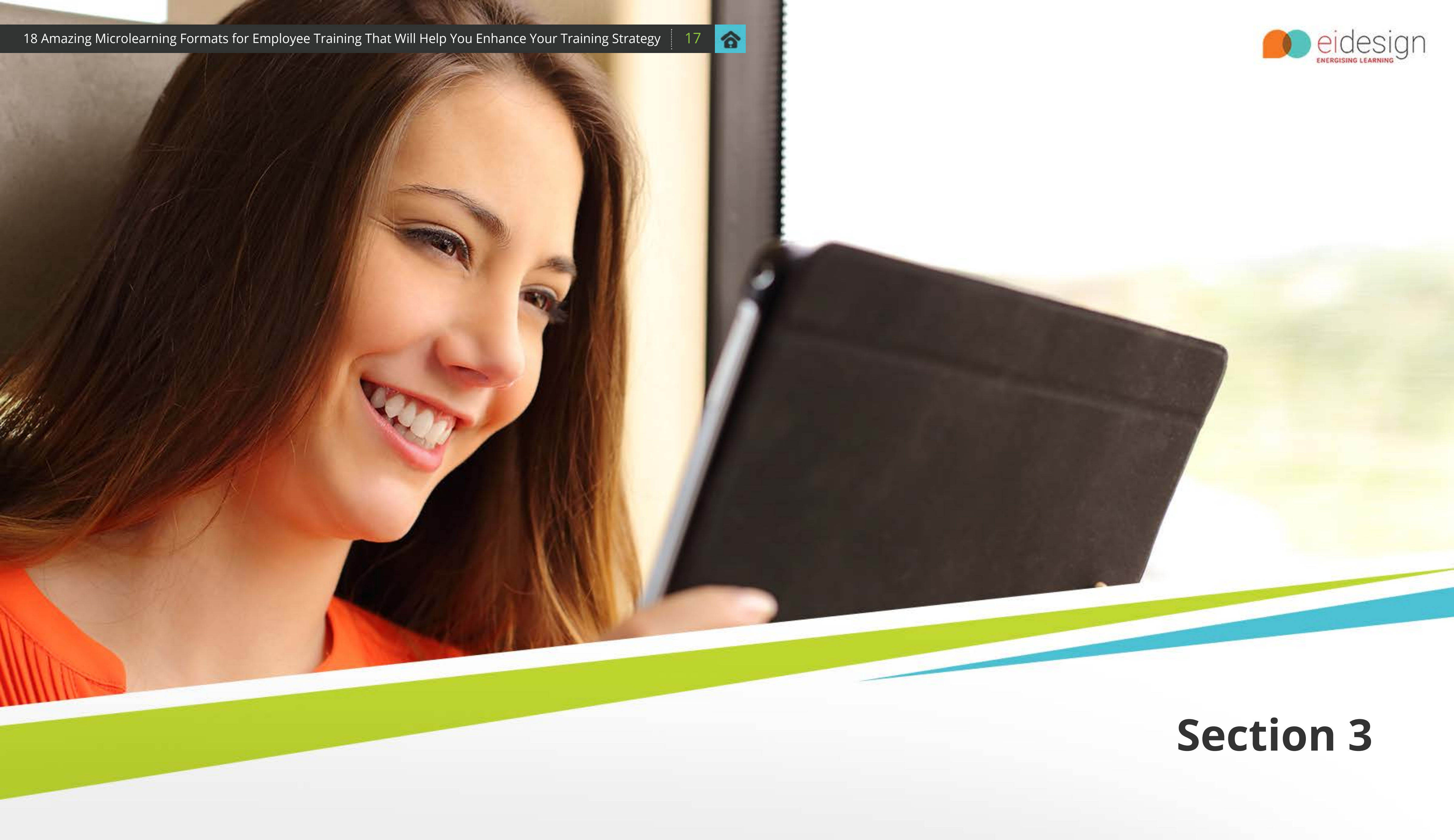
Section 3

Where does Microlearning find a fit in an organization's training?

Microlearning can be used very effectively to create sticky learning experiences for pretty much most of your corporate training needs. However, there are certain aspects that should be on your checklist to determine if a given training is apt for Microlearning based delivery.

Here is my checklist that you can use at various stages to determine if your training would map to a Microlearning format or not:

Step 1: Learning Outcome And If Content Can Be Mapped Effectively To Microlearning Format
1. Is the learning need specific and not too complex?
2. Can the learning objective be met in one glance/short time?
3. Can you filter out the redundant/unnecessary content and retain only the need to know information?

Step 2: Design And Development
1. Have you decided on the medium/format to be used?
2. Can the learning outcomes be achieved through the chosen format?
3. Do you have rapid development measures in place to ensure that the Microlearning nugget can be developed and updated quickly?

Step 3: Further Value-Adds
1. Is your intended Microlearning nugget searchable?
2. Is your Microlearning nugget contextual (providing the greater picture)?
3. Does your Microlearning nugget provide cross-references to the related Microlearning nuggets?

Is Microlearning relevant only for the millennial workforce?

Microlearning based trainings certainly find a natural alignment to your millennial workforce. However, they are not limited to millennials alone. As we know, irrespective of the age group or learning preferences, we keep coming across challenges like "I want to learn but where is the time?" We are equally aware of the dwindling attention spans that is applicable to all age groups.

All learners today seek is flexibility in learning, that is, on the device of their choice and when they want to learn. More so, they will not sign in to the LMS to find the learning piece. They want it to be available within their workflow, on the device they access most (read smartphones).

On account of all these compelling factors, your strategy to use Microlearning based training will resonate with all your learner profiles and not just millennials.

How can Microlearning be used?

Microlearning is short, focused, available on mobile devices, and can be adapted to offer both Formal and Informal Training. You can use various types of Microlearning to suit both Formal and Informal Training. Here are a few options:

1. **Formal Training:** You can transform your traditional eLearning format or Macrolearning format to a series of nuggets that are connected seamlessly through a learning path. These are designed in the Mobile Learning or mLearning format giving the flexibility to the learners to consume them on the device of their choice and at the pace that works best for them.
2. **Supplement Formal Training:** You can also use Microlearning to supplement your Formal Trainings.
   a. It can be offered as nuggets to provide a reinforcement to the primary, Formal Training.
   b. Alternately, you can offer a series of nuggets to challenge the learners (micro quizzes).
   c. You can also design them as a series of nuggets for practice and eventual mastery.
   d. You can also use it to supplement your Instructor Led Training (for instance, for online pre/post workshop material or practices sessions).
3. **Performance Support Tools (PSTs) or job aids:** Microlearning finds a perfect match to offer Performance Support to the learners. PSTs are just-in-time learning aids that are available within the learners' workflow and are designed to address certain needs. They could offer a quick fix, a ready reckoner to support their task, or a checklist that enables them to create the output with the required quality. Microlearning can be used very effectively to meet these specific just-in-time learning needs.

When should you not use Microlearning?

Microlearning may not work in a few situations where the training program at hand is too complex and where it makes more sense to present the training as a single larger learning unit.

Otherwise, Microlearning can be applied to almost all training programs in the form of standalone nuggets or as a series of nuggets threaded in a learning path. Their widest adoption continues to be as Performance Support Tools or PSTs (just-in-time learning aids).
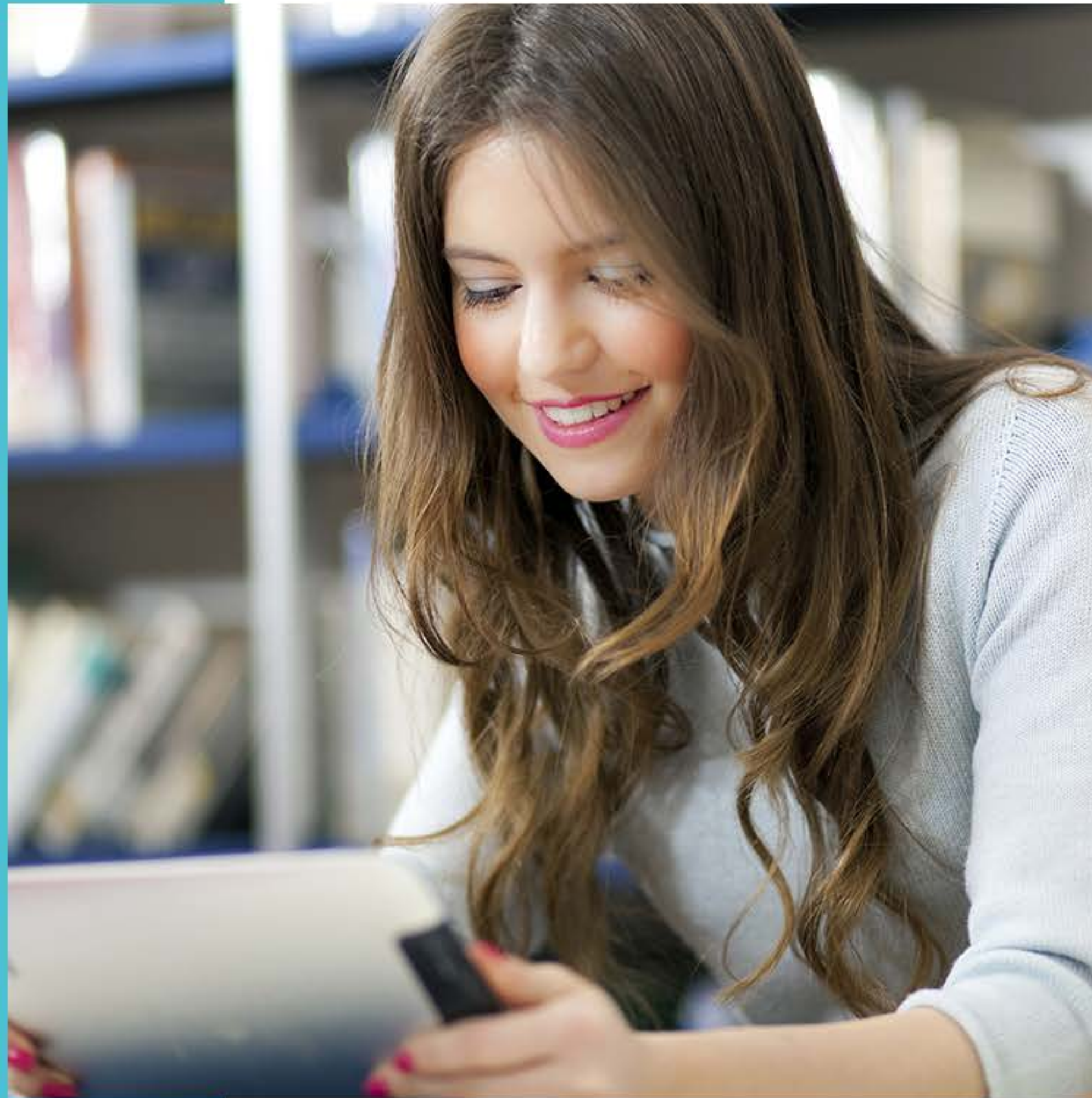
Section 4

What are the ways or formats to use Microlearning to make your training more effective?

Today, you can take a pick from several engaging and innovative formats. All of these are multi-device formats (supported on desktops/laptops as well as tablets and smartphones). You can pick a particular format based on the nature of content and how it should be applied.

At EI Design, we have created a huge library that has a wide range of Microlearning formats. I have grouped them into 3 silos (Read, View and Learn) so that each format reflects its primary application.

However, this should not be seen as a limiting factor and the usage of a given type of Microlearning can be adapted easily to serve another purpose.

Read

1. **Infographics:** They are a great fit to summarize the key takeaways. The visual approach to summarize the key aspects leads to higher recall and retention.

Read

2. **Interactive Infographics:** Similar to Infographics (in terms of the visual based approach), the additional component of Interactivity here enables you to layer information and pack more details. As an extension, they can be used as short learning guides.
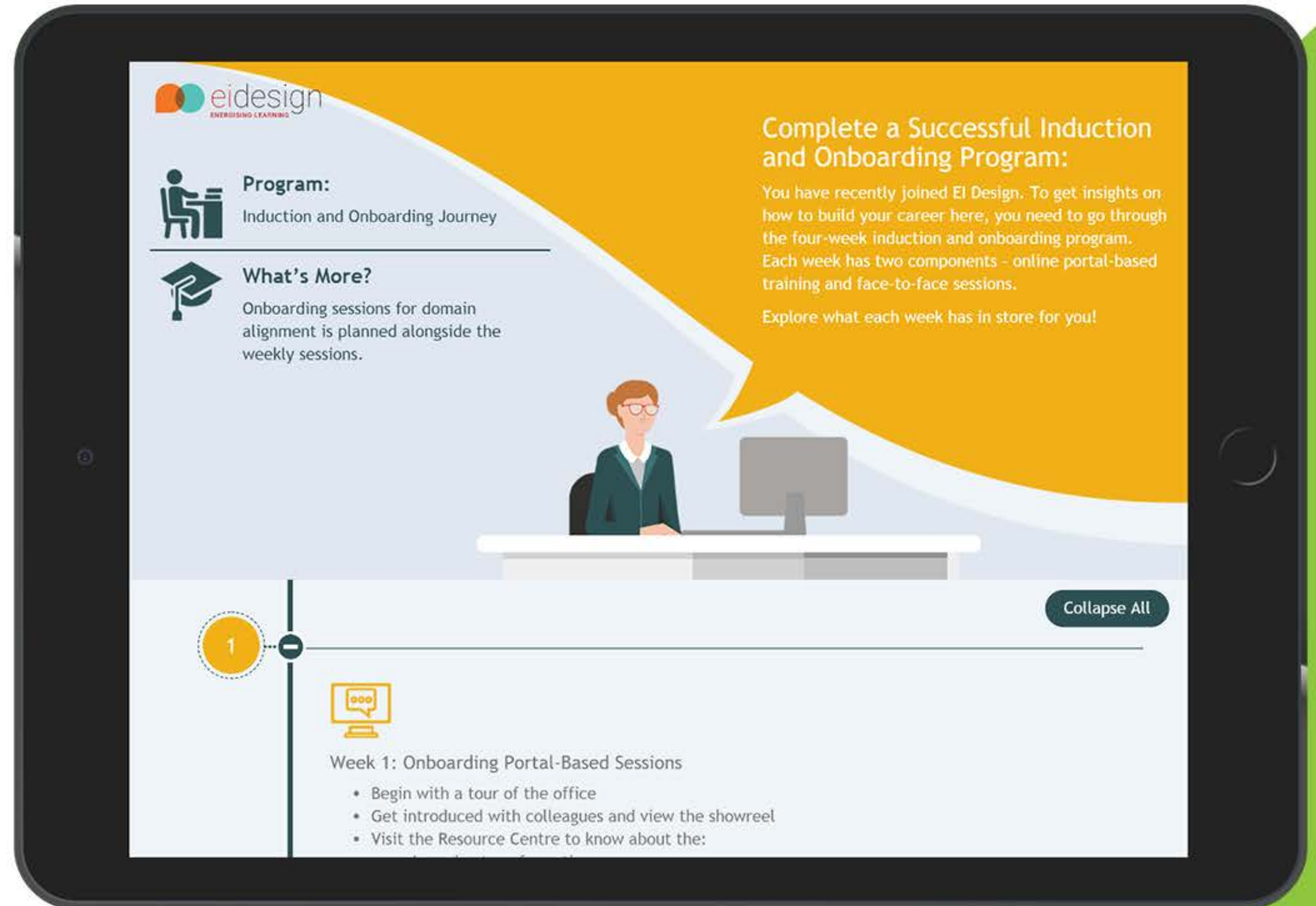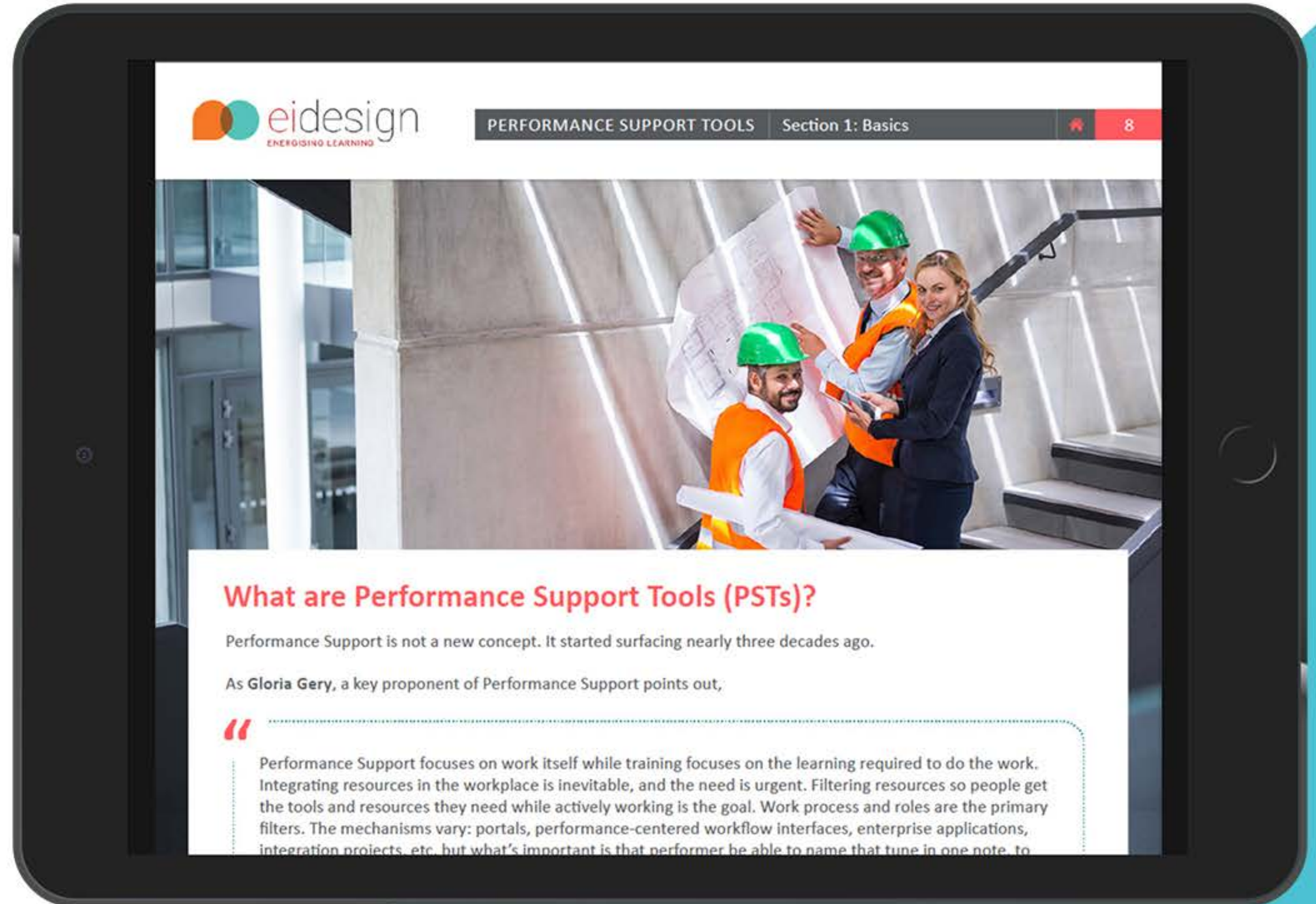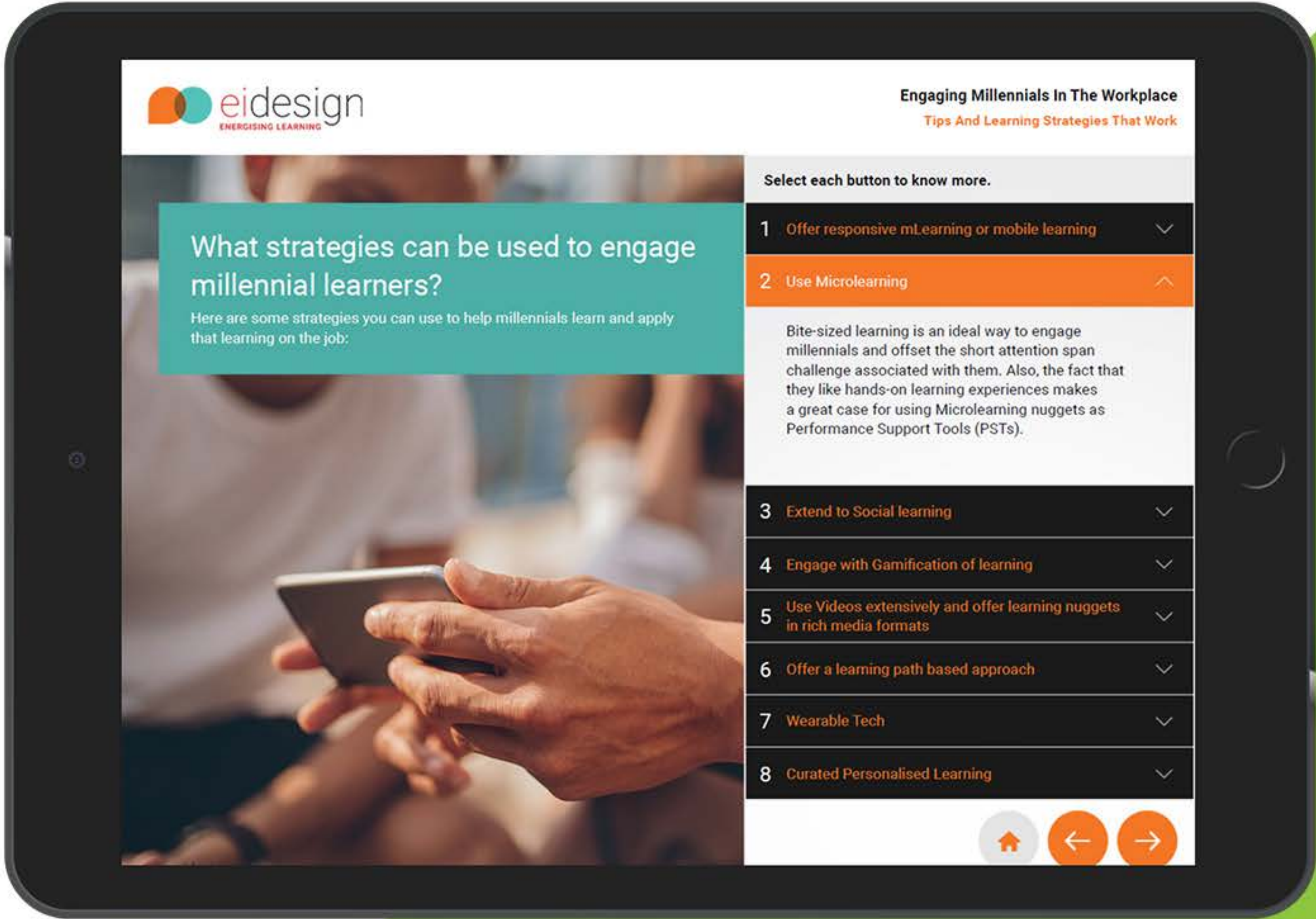
Read

3. **PDF:** This is probably the most common format for Microlearning and can be used to provide quick and just-in-time access to specific information.

Read

4. **Interactive PDFs:** A more current avatar of the traditional PDFs, this format allows longer reams of data to be packaged into meaningful info groups that the learner can browse through easily.

Read

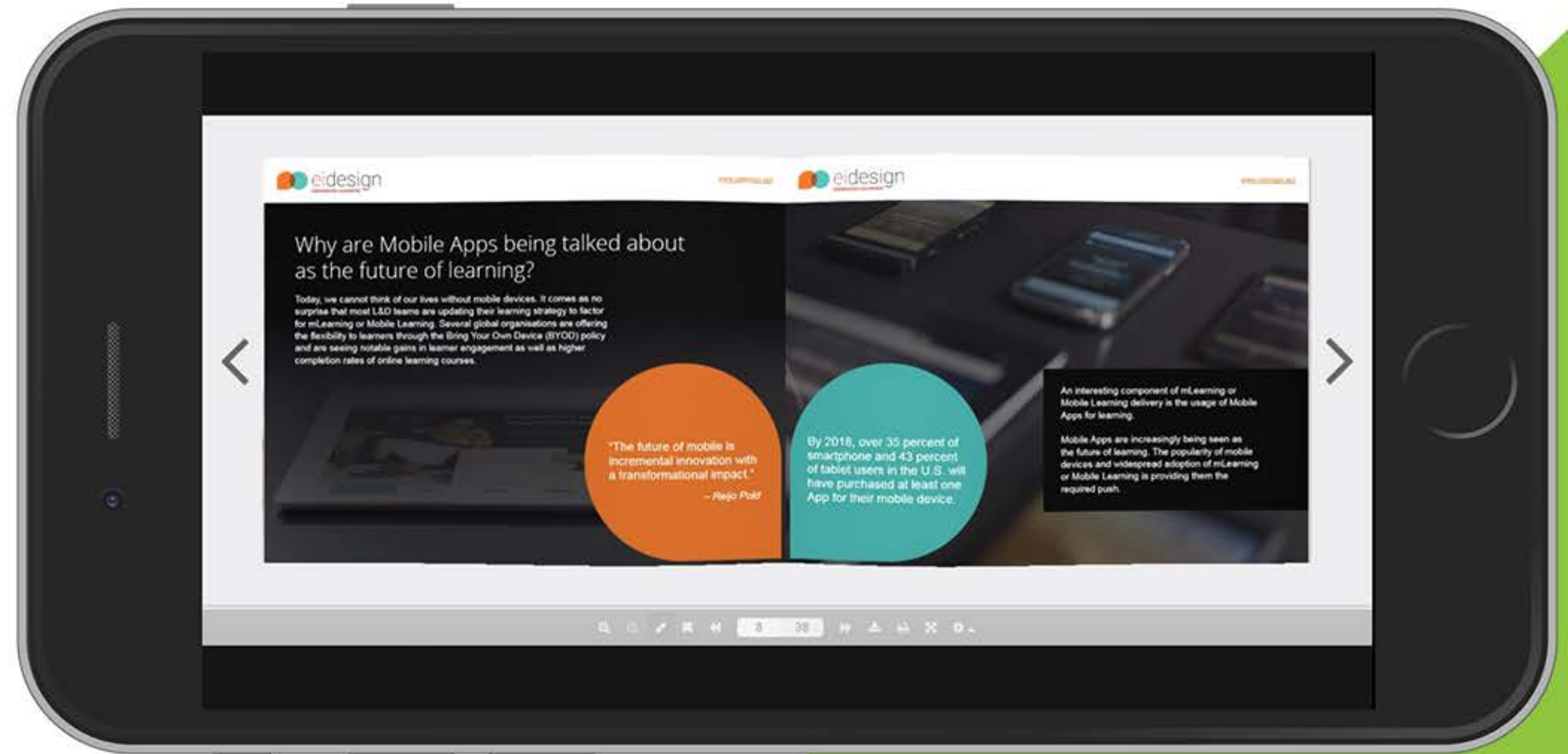5. **eBooks:** To gain quick and just-in-time access to specific information, this Microlearning format is the best approach.

Read

6. **Flipbooks:** They make handy job aids wherein you can pack great visual appeal and interactivities. They are multi-device and can generate HTML5 outputs. You can also integrate audio and video to further enhance the impact.

View (Video Based Learning)

1. **Animated Videos:** These are popular formats that can be adapted to create a variety of learning aids. It can also be a part of traditional eLearning (for context setting or learning summary).

View (Video Based Learning)

2. **Whiteboard Animation Videos:** A picture is worth a thousand words. Explaining concepts through pictures (featuring illustrations, animations, and audio) creates a higher engagement and the image stays with the learners well past the learning interaction.
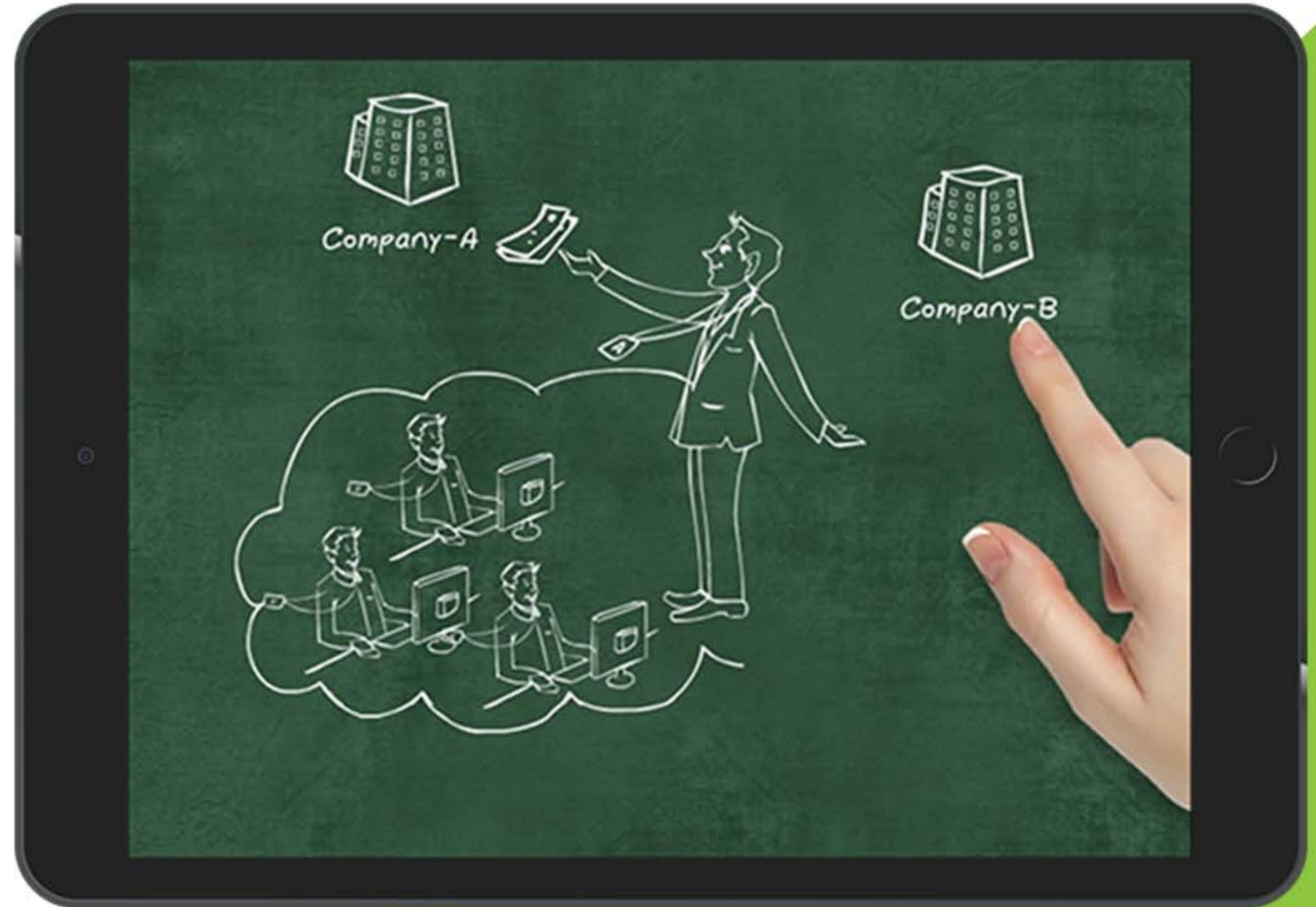
View (Video Based Learning)

3. **Kinetic Text Based Animation Videos:** Sometimes minimalism scores. Instead of visuals, the mere animation of text (with sound effects) can be used to convey the required message.

View (Video Based Learning)

4. **Explainer Videos:** As the name suggests, these are great to introduce a concept in an easy-to-understand visual manner. Sharp and focused, they can be aligned to create wide ranging concepts very effectively.
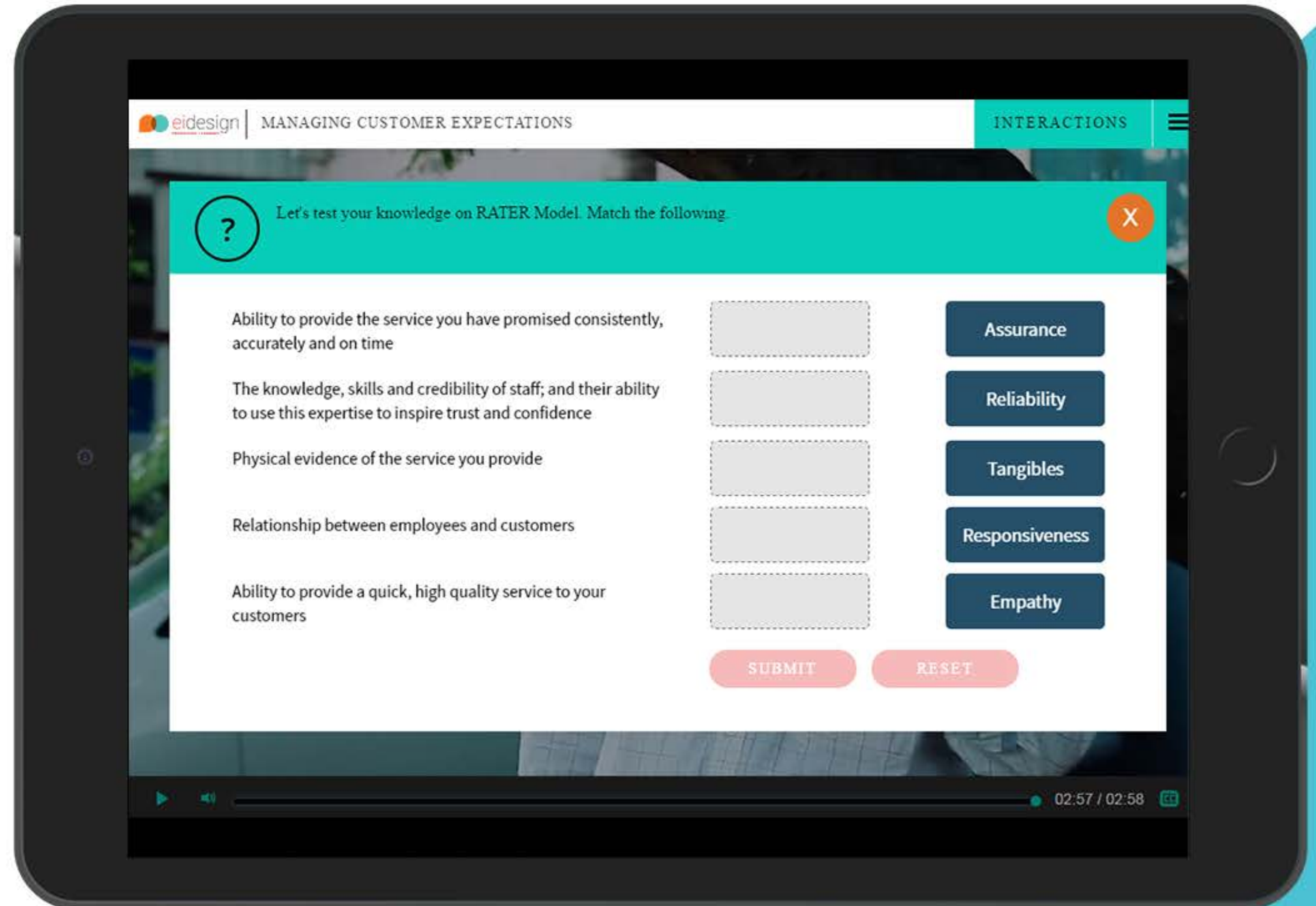
View (Video Based Learning)

5. **Interactive Videos:** While Video Based Learning is great, you can top it up through Interactive Video based learning. You can add interactions (matching the learning interactions of the eLearning courses) to create high-impact learning experiences.
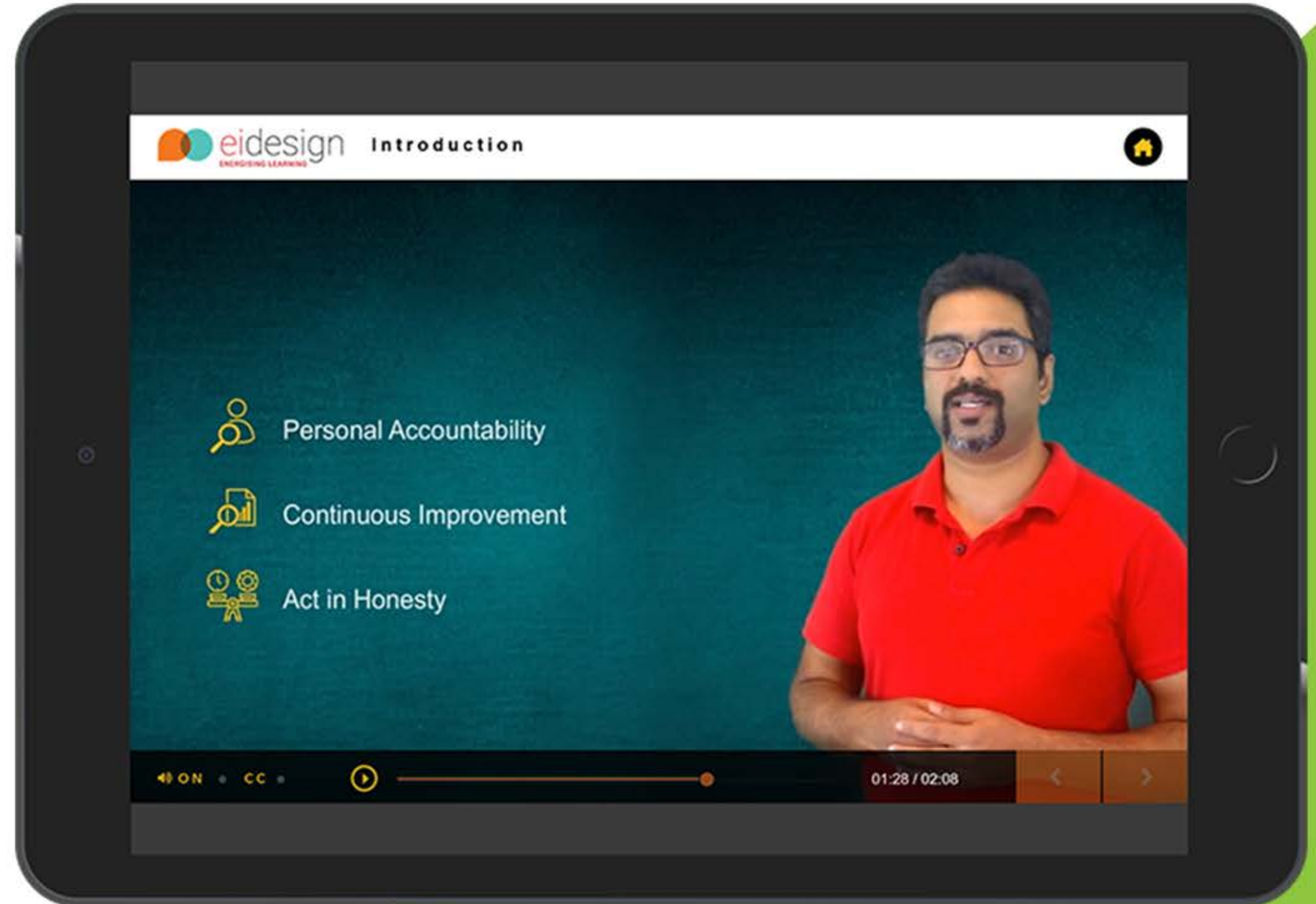
View (Video Based Learning)

6. **Expert Videos:** We look forward to expert advice and insights. Using this approach makes them accessible to learners on the devices of their choice and available when they want to review it.
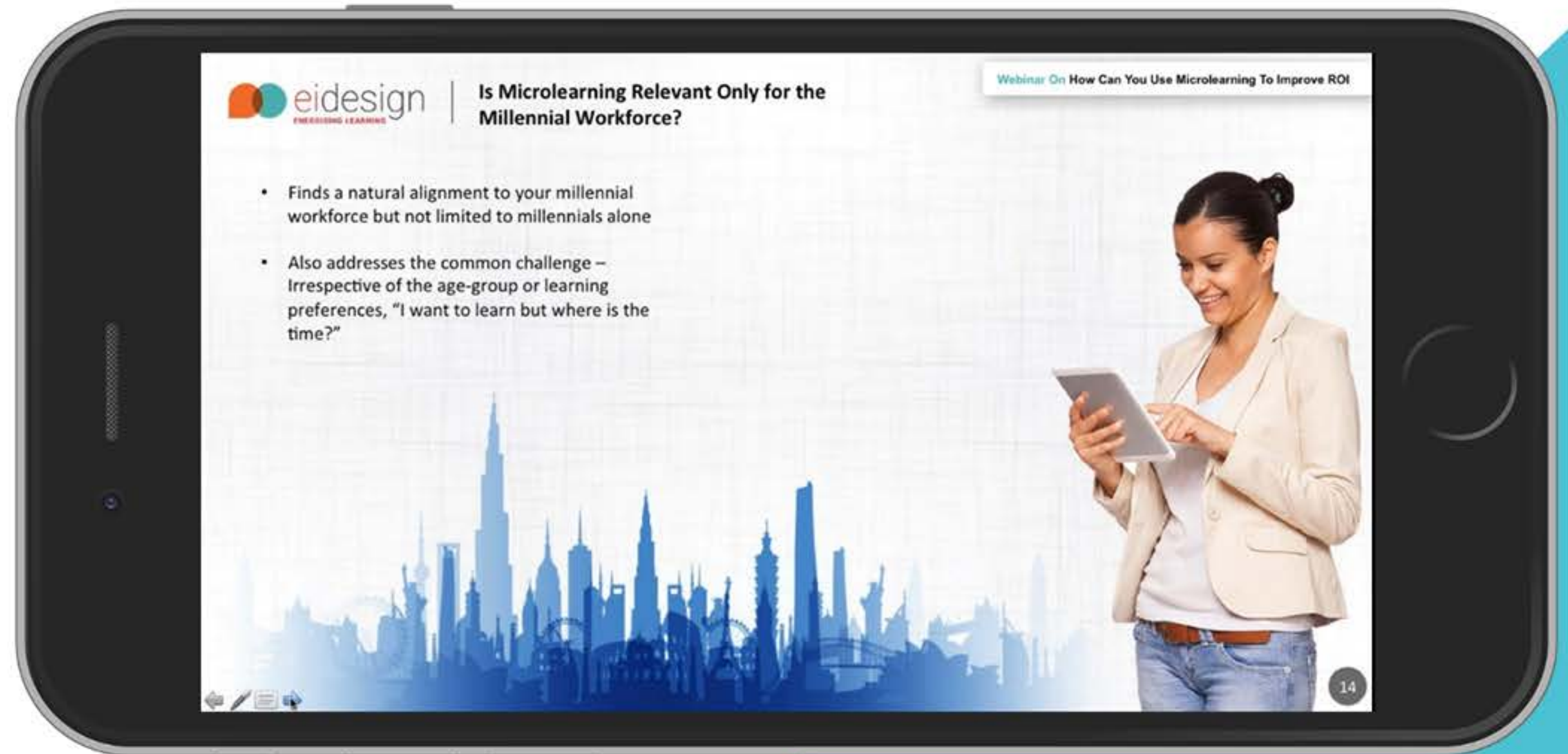
View (Video Based Learning)

7. **Recorded Webinars:** This approach is good for learners who want to access information on the go and at the moment of their need.
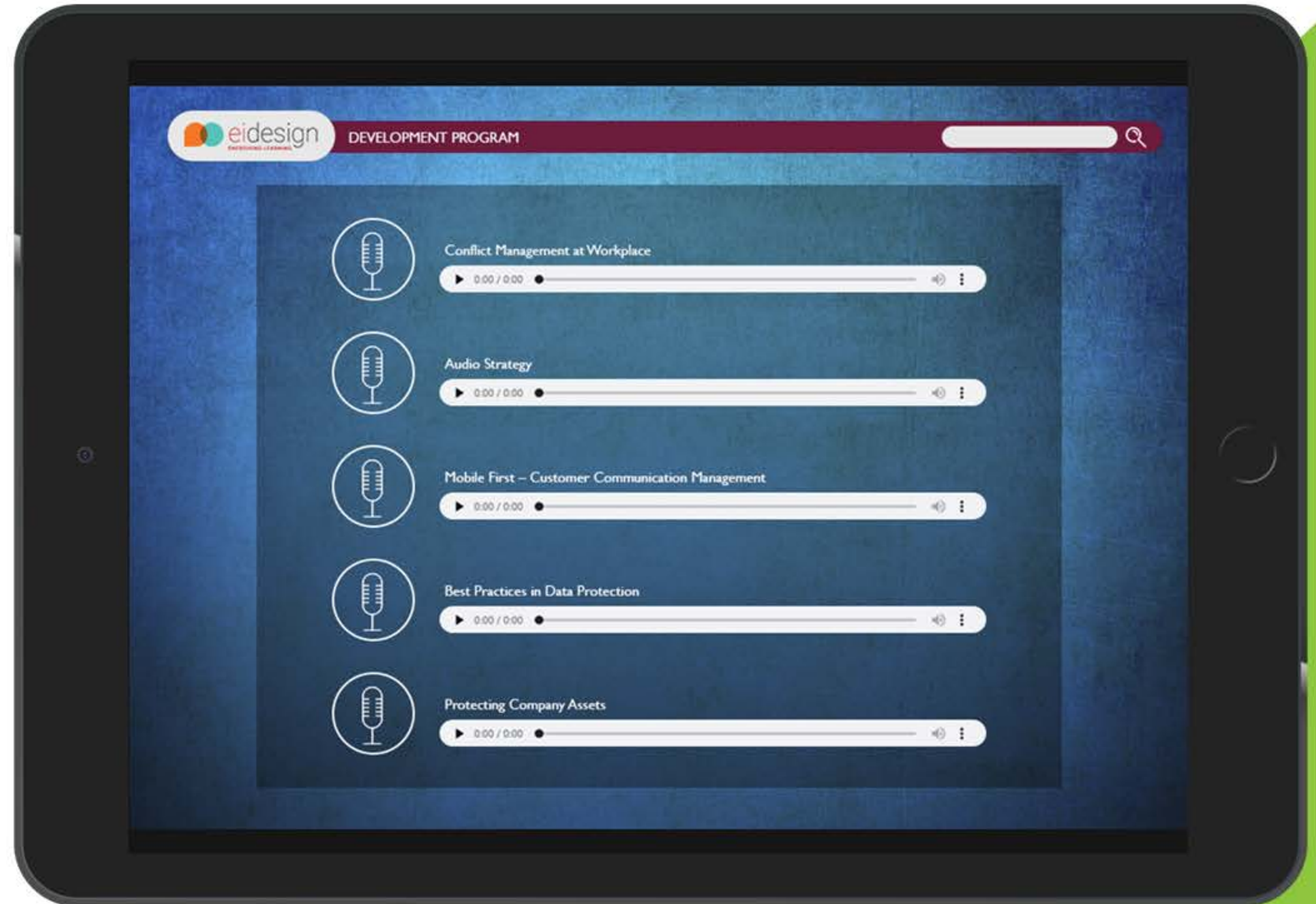
View (Video Based Learning)

8. **Audio Books/Podcasts:** These are again very useful alternative formats to share expert comments that can be accessed on demand by the learners.
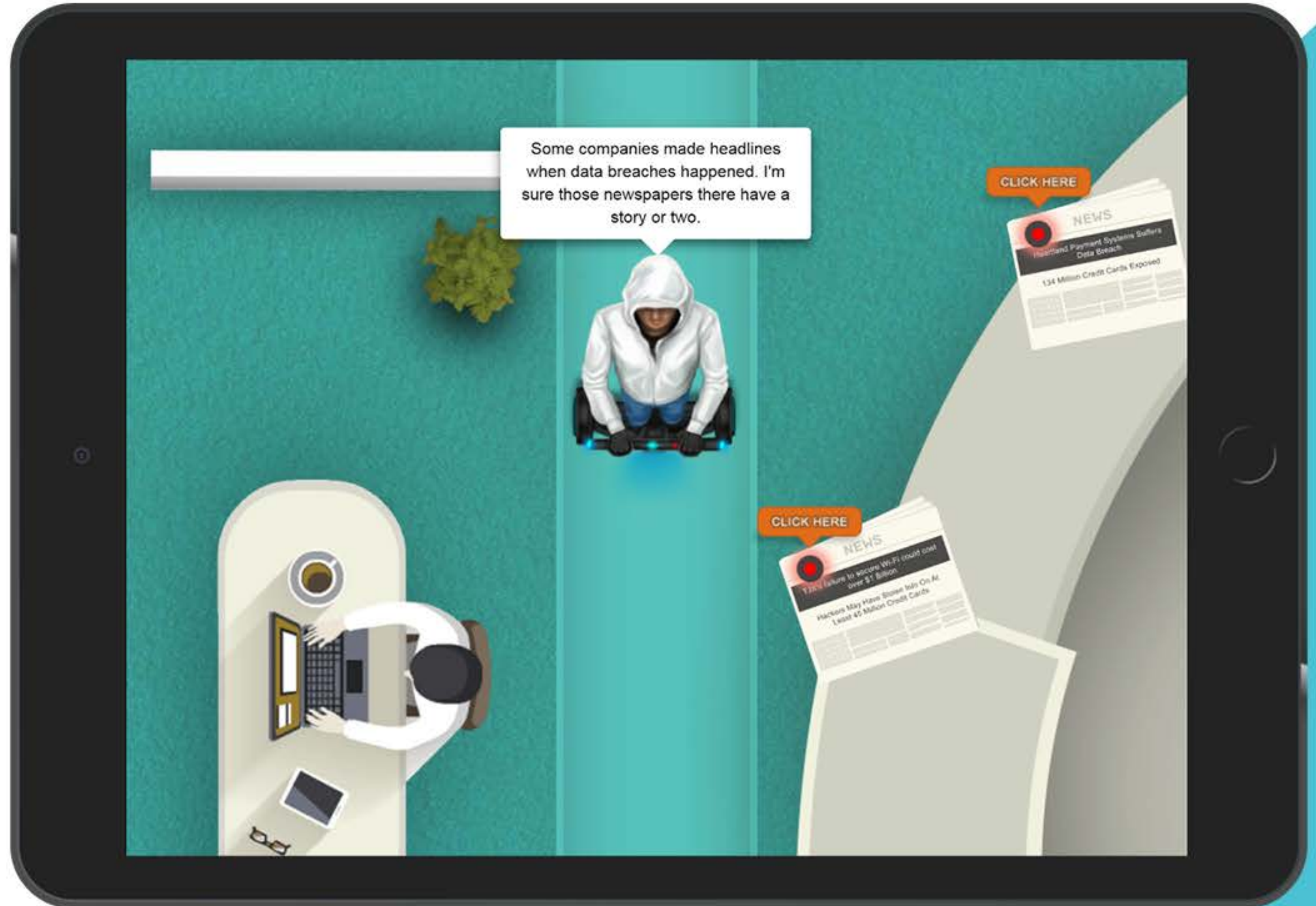
Learn

1. **Interactive Parallax Based Scrolling:** This is another very interesting format that applies the parallax approach and is commonly used in websites. It uses the same technique to simulate a learning path that the learner can "scroll through." Alongside the learning path, interactions and quizzes can be added.
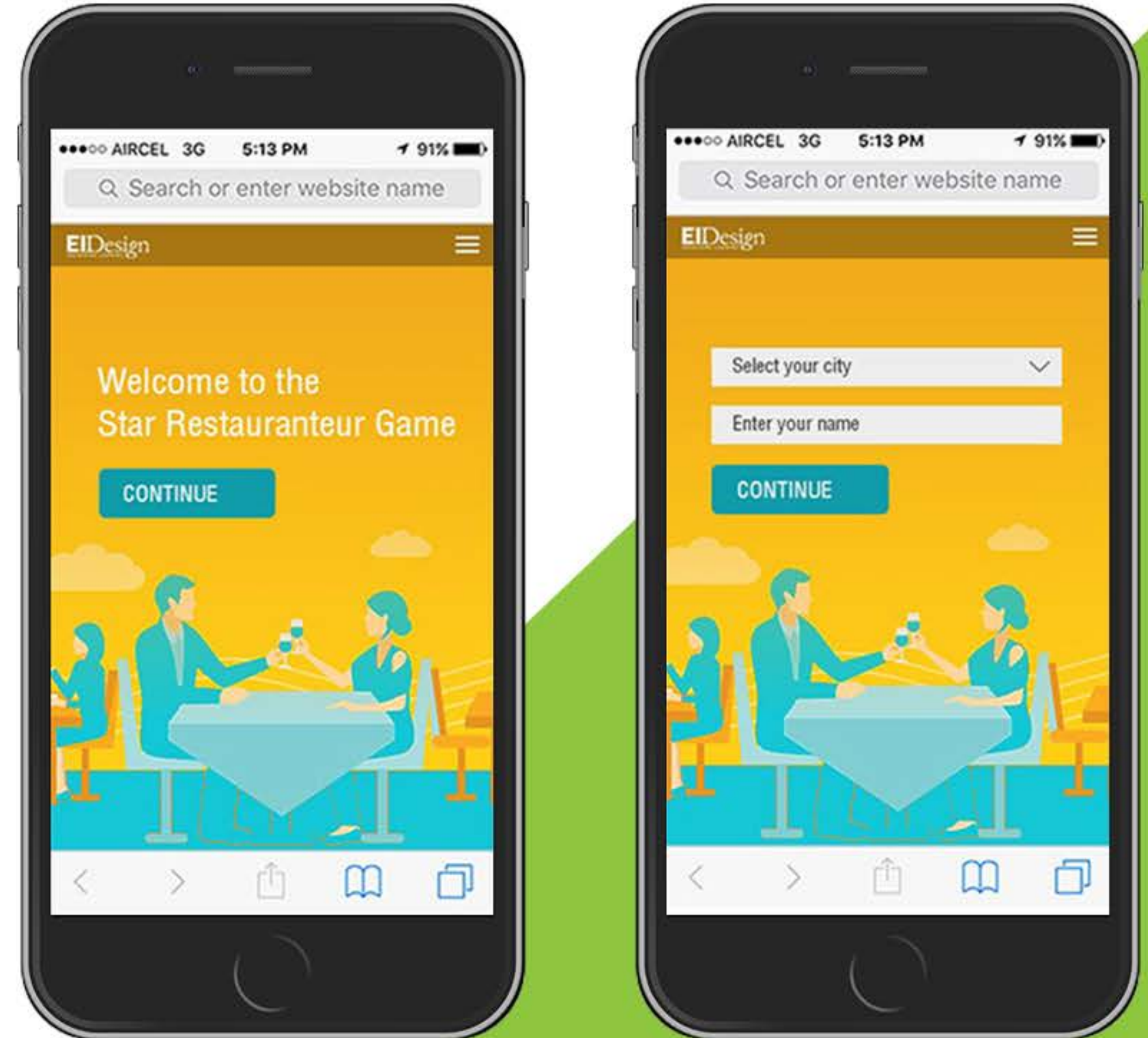
Learn

2. **Mobile Apps:** A very powerful approach to offer learning is through a Mobile App that is being talked about as the "future of learning." Not only is it the right fit for learning on the go but it also brings in the added advantage to enable both online and offline viewing. It facilitates an easy updation of content and its roll-out to learners and provides notifications nudging them to access the updated information.
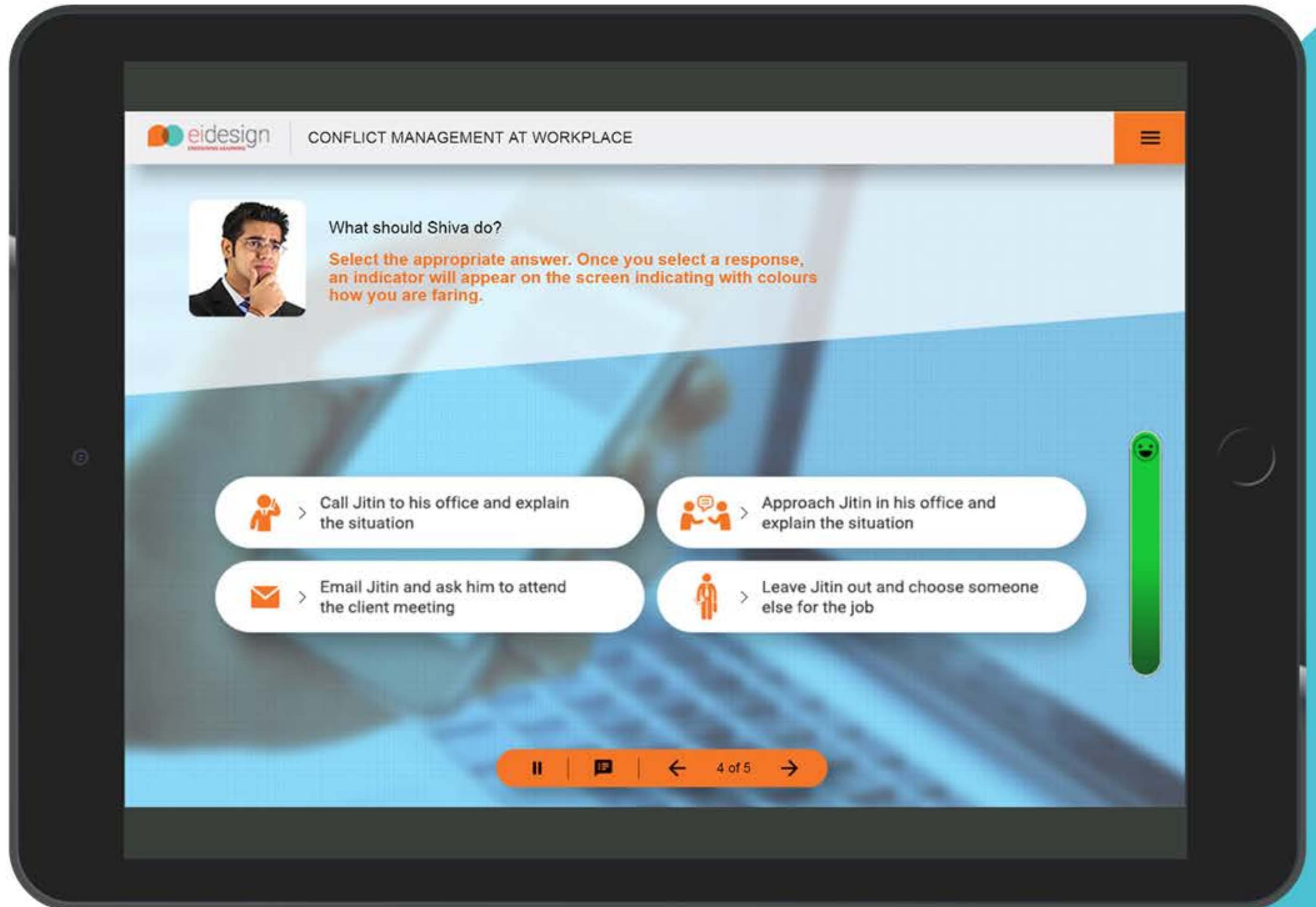
Learn

3. **Complex Branching Scenarios:** When you need to simulate complex, real-life situations that learners need to handle and gain mastery on, this format is the right fit.
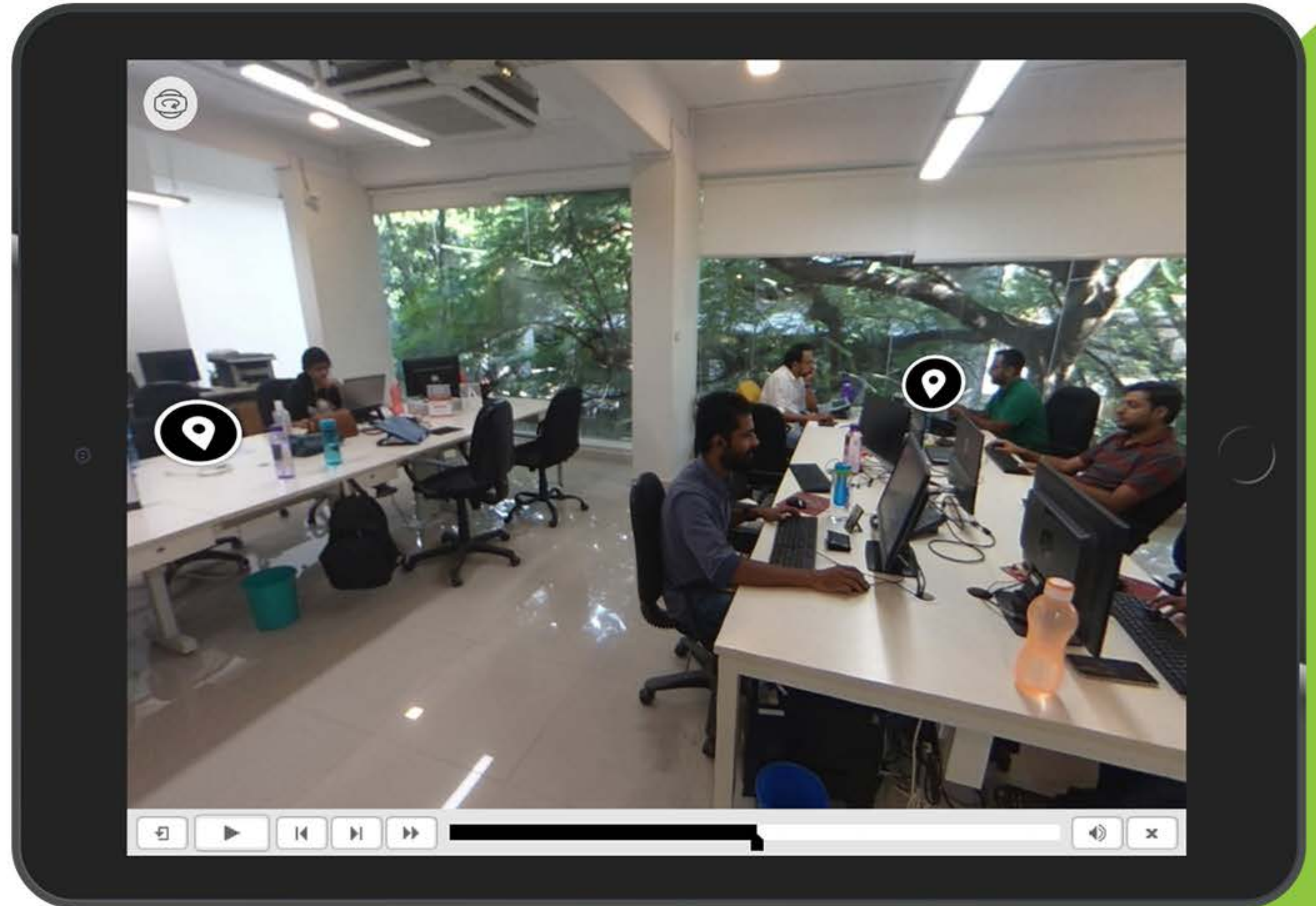
Learn

4. **Virtual Reality (VR):** This immersive learning experience uses a 360 degree imagery to explain to new joinees about the functions, mission, vision, teams in the organization etc. The joinee can explore the complete office virtually and click on hotspots (within the 360 degree imagery) to learn how each domain contributes to the organizational goals.

Summary

I hope this eBook provides cues on Microlearning based training (for Formal and Performance Support intervention as well as for ILT support) that you can use to enhance your existing training. If you have any queries or would like to see any of the featured demos in action, do contact me.

Read More

- Free eBook: Microlearning: How Can You Create Macro Impact With Micro Nuggets
- Free eBook: Why You Should Adopt Microlearning Based Training
- 5 Must See Examples of Microlearning Strategies for Corporate Training
- Microlearning in the Workplace – 15 Amazing Examples to Make Your Training Exciting
- 6 Amazing Examples – How You Can Use Microlearning Videos In Your Training

Are you investigating choices with the combination of Mobile Learning and Microlearning in your corporate training? EI Design can help you with that and more!

Our innovative approaches and focus areas include:

- Learning portals with learning paths
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- Content curation solutions
- Social Learning (collaborative learning)
- Microlearning (for both formal and informal learning)
- Millennial-centric solutions
- Approaches to predict, measure and validate learnability or learning effectiveness of online courses
- Reporting and analytics

We use the following strategies to create immersive learning:

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- Gamification
- Videos and Interactive Videos
- Apps for learning
- Decision making – complex branching simulations
- Scenario-based learning
- Storytorials

We offer a comprehensive services portfolio that includes custom online (eLearning and mLearning) and Blended solutions. With a focus on performance gain, we offer a wide range of Performance Support Tools (just-in-time learning/job-aids). We also have a large Localization practice, covering over 31 global languages.

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