Teaching Your Team to Fish
How Holistic Learning Makes Performance Gains Permanent

Learn more at www.grovo.com
Why this matters to you:

Directly following training, does your team experience a promising rise in performance, followed by a disheartening decline? Or, are you not tracking your training at all? Investment in an L&D program often results in an up and down cycle of learning that has become a constant challenge for trainers. How do you replace incremental and fleeting increases in knowledge with lasting fluency that learners can call upon in real performance situations?

Holistic learning offers a solution to not only make gains permanent, but also to give people the skills to continually improve on their own. So stop feeding your learners, and teach them to fish instead. In this white paper you'll learn:

- The science and psychology behind why holistic learning works
- How to design a holistic learning program, and why microlearning makes it possible
- How to break out content into categories that give learners a 360º view of a topic
- Why holistic is the best way to improve performance—permanently
WHERE WE ARE NOW:
Training’s Roller Coaster Effect

Training today often results in a roller coaster effect: temporary improvements in performance that are almost always followed by declines or plateaus that eventually drop off again. Considering the time and resources that get spent on training, retention rates are pretty shocking. It’s clear that current methods ARE NOT producing the desired results:

- 80% of learning is forgotten within 30 days¹
- 90% of new skills are lost within a year²
- Fewer than 15% successfully apply what they learn³

The question is, then, how do you make performance gains stick? Not once, but over and over again? Most training interventions only lead to incremental increases in knowledge. That’s not enough for continuous improvement. Up until now, we only had two options:

- **Keep Feeding Your Team All the Time**: Your team will eat very well this way, but they’ll probably remain hungry and reliant on you forever. This strategy isn’t very practical for training.

- **Build a Team of Fishermen/Women**: Your team doesn’t need you for sustenance at all, but may not be loyal to the material or the mission. This scenario is rare, if a bit fantastical, for training.

2 Salas, Eduardo, Institute for Simulation and Training as quoted in the Wall Street Journal

“A feast of training sates a team but once.”

— Unknown but very wise philosopher sympathetic to the challenges of L&D!
WHAT WORKS: Immersion is the IDEAL Way to Learn

So what are some examples of learning interventions that we know work well, where performance gains last?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Army Basic Training</th>
<th>The learning environment is formal/structured. Institutions pour resources into training to get the desired result: participants eat, sleep, and breathe realistic practice.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Athletes &amp; Olympians</td>
<td>The training is informal/self-directed. The experiences happen to the learner or the learner seeks it out without an outside governing body.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Living Abroad to Learn a Language</td>
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<td>Method Actors</td>
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Regardless of how structured or self-directed the immersion is, there are barriers which make it wholly impractical, if not impossible to employ for everyday training.

With structured immersion, i.e., “feeding your team all the time,” training would likely cost millions (if not billions?) of dollars. It’s also inefficient: professional athletes spend 5-6 days a week training for just a few minutes of game time; soldiers train for months, if not years, for combat they may never see. This tactic just isn’t practical.

But there are also challenges to the more self-directed approach, “building a team of fishermen.” Wouldn’t it be NICE if all workers were as committed to their jobs as method actors? Or as reliant on their training as a language-learner trying to survive in a foreign country? This is scenario is basically a fantasy—it just doesn’t exist.

What makes immersion so effective is that it either is—or simulates—experience, allowing for continuous and realistic practice. This is the aim with holistic learning.

“A little learning is a dangerous thing; drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.”

— Alexander Pope
THE BASICS:

Holistic Learning Is...

A systematic approach that simulates immersion and leads to self-directed, continuous performance improvement and fluency.

Put another way, it’s a method that’s able to formalize what has always been an informal, experiential type of learning—immersion—and makes it available and consumable by the average worker.

What do we mean by simulated immersion? With immersion you’re experiencing reality made up of all contexts: the mission behind the training as well as the social, emotional, and physical aspects of the desired performance. A way to formalize it is holistic learning: a simulation of immersion. What does it provide?

It gets us knowledge fluency, or, a kind of wisdom. You could even call it an intuition—a sense to call upon when regular “knowledge” fails. A familiarity that breeds the right answer without even having to think about it.

To achieve fluency, feeding your team all the time is impractical, while building a team of perfectly self-sufficient fishermen is rather fantastical. Neither method works well. So in with holistic learning we combine the two:

Feed your team enough fish to sustain the process of them LEARNING TO FISH FOR THEMSELVES.

In other words, holistic learning is a very organized approach to what is normally a very disorganized process.
Media Examples of Holistic Learning

HBO-Go: Much like the “special feature” extras that come on a DVD, a show like Game of Thrones on HBO-GO offers value-added content so you can immerse yourself in the “world” of GOT—learning more about the cast, characters, and landscape than the show alone provides.

24-Hour News: We’re familiar with this practice whenever an (often catastrophic) world event takes place: outlets scramble to fill their 24-hour news cycle with a story told from a variety of different perspectives. The tactic is successful: we come to know the news story by heart without even trying to.

ESPN.com: During the Super Bowl, for every game or team you watch online, you can find content related to every perspective of the game you might be interested in: individual game highlights, commentary, interviews, fan reactions, etc. All of this content is well organized, fairly exhaustive, and immediately updated.

Dove’s Campaign For Real Beauty: Started in 2004, this campaign, or series of campaigns, has run for over 10 years as messaging that bucks the stereotypical norms of beauty for women, including plus-size or “real sized” women, women of age, androgynous beauty, etc. It’s also taken many forms: print ads, a microsite, commercials, films, mentoring programs, commissioned studies — and notably in 2014, one of the most successful viral video series’ of all time: Real Beauty Sketches.
The 4 Contexts of Holistic Learning

- Mission
- Intellectual
- Psycho-social
- Physical
MISSION

**Description:** This is about broadcasting the motivation and reasoning behind doing what you’re doing. The mission should start with performance, be specific and applicable to the real work people do for their jobs, and be understood and communicated well by leadership.

**The Mission Context is:**
- Specifically related to your business and applicable to “real work”
- Not just “knowledge” but the desired performance (actually catching enough fish to eat, not just “learning about fishing”) 
- Self-directed because learners internalize a motivation

**How to Add the Mission Context into Your Training:**
- Focus not on skills or topics, but the actual performance you desire
- Communicate it clearly to your team
- Adopt it, rally around it, believe in it
- If there isn’t a strong mission or motivation, reconsider your training

**Examples of the Mission Context**
- Impassioned speeches
- Mission statements
- Company literature
- Quantitative or qualitative performance goals like “30% lead increase” or “Better Team Communication”
**INTELLECTUAL**

*Description:* This is usually what we mean when we talk about training. In fact, training rarely goes *beyond* the intellectual context, which provides the necessary cognitive and academic background to do your job (i.e., if you were learning to dance, these are the dance steps). It’s what your “head” needs to know in order to perform.

**The Intellectual Context is:**

- The “need to know” content behind the performance
- A 360° view of training with different perspectives/points of view
- More than “methods” of training, these are cognitively variant modes of engaging with the material

**How to Add Intellectual Context into Your Training:**

- Break content into systematic, yet exhaustive sub-categories such as: concepts, best-practices, procedures, practical application, and metacognitive strategies
- Design lessons as self-contained units
- Organize lessons into “tracks” of learning for easy access and delivery

**Examples of the Intellectual Context**

- Conceptual: “What is a Presentation”?
- Best practices: “How to Hold Your Audience’s Attention”
- Procedural: “Creating a PowerPoint Presentation”
- Practical: “Examples of Highly Effective Presentations”
- Metacognitive: “How to Know When You’ve Talked Too Long”
**PSYCHO-SOCIAL**

*Description:* What mindset do you need when performing? How does your work fit into the larger community? This is the psychological and social context of a task, or the “heart” behind your performance.

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**The Psycho-social Context is:**

- Pertaining to the emotional state of the learner when performing
- How a performance affects others and fits into the larger system or community
- Separate from the essential knowledge, yet critical to performance

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**How to Add Psycho-social Context into Your Training:**

- Use role play, instructor-led training (ILT) or blended learning to aid simulation and put learners in the mindset of performance
- Address the emotional needs of both the giver and receiver of an action
- Give the learner ownership over the task and encourage reflection

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**Examples of the Psycho-social Context**

- Training on presentation skills: “How Do You Combat Stage Fright?” and “Know Your Audience”
- Under delegation training, teach both the mindset of the delegator, but also the delegatee
- The “2-minute drill” in American football prepares players for the final 2-minutes of game play
PHYSICAL

Description: What are you doing during this act, what’s happening with your body and your environment? These are the elements affecting the physical nature of the task, and what your “hands” are busy with during the performance.

The Physical Context is:

- Psychomotor
- Pertaining to the tools or environment of your performance
- Occasionally outside of your control, but can be prepared for

How to Add the Physical Context into Your Training:

- Use drills, role play, or instructor-led training (ILT) to aid simulation
- Make the task as realistic and authentic as possible, ideally set within the performance environment itself
- Wear the costumes, prepare the setting, and use the tools of performance

Examples of the Physical Context:

- For training on presentation skills: “Hooking up Audio/Visual Tools” or “Dressing for Success” simulates realistic practice
- Running drills can encode muscle memory
- If training for a telemarketing sales scenario, using the phone in role play
Why We Know Holistic Learning Works

How do we know that a holistic approach, i.e. immersion, works? Anecdotally, sure – we’ve mentioned some very successful examples. But we also see that in the research, it’s more powerful: in one educator’s study, immersion was 18% faster and more effective than classroom training when it came to learning to speak a foreign language. Let’s break this down, holistically:

MISSION: Memories are a combinations of old and new information so the most effective way of creating strong connections is to hook them on to old ones. A study by Craik and Lokhart in the 70’s showed that thinking about a word’s meaning is far more powerful in remembering that word later than other forms of encoding (semantic judgment took precedence over sound, shape, or visual judgment). Therefore we conclude that understanding the mission of the work is a powerful motivator that enhances memory function.

INTELLECTUAL: Our brains are less like a filing cabinet or storage drive than they are like a web. Instead of accessing a file, we “stumble” on the answer via threads of interconnected neurons. The more “threads” of associations we have, the more successful our retrieval of information via memory function. Therefore, adding perspectives, or sub-contexts to training aids “threads” to our web.

PSYCHO-SOCIAL: Learning is more likely to take hold when you have the stimuli necessary for sustained engagement. Meaning if you are emotionally involved with the content, or invested socially, learning is more likely to be retained.

PHYSICAL: The more practiced a movement is, the stronger the neural encoding becomes but besides the motor cortex, psycho-motor learning also involves the perceptual system and physical feedback. Multi-sensory channels imprints knowledge through application, therefore, the stronger, deeper your brains neural “web”, the more built more pathways you’ve built to the solution and

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1 Colby Sawyer College, “Language Study Research: Cultural Immersion vs. Technology-Driven Classroom Learning”
2 Introducing Psychology, Daniel L. Schacter, Daniel T. Gilbert, Daniel M. Wegner
4 Young, Scott H. “Holistic Learning Ebook”; MIT School of Engineering, “What are ‘Thoughts Made of’”
7 Pittman, Roland E. Taxonomy of Learning. p. 17
PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Keys to Creating Holistic Learning

There are some additional strategies for creating holistic learning:

**Use Microlearning.** We’re at a unique time in history where the trend towards micro media and microlearning has emerged just in time to be able to deliver holistic learning in ways that make sense for training.

- Bite-size content offers learning in small chunks for ease of consumption with short, digital lessons or instructional videos.
- Cloud-based technologies allow for accessible, on-demand content, weaving training into real life and performance scenarios.
- Online lessons let you learn at your own pace for a self-directed, digital immersion—a personalized, unique learning experience that can pinpoint strengths & weaknesses, orienting the learner in the content.

**Design Your Lessons as Holons.** It's best to use granularity to design your lessons so they can stand alone.

- Holons are small, self-contained units that also contribute to a larger whole. For example, you can think of holons like the individual bricks that make up the holarchy of a building – or you can think of them as grains of sand that build up a beach.
- Holons help build up your mind’s “web”; it's how ideas fit together to form a complex idea.
- Holons can be organized into “tracks” of learning for ease of consumption.

**Separate out “Need to Know” from “Point of Need.”** By using holons in your instructional design, you're able to take your content and strip it down to its most essential parts.

- Separating out the “need to know” (or the general/background information), from the “point of need” material (useful as a resource for performance support) eliminating fluff and redundancy.
- This way learners focus on what they need to, when they need to.
- For example, when learning to dance, you first learn the basic steps via instruction, then get performance support via an instructor correcting your movements.

HOLISTIC LEARNING: How Grovo Does It

Grovo breaks up content using perspectives or sub-contexts, with lessons falling loosely under these umbrellas:

1. **Cognitive/Conceptual:** “Why is Evernote so Popular”
2. **Principles/Best Practices:** “Keep Your Evernote Account Secure”
3. **Procedural/How To:** “Create a New Note Via Email”
4. **Contextual/In-Practice:** “Interview w/an Evernote Power User”
5. **Meta-cognitive (or: thinking about thinking):** “Beta Testing Evernote”
Finally: Holistic Learning is for Everyone.

Holistic is the great equalizer: useful for a wide range of learners, experts and non-experts. Until now, training has only serviced elite LEARNERS. Instead, holistic learning grooms top PERFORMERS. Which means anyone can learn anything, at anytime.

And that’s an inspiring idea.
Summary

To combat training’s roller coaster effect, you can either keep feeding your team fish, or you can build a team of fishermen — but neither is practical for everyday training. Instead, simulate immersive learning by taking a holistic approach: contextualize and deliver realistic practice in the following ways:

Mission: Define the mission of the work and communicate it to the team
Intellectual: Separate out and deliver the essential “need to know” content, broken out into perspectives or sub-contexts so it’s organized, but exhaustive
Psycho-social: Identify and prepare for the emotional and social aspects of the performance
Physical: Practice the psychomotor skills and simulate the environmental realities of the performance

Holistic learning can train anyone to be a top performer, fluent and self-directed in the skills they need to flourish in the 21st century workplace.

To learn more about holistic learning, to see a sample holistic learning video track of lessons, or to schedule a demo, get in touch with us at: contact@grovo.com.

CONGRATULATIONS!

You’ve now taught your team to fish for a lifetime of meals!
Grovo is the quickest, simplest way for organizations to train their teams. The cloud-based platform features an intuitive, easy-to-use interface to create, deliver and track training, as well as a customizable library of 5,000 highly effective, one-minute video lessons covering 170 Internet tools, digital applications, and professional topics. Grovo provides a science-backed microlearning methodology to teach the critical skills for today’s fast-moving world. Learn more by visiting Grovo.com or contact us at:

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