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Simplifying Visual Communications

The Ultimate Guide to Optimising Your Internal Communications for Maximum Reach and Retention

Snackable learning and spaced repetition are two game-changing concepts that will help you:

- Maximise internal communication message retention
- Avoid getting workplace messages lost and ignored amidst corporate "noise"
- Implement a successful snackable learning strategy

When you're tasked with training or communicating business critical information, it can be frustrating when the workforce forgets key messages or forgot what you said last week.

First, we need to understand why we forget things in the first place.

The Forgetting Curve

In the 1880s, German psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus wanted to understand more about why we forget things and how to prevent it. He found that

- **Memories weaken over time**
  If we learn new information, for example first aid best practices (but make no attempt to reinforce that information) we remember less and less of it as time passes.

- **We're quick to forget**
  When was the last time you fully retained key facts and figures an hour after a webinar? Without reviewing or reinforcing our learning, our ability to retain new information plummets.

Ebbinghaus created the Forgetting Curve, a visual representation of the way that learned information fades over time. This enduring model has endured repeated tests since the 1880s and is still highly regarded.

Forgetting Curve

Other factors can affect your ability to retain information, such as age, stress levels and hours of sleep.

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Stop the Forgetting Curve with a snackable learning strategy

It's not all doom and gloom. One way for internal communication specialists to beat the Forgetting Curve is by using a snackable learning strategy. A snackable learning strategy is a science-backed technique for improving the retention of your messages so they have an impact on influencing key outcomes.

It is underpinned by two crucial elements: bite-sized key messages and calculated repetition of the key message.

What is snackable learning?

Also known as bite-sized learning or microlearning, snackable learning is a learning methodology where learners are strategically exposed to repeated bite-sized chunks of information. This learning methodology aims to improve long-term information recall.

SCENERIO:
Larry's Health & Safety briefing

Larry just emailed a hefty document outlining health and safety protocols with the warehouse team because people were slipping, tripping, and getting injured too frequently. Two weeks later, he is still seeing the same injury rates and plenty of safety hazards on the warehouse floor. What went wrong?

Instead of a long document, Larry could share bite-sized chunks of information on a slideshow or displayed on digital screens. This would allow his warehouse team to understand key messages quickly and easily.

Snackable learning works because the more we repeat and use information, the more likely it is to end up in our long-term memory. It has been found to be effective in many areas, from learning a new language, studying medicine, and internal communications. The key is that the messages must be short.

Which is easier to read, remember and recall? Distilling information down to a key message makes it more palatable for readers

What is spaced repetition?

Spaced repetition is an integral part of the snackable learning strategy. Spaced repetition involves repeating the same message at increasing intervals. This embeds the knowledge in the long-term memory. Consistently reviewing what you've learnt halts the Forgetting Curve and allows you to remember what you've learnt for longer. In the diagram, we can see that with each time you are exposed to the message again, retention goes up and it takes more days for the retention rate to drop. In other words, more repetition means remembering more of what you've learnt for longer.

Good and bad repetition

Good repetition is where you space out the delivery of your messages over time. Start with a higher frequency to begin with, then reduce the frequency over several months. Not to be confused with "bad" repetition, which is showing the same content on repeat, over and over in a short space of time. This has the adverse effect because the message becomes noise, and we simply switch off.

Benefits of a snackable learning strategy

Improved employee engagement

One of the biggest benefits of a snackable learning strategy is improved employee engagement. Gone are the days of day-long training sessions. When it comes to information consumption, modern workers want content that's:

- Bite size and easy to digest
- Relevant and engaging
- Visually stimulating

Snackable learning suits the content consumption habits of modern learners, increasing employee engagement.

Increases information retention

The best outcome for internal communications messaging is that people remember your messages. With small bits of information-rich content, your workforce is more likely to retain and recall that information.

Supports training efforts

Traditional methods of learning provide the context of information, which is an important part of the learning process. But where workshops and online learning fall short is the ability to deliver the frequency of key messages over time. Repetition is the cornerstone of learning because it delivers deep seated retention of information, transitioning the learning from conscious behaviour to subconscious habits.

Challenges of snackable learning strategy

Implementing snackable learning and spaced repetition can involve trial and error. Here are the factors you'll want to keep in mind:

- What kind of communication messages are you sharing
- How much detail do you want your workforce to know
- Are there competing messages or information

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5 fundamentals of an effective snackable learning strategy

Noise and distractions are part of the workplace, even for non-desk workers and people who work remotely from home. Emails, announcements, team meetings and more contribute to distractions employees face on a daily basis.

Imagine pushing out the same message via email or collaboration software, such as Teams, Yammer or Slack. This repetitive messaging not only annoys your readers, but repetitive messaging clutters the channel, turns into background noise and becomes ineffective.

If you want your messages to stick and influence key outcomes, keeping messages front of mind is critical. However, without obeying the five fundamentals, you risk turning your business-critical messages into background noise.

1. The content must be snackable

Present the real essence of your message. A good gauge of word count is to keep it no longer than a tweet.

2. It needs to be lively

A static message is a dead message. Lively and dynamic content will grab attention and get cut through to engage your audience.

3. It must be communicated visually

Our brains are wired for visual communication. In fact, the human brain processes images in 13 milliseconds – that's 60,000 times faster than text.

Reinforce a message with a visual cue that depicts the essence of the message you're trying to get across. This allows the message to be processed quickly, improves recall, and transcends the language barrier – especially if English isn't their first language.

4. It is delivered at the right frequency

Repetition is the mother of all learning but there is a right way and a wrong way of using repetition to leverage your internal communication.

The wrong way would be to repeat the same message – word for word – across all your communication channels, non-stop. It'll quickly turn into noise and forgotten. The right way to use repetition is to space out the delivery of your messages over time. Start with a higher frequency to begin with, then reduce the frequency over several months. The right frequency depends on how complex the content is and who your audience is.

5. It uses the right channels of communication

Passive channels – like digital screens, screensavers, browser home pages and lock screens – are best at keeping information front of mind. These are channels that are highly visible yet won't disrupt or detract the workforce from their day-to-day work; you don't want to add to the disruptions that are already going on in the workplace.

You also don't want to be in the position where you feel like you can't send another message out this week because it's going to annoy or clutter their inbox or collaboration tool.

To influence key outcomes, your internal communication messages needs to get cut-through and be retained.

A snackable learning strategy works across all your communication channels to deliver an impactful messaging campaign.

These five non-negotiable fundamentals make your business-critical messages seen, understood and remembered.

All five elements work together to help you achieve effective communication.

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How to implement a snackable learning internal communications strategy

A snackable learning strategy can be used as a follow-up to a one-off event to minimise forgetting, such as after a town hall meeting or a learning and development seminar. Other times, this versatile strategy can be used to reinforce business-critical messages over a long term, such as strategic objectives and goals, health and safety messages, wellness messages and more. Here are six steps to implement a snackable learning strategy for your internal communications.

Step 1 : Determine your objectives

What do you want to achieve? Whether it's to reach more of your workforce, increase awareness of your messages, encourage staff to engage, embed a program (such as wellbeing) with a long term objective or a combination of all the above, you need to clearly define your goals.

Step 2 : Identify your needs

Now it's time to look at your requirements. Consider things like your internal audience and cross-device compatibility. You'll also need the right software for the job. Here are some things you'll want to look for:

- **Integration capability.** You don't want to double-up effort by copying and pasting information from one platform to another. Make sure your tools integrate and share information seamlessly

- **Ease of use.** Make sure there is adequate support available (support documents, customer service team, tech support, video tutorials etc.)

- **Scalability.** You'll want to make sure this software can grow with you

- **User-access management.** Control who has access to certain features so that nothing gets published accidentally

Step 3 : Choose the right communication channels

This can be the difference between a majority of your workforce seeing your message or only a handful of employees. For internal communicators, mastering a multichannel communications strategy means getting your messages in front of the workforce where they work, where they want to consume content and where they're most likely to engage with your message. Instead of asking your workforce to check their inboxes for business-critical updates, you should place key internal comms messages in front of them.

One-way communication channels

Also known as push communication channels, these channels are used to keep the workforce informed and engaged. Push communication channels lend itself well to snackable learning as it works well to influence workplace culture, socialise business direction and purpose, and drive staff engagement.

Two-way communication channels

Also known as collaboration channels, these channels encourage knowledge sharing and drive team productivity. It's best used for team chats and project discussions. Platforms that enhance this type of communication are the likes of Workplace, MS Teams, Slack, Yammer and more.

Collaboration tools are generally self-managing – once you provide the right platform, it is primarily driven and owned by your workforce. Push communication is where the challenge is at; when done right, it can have a huge lasting impact on your workforce.

Step 4 : Create valuable content

Don't clutter the workplace with messages that don't offer value or have a purpose. Answer these questions to see if your content is beneficial:

- What benefit does this content offer?
- What information does the employee need to know?
- How will reading this help them?
- What is my goal? Does this content engage my audience with that goal?

These types of content work well in the snackable format:

- **Top-down messages.** This includes company announcements, news, and event updates
- **Rewards and recognition.** Recognise high-performing employees company-wide and within departments
- **Company and team-related messages.** Break down company policies, codes of conduct, and processes into bite-sized messages
- **Health and wellbeing messages.** Short, impactful messages that will influence behavioural change
- **Testimonials.** Strengthen employee advocacy and quote engaged employees on why they love working at the company
- **Change management.** Works well to give employees a heads up and manage the transition
- **Crisis management.** Reach all employees or a specific subset to ensure they know what to do in an event of an emergency. This includes natural disasters or even cybersecurity protocols.

Make it consistent

Employee trust contributes to overall engagement. If you have a steady stream of content in your pipeline and maintain the same tone of voice across your comms, it builds an element of reliability in your comms.

Your workforce will know what to expect (and anticipate) from you.

Keep it accurate

Maintain trust and engagement with your communications by keeping the information accurate and relevant. Your messages must be the single source of truth for your employees to avoid costly miscommunication.

Teams lose an entire workday each week due to poor communication issues such as resolving unclear communications or following up on tasks.

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Step 5 : Personalise communication campaigns

Here are some differences in the workforce to consider, and how your messaging may change.

Work environment

Front line workers often don't have access to screens while they're working, whereas in-office or staff working from home will be in front of a screen all day. This will affect what types of screens you use to get your message in front of your audience.

For non-desk teams, a digital screen in the lunchroom or in the warehouse is passive without being distracting; for desk-bound teams, screensavers or screens in the lunchroom will get your message above the noise.

Deskbound vs front line workers

Differences in what's shared in the office and what's shared to off-site or remote workers can cause perceived unfairness. As a result, employees don't feel included or may feel like the information doesn't apply to them.

Language proficiency

English may not be everyone's first language, and acronyms or jargon can confuse meaning; images can bypass language barriers and communicate to everyone.

Age

Millennials and Gen Zs are wired for movement; if information is not visual and lively, it will simply be ignored.

Culture

People from different backgrounds might interpret information; consider delegating internal communications to local teams to keep messages relevant, attractive, and culturally sensitive.

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Step 6 : Monitor and evaluate

And as the saying goes, you can't manage what you don't measure. Monitoring and evaluating is the only way you'll know your snackable learning strategy is working! Here are some frequently used metrics and KPIs for internal communications.

Employee engagement

This is one of the most important measures of effective internal communications. Engaged employees are happier, more dedicated to their work and perform better. Surveys on the subject of overall work satisfaction and effective communications can give you an idea of how workers feel about communication in the workplace.

Adoption rate

This metric measures how engaged the workforce is with your message. For example, if your internal communications campaign is to promote a new payroll app, track how many people registered and logged into the app before and after your internal comms message went out.

Employee feedback

Employees who feel heard at work are 4.6 times more likely to feel empowered to perform at work. It's becoming more important than ever to facilitate a two-way conversation to receive employee feedback. There are many ways to do this:

- Pulse surveys
- Questionnaires
- Focus groups
- Informal conversations (in the lunchroom, at the coffee machine etc.)
- Employee turnover rates

Just like employee engagement rate, this is an important metric to measure. Effective internal communication provides clear directions so the workforce can do their jobs effectively. Poor internal communication results in employees not being aligned with the wider company values and goals, and a short employee lifecycle. This metric is a good gauge of overall effectiveness of employee communication.

Employee Net Promoter Score

Also known as eNPS, this metric measures how likely an employee is to recommend their workplace as a place to work. It's a valuable metric that gives you a benchmark of the state of your workforce. Aside from conducting eNPS surveys, you can track your social media activity, such how many employees repost company content on social media.

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CASE STUDY:
Fisher and Paykel Healthcare

Fisher and Paykel have been designing products since 1934 and have since grown into a global company. They boast a 6,000 strong workforce across the globe, with many of their staff based in Auckland. With an even split between staff who are in the office and non-wired staff who work in operations, factories, and distribution centres, it's essential that no one gets left out when it comes to workplace communications.

Running a six-month wellbeing program

Fisher and Paykel communications team use Vibe for a variety of internal communication messages and programs. One of these programs is their Kimiora program. Developed in-house, the six-month program was designed to help their workforce understand the different aspects of wellbeing based on te whare tapa whā – the four cornerstones of Māori health. This program aimed to raise the profile of Māori in the business, bring awareness to the different ways of improving wellbeing, and signpost staff to Fisher and Paykel's existing wellbeing resources.

As part of the program, the team also organised special events such as yoga classes, comedy nights, informative panel discussions, seminars and more. Of course, they used Vibe.fyi to promote those events!

Reaching and engaging the entire workforce

Fisher and Paykel have Vibe screens across all their campus buildings, in office pods, cafeterias, and distribution centres. No matter where you go, you're sure to pass a screen. This makes Vibe the perfect channel for sharing Kimiora's health and wellbeing messages – staff knew where to look for information and it wasn't disrupting their day-to-day activities.

Measuring a successful wellbeing program

The team behind the Kimiora program created a site in their Intranet dedicated to Kimiora program, which they directed people to, using Vibe screens. The team knew Vibe had helped them maximise reach to their non-wired workforce because the turnout at Kimiora events meant that their messages on Vibe were being seen, going to the website, and registering. Plus, they made clever use of tracked QR codes and links so they could directly measure how many people landed on a page via a digital signage screen.

Staff have now recognised Vibe as a primary channel for sharing messages; the communication team are getting requests from the workforce on what messages they want to see on screens.

As Fisher and Paykel continue to grow from strength to strength in the future, they are confident that they can use Vibe's workplace digital signage solution to keep their workforce – especially the non-desk workforce – connected and engaged.

> **"Vibe reached a lot more people in the non-wired space than we could have. That was the main reason [we ran the programs] on the screens."**

Veronica Matheson,
Senior Communications Manager

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Next steps

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