



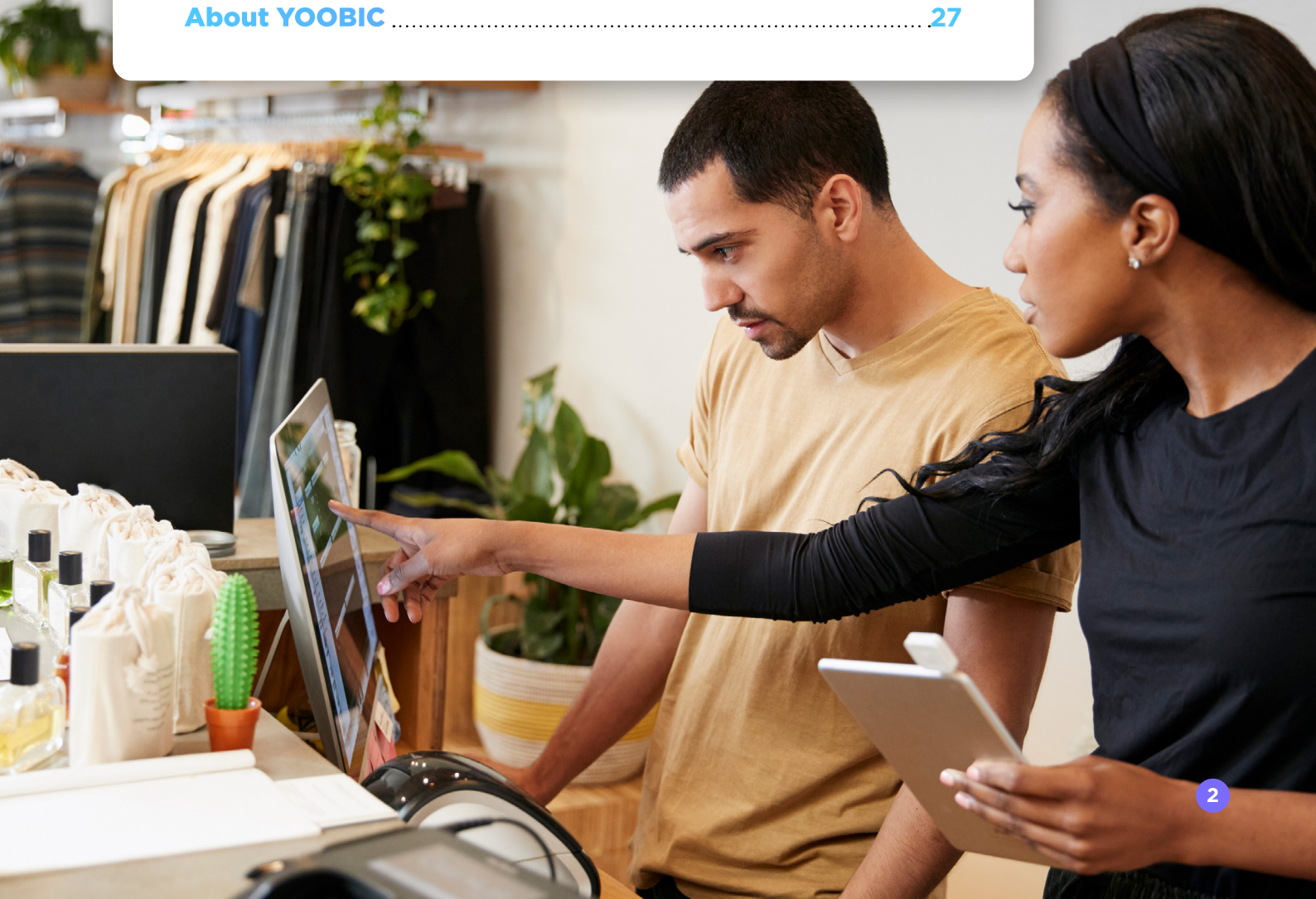
**WHITEPAPER**

5 STEPS TO  
EFFECTIVE LEARNING  
FOR FRONTLINE TEAMS

**YOOBIC**

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# Frontline employee roles are **evolving at the speed of light**, but learning isn't keeping up.

## Frontline employees face a variety of challenges in their day to day roles:

- ✗ As deskless workers, they're always on the go.
- ✗ They're constantly jumping between lots of different tasks.
- ✗ Their work is hands-on and demanding.
- ✗ They need to be socially engaged to work with customers and in teams.
- ✗ Information isn't accessible on the job.

## Why are training and learning so important for frontline employees in industries like retail, hospitality and logistics?

- ✗ They need to quickly master new regulations, technologies and responsibilities.
- ✗ They need the skills to provide customer experiences that drive a consumer return to doing things in person.
- ✗ They need to know how to work most productively and minimize incidents and accidents.

Effective training improves the frontline employee experience, boosts retention rates and makes a frontline role with your company a more attractive career prospect during a labor shortage.

But training is failing frontline employees, because it's not tailored around the realities of their work.



### 40%

of frontline employees are trained only once per year or less



### 48%

of frontline employees trained once per year or less also feel unrecognized and undervalued

Read on to find out why it's such a challenge to effectively train frontline teams and **5 steps you can take** to improve your training and fuel your frontline employee engine.

## Why is it so hard to train frontline employees?

Sometimes it seems like effectively training frontline employees in stores, restaurants, warehouses and out in the field is a Sisyphean task. L&D teams invest heavily in training efforts and tools, but end up with little to show for it.

The truth is that frontline employees want to learn, but learning hasn't been tailored around their roles. And that's holding them back.

Here are 4 of the biggest challenges L&D teams are running into with training their frontline teams and what's actually causing each of them.

### **Symptom:** Frontline employees don't make time for learning, so it's inconsistent between locations.



**Root cause:** Frontline employees can't make time for learning because it's inaccessible and disruptive.

- ✗ Frontline employees are deskless employees who spend the day on their feet, helping customers and jumping from task to task. So desktop learning, paper materials (binders and printed PDFs) and even classroom sessions disrupt their flow of work.
- ✗ The burden of learning is placed on frontline teams to complete outside of working hours, clashing with part-time and/or shift schedules, other jobs, school and family commitments.




## Symptom: Frontline employees don't retain what they've learned.

 **Root cause: Training formats are actively preventing information retention.**

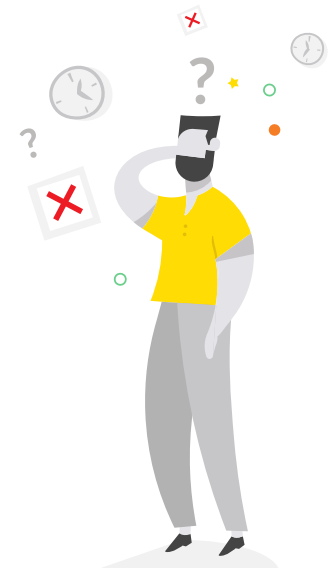
- ✗ [40% of frontline employees](#) are trained only once per year or less.
- ✗ The [forgetting curve](#) proves that without repetition, the amount of information employees remember [halves each day](#). Even if learners take on 90% of the information taught, within 5 days they will remember less than 3%.
- ✗ Training formats like classroom sessions and take-home materials present information passively instead of actively, so it's easier to forget.



## Symptom: Frontline employees don't make time for continuous learning unless we make it mandatory.

 **Root cause: Continuous learning is time-consuming and inaccessible for frontline teams. They aren't rewarded or incentivized to complete it.**

- ✗ Frontline employees aren't sure what they'll get out of continuous learning.
- ✗ Even if employees put time into continuous learning or upskilling, they won't retain information they've only learned once.
- ✗ Continuous learning is completed by taking employees out of their work environment, disrupting their flow of work. It takes an average of [23 minutes and 15 seconds](#) to refocus after disrupting an employee's workflow.

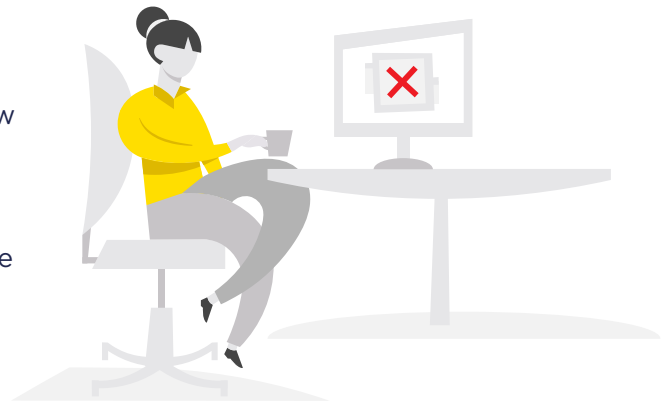


**Symptom: Adoption rates of new learning tools are rock-bottom for frontline teams.**



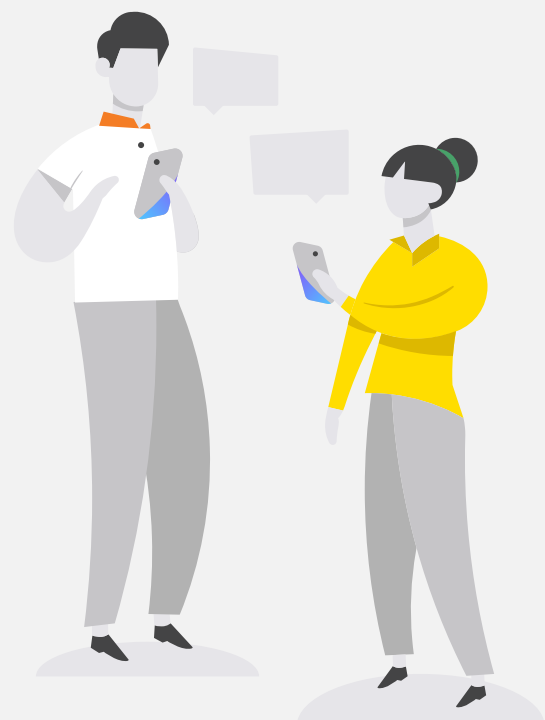
**Root cause: Most learning tools are built for desk-based workforces and not tailored to frontline teams.**

- ✗ Even web-based tools like e-learning don't fit into the frontline employee flow of work.
- ✗ Learning tools aren't user-friendly, and the more platforms frontline teams have to use, the more confusing things get.
- ✗ No one has explained to frontline staff what they'll get out of using the tool.



So, on deeper examination, we can see that learning is inaccessible, disruptive and isn't presented to frontline employees in the right ways.

**Here are 5 steps you can take to turn that around.**



A man and a woman are standing in a kitchen, looking at a smartphone together. The woman is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and a dark apron. The man is wearing a dark t-shirt with white speckles. They are both smiling and looking at the phone. The background shows a kitchen counter with jars and a blender. A large, stylized white outline of the number '1' is overlaid on the image.

# **1. MAKE LEARNING ACCESSIBLE**

**The average employee only has time to dedicate 1% of their work week to learning. The average deskless employee has far less time than that.**

**So, the first step to effectively training your frontline teams is to stop disrupting their work to learn.**

That means bringing learning to frontline employees where they are, so it's accessible on the job. The best way to do that is mobile learning - learning that's accessed on, completed on and formatted for mobile devices, whether personal or company-owned ones.

A smartphone or tablet is the closest thing to a computer for frontline teams. The use of mobile devices is quickly overtaking laptop and desktop computers. It's estimated that by 2025, 76% of internet traffic will come from mobile devices alone.

So by delivering your learning content straight to a mobile device, not only are you making learning accessible - you're also keeping up with the times. You're reaching your staff where they spend a big chunk of their time - 3 hours and 43 minutes every day - to be exact.

There's still a lot that needs to be done to make learning work for your frontline teams instead of against them. And mobile devices are a massively underused tool in the frontline workplace - only 59% use one at work.



## How to make your learning accessible:

- **Decide on a BYOD policy** or equip frontline employees with company devices.
- **Choose the right mobile learning tool.** Mobile-friendly learning that employees access via a URL isn't the same as a native mobile learning app. Anything else won't give frontline employees the smooth experience they expect.
- **Reformat your learning content** for mobile learning.



## An example of mobile learning:

It's Ollie's first week as a store associate at a fast fashion retailer. He's **assigned an onboarding module** of short lessons to do every day to complement his in-person onboarding and shadowing his colleagues. Ollie **accesses these lessons on a store iPad** using his unique login. He's also downloaded the company learning app on his phone, so he can come back to lessons and a detailed knowledge base **whenever he needs to**.



## Mobile learning success story: Burgerfi

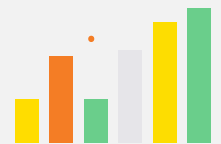
**Challenge:** Frontline restaurant teams at fast-growing better burger chain BurgerFi were using multiple outdated LMS platforms that weren't accessible for 3000+ frontline employees, so adoption was low. That meant training wasn't scaling quickly enough to keep up with BurgerFi's rapid expansion.

**Solution:** Centralizing all training in a branded mobile app made learning accessible for all frontline teams in corporate and franchised locations. Courses can now be created and pushed out at scale by BurgerFi's L&D team and grouped into learning paths for employees, including paths to promotion.



*"If people aren't using the platforms you already have, that's an important story to take a hard look at."*

Kevin Cooper, Director of Leadership & Development @BurgerFi



**100%**  
adoption rate

**100,000**  
courses completed in a year

## 2. MAKE LEARNING SIMPLE



## Even if learning is accessible for frontline teams, are they actually **retaining what they've learned afterwards?**

**It's been scientifically proven and universally accepted that old-school information dumps don't help people retain any of that information - even if they don't spend the whole day jumping from task to task like a frontline employee would.**

We all want to remember everything on the PowerPoint deck in that hour-long training session. But our brains have different plans, like forgetting 90% of that within the first month.

Now imagine how all of this works for a frontline employee juggling multiple customer interactions and 6 different checklists they need to complete - not to mention family responsibilities, other jobs and school.

To be effective, learning sessions need to be designed and delivered with the objective of quick mastery of new concepts and real-life application, not just presenting information.

Learning sessions need to be simple if your employees are going to invest any time in doing them.

And that means learning needs to be:

- ✓ **Short** - no more than a few minutes long.
- ✓ Formulated around **one** applicable piece of knowledge or concept - what's the one thing you want employees to take away from each session?
- ✓ **Relevant** to each employee's role and responsibilities.
- ✓ **Repetitive**, so employees can revisit what they've learned and find answers whenever they need to.

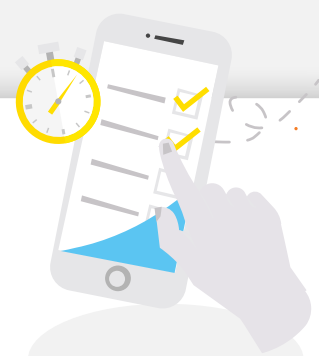




## How to make learning simple:

Use **microlearning** - a skills-based approach where content is delivered in short chunks, bites or nuggets that learners access whenever they need to, usually on a mobile device.

Each microlearning session is about one concept that learners need to master, or one problem that they'll need to solve on the job. When used successfully, microlearning gives frontline staff everything they need to know, while avoiding the cognitive overload that comes along with information dumps.



## Examples of microlearning:

- A **2 minute video** followed by a quiz.
- A **short paragraph** describing a hypothetical situation followed by a **multiple choice question** to select the best response.

### Microlearning simplifies training for frontline teams because:

- The **short sessions** are easy to slot into their busy schedules.
- Each lesson **shows - instead of tells** - employees what they need to know and how to apply it.
- Since each lesson is about one standalone topic, employees are **less likely to experience cognitive overload** from too much information that isn't relevant to them.
- Learning sessions are **easy to revisit anytime**.

**Pro-tip** - Artificial intelligence (AI) can help you make microlearning even more relevant and simple by automating the grouping and suggesting of new courses based on what employees interact with the most. Think of it like your Netflix suggestions that help you discover your next binge.

## Microlearning success story: Jules

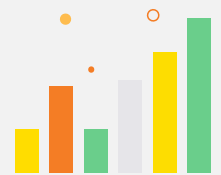
**Challenge:** In-depth and consistent product knowledge was a core tenet of a 2020 revamp of Jules' branding and in-store experience. But training 3000 busy store associates and managers across 550 stores on the new brand strategy - and helping them retain that information - was extremely difficult.

**Solution:** Jules tailored training around the realities of being a frontline retail employee by delivering training via a microlearning app.

### JULES

*"We really wanted to make training available to everyone. When we closed our stores during the lockdown, we noticed the first thing our frontline teams did was complete their training courses while they had more time. This shows that our store teams wanted more training."*

Cristophe Pincon, Retail Director Europe  
@Jules



1

training session completed  
per week by every sales  
associate

200,000

Over 200,000 lessons  
completed

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and a dark skirt, is looking at a tablet computer. She is in an office environment with blurred shelves in the background. A large, light blue abstract graphic element is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# **3. MAKE LEARNING PART OF THE FLOW OF WORK**

**Although accessible and simplified learning is a huge improvement for frontline teams, it doesn't go quite far enough if you want to make training your high octane fuel for a top-performing team.**

**Learning needs to become an integral part of the working day - just the same way as clocking in and out.**

In other words, training needs to become part of the frontline employee flow of work.

Similarly to the elusive and highly sought after “flow state” experienced by musicians, artists and athletes, being in the flow of work means complete immersion and focus on the processes and interactions you'd go through in a working day.

But since the frontline employee flow of work involves so many processes, customer interactions and multitasking, it's even more fragile, fleeting and easy to disrupt. Frontline employees in the flow of work are more productive and create higher quality customer experiences, products, or services.

Anything, including making time for training, can disrupt this flow of work. It takes [25 minutes to refocus after a disruption](#).

That's why effective training needs to be integrated into this flow of work. If training meets employees at their point of need, information is quickly transferred into working memory and retained better.

**Learning in the flow of work is a term [coined in 2018 by HR technologist Josh Bersin](#), and means that learning is not only available to employees while working, but can be completed without any disruption to other working activities or loss of focus.**

Instead of having to stop what they're doing and switch into learning mode, learners find exactly what they need in the most convenient format.

Sure, you can set aside “learning hours” during the work day, but it's still disruptive. After a while, these mandatory sessions will likely start evoking eye-rolls and grumbles from staff because they have more pressing responsibilities to attend to.

Learning done in the flow of work has to be appealing to employees. For that to happen, learners have to see training materials - whether it's onboarding, refreshing knowledge or continuous learning - as a resource instead of another responsibility added to their already jam packed schedules.

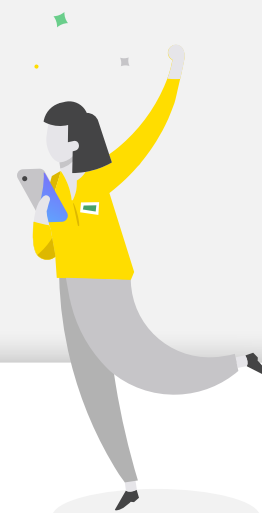


## How to integrate learning into the frontline employee flow of work:

### You'll need these things:

- An in-depth understanding of the frontline employee flow of work.
- A permanent mindset shift to the frontline employee perspective.
- Solid learning content curation skills.
- The right tech to help you rapidly create, roll out, customize and curate learning content at scale. Pro tip - a training app is the best way to integrate learning into the flow or work. [76% of frontline employees think app-based training would be easier.](#)

What's more, when training is accessible, simple and part of the workday, adoption rates will skyrocket. Employees get what they need to perform their best and L&D teams get the sky-high adoption rates they need to show to the rest of the business - a win-win for everyone.



## An example of learning in the flow or work:

Mo works in a hardware store as a sales associate. A line of drills has been recalled and needs to be **removed from shelves ASAP**. But since Mo works part-time, he's never had to do this before. The company pushes out an **urgent announcement to all store associates on their store tablets**, combined with **2-minute videos** giving a **step-by-step demonstration** of how to remove the drills from all shelves and get a manager's verification that the recall has been completed correctly. Mo can refer back to the videos **whenever he needs a refresh**.



## Success story: Petit Bateau

**Challenge:** French designer family fashion retailer Petit Bateau needed a way to make staff consistently knowledgeable, but taking them off the shop floor to train meant staff had less time with customers.

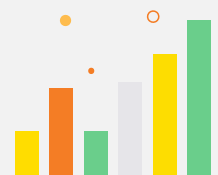
**Solution:** Using a mobile learning app, Petit Bateau integrated learning into the flow of work for their 700 store associates spread across 150 stores. What's more, by combining learning, communications and task management in the same app, store associates never have to leave their flow of work to find the information they need.



**PETIT BATEAU**

*“Mobile learning has become very important because it’s perfectly adapted to all problems encountered in retail.”*

Adele de Pimodan, HR Development  
Manager @Petit Bateau



**80%+**

**adoption rate**  
(vs 10-20% for average LMS)

**10+**

**lessons completed**  
per user per month

# 4. MAKE LEARNING ENGAGING AND FUN



## Frontline employee roles are hands-on.

### They work:

- **In a fast-paced environment**
- **On their feet**
- **Handling products and equipment**
- **In constant view of customers**

That means their training needs to be hands-on too.

But to get employees in the zone for hands-on learning, training has to be presented in a fun way that gives employees more of an incentive.

There's a saying that goes "The best athlete is the one having the most fun", and the same is undoubtedly true for frontline employees.

[58% of frontline employees agree](#) that the most important attributes of successful training are that it is fun and engaging.

[One out of three employees](#) think a lack of inspiring training content is a barrier to their learning.

It's been proven that when [learning is accompanied by strong positive emotions](#) (aka fun), learners retain information better.

Engaging, fun training mirrors the realities of working on the frontlines and helps employees **retain information better** since they're putting learning into practice immediately. This speeds up **the transfer of knowledge into their working memories**, so they can retrieve it more easily when they need it.

And since employees are having fun, they'll be more likely to come back to training on their own, **boosting adoption rates** of new learning tools.

Engaging training is fun training. But it's all fun and games until training contains too much fun and games and no one is retaining any information anymore.

So how can L&D teams strike the perfect balance?



## How to make learning engaging and fun:

### Choose engaging learning content formats and switch them up:



**Video:** There's a reason why [87% of users](#) turn to YouTube to figure out how to do new things. Video shows, not just tells, learners how to do something.



**Variety:** Even video gets dull and tedious if it's the only format you're using. Keep things fresh for your learners by switching it up with formats like infographics, audio clips and quizzes. Using a variety of formats means there's something for everyone, but your learners are also challenged to learn in new ways.



**Gamification:** Incorporating game playing elements like battles, scoring, leaderboards and badges into your training makes it even more interactive.



**External vs. intrinsic motivation:** Incentivizing teams to learn is crucial, but never underestimate the motivational impact of intrinsic drivers like seeing the progress you've made. Build this into your learning content to make it even more engaging. Design your microlearning sessions so employees can always see what courses they've completed and what skills and new concepts they've mastered.

## An example of fun and engaging learning:

With winter coming up, a **new line of coats** is about to drop in the outdoor apparel store where Melissa works. She gets a **notification on her store iPad** that a new course is waiting for her to complete. She works through a **2 minute video** showing off the new range, an **interactive infographic** showing the unique features of the new line and a **multiple choice quiz** at the end. Later that day, a colleague in another store **challenges her to a battle** on product knowledge. Melissa answers more questions correctly and wins, earning herself a badge displayed beside her name on a **leaderboard within the app**. Everyone on the learning app can see that Melissa is now #1 for product knowledge in her district, winning her store a **shoutout from HQ**.

## Success story: Tomlinson's Feed

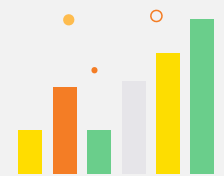
**Challenge:** In-person trainings and printed materials weren't giving team members at healthy pet food retailer Tomlinson's the extensive knowledge they needed to differentiate themselves from competitors.

**Solution:** Tomlinson's digitized training in a gamified microlearning app that was engaging and user-friendly - not only for the predominantly Gen Z workforce, but for older employees too.

### TOMLINSON'S

*"When employees saw the gamification of the tool, they just dove right in."*

Kate Knecht, Brand Director  
@Tomlinson's Feed



High adoption rates



Stronger relationships with pet food brands, since better employee knowledge means more sales.

A man and a woman are looking at a tablet together in a professional setting. The woman is holding the tablet and both are smiling. The background is a blurred office environment. There are decorative white lines on the left side of the image.

## **5.** MAKE LEARNING SOCIAL

## Over 66% of workers consider the social aspects of working more important than their paycheck.

**This is huge for frontline workers, as to be successful, they need to thrive in social situations.**

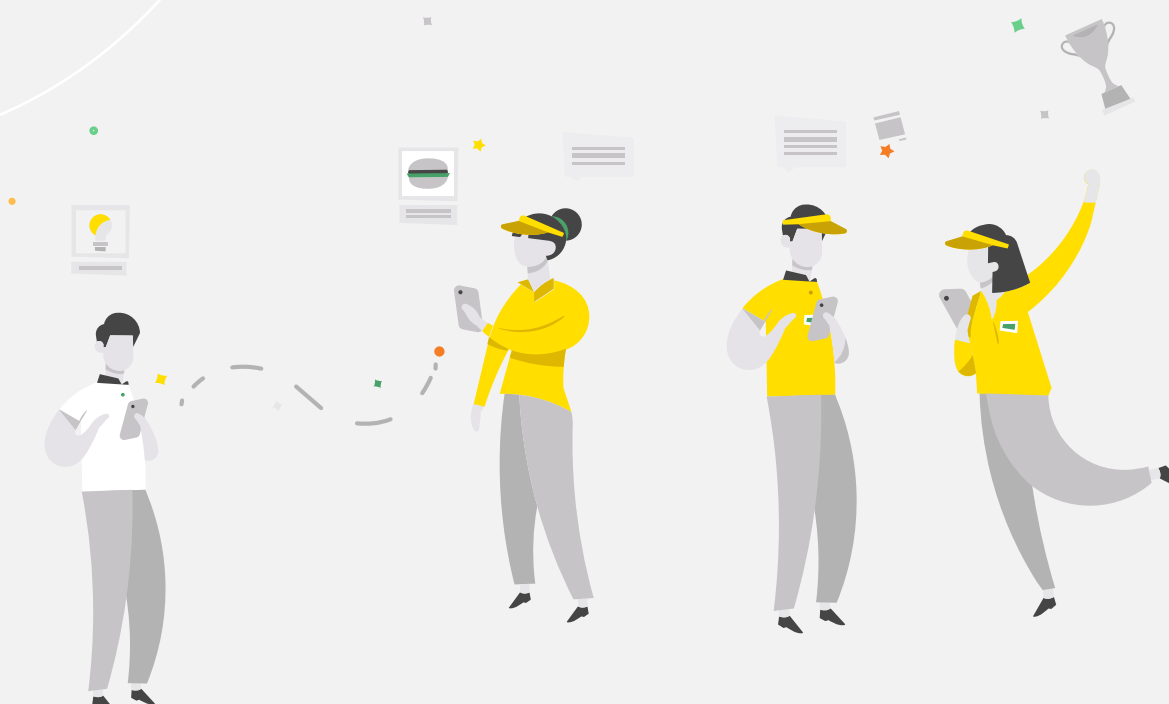
Frontline roles are inherently social; they're team-oriented and customer-facing. Learning in an isolated classroom environment or silently reading through a paper manual won't prepare frontline employees for a bustling, social work environment.

Learning needs to be a social activity. Social learning reflects the reality of frontline roles and enables employees to train in a way that mirrors the day to day experience of their jobs.

A [Harvard Business Review](#) report found that low user adoption of training tools was caused by a lack of an organizational culture which promotes learning. This is definitely an obstacle for frontline teams, as [39% have an isolated work environment and 34% feel disconnected](#) from their company. This makes it unlikely that employees will be able to perform their best as a team, or want to invest in learning more.

Social learning remedies this as employees are able to build a sense of community through learning, developing stronger ties with coworkers and the company through competition, collaboration and shared experiences.

Additionally, learners who use social features in their training like forums, comments and Q&As [complete 30 times the amount of training as those who don't](#). Embedding learning into the social culture of an organization will help solve two problems in one, boosting both company culture and the adoption rate of training.





## How to make frontline employee learning social:

Implementing social learning can take a range of forms. It can involve learning in groups through collaborative scenario-based training, competitions amongst employees, or battles between learners with point-scoring and leaderboards. Providing rewards or shout-outs on company communication channels is a great way to encourage excitement around learning and instill it into the company culture.

### An example of social learning:

Jenny works as a waitress at a pizza chain.

It's coming up to Halloween and the restaurant is bringing out a **new seasonal menu**, so they need wait staff to **recommend and upsell** the new menu items.

Restaurant HQ launches **training modules** for the new menu which include **quizzes, games**, an **employee leaderboard** and a **forum** where employees can discuss their answers and thoughts. Employees **earn points** for completing training, selecting correct answers and posting relevant comments in the forum.

HQ announces that whoever scores the highest in the training and finishes at the top of the leaderboard by the end of the quarter will **win a team activity for their branch**. This approach encourages team members not only to learn, but to also **connect and interact** with each other, **embedding learning into the social culture** of the company.





## Success story: Sportscene

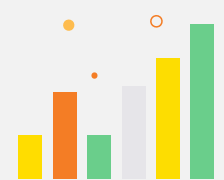
**Challenge:** Store associates at South African sneaker retailer Sportscene needed extensive and up-to-date product knowledge on multiple big brands and brand stories. But incentivizing them to complete and engage with training on their own was difficult.

**Solution:** By using a gamified microlearning app, Sportscene made learning social by facilitating friendly competition between store associates. Now, employees can't wait to battle each other and earn points to win prizes.

### sportscene

*“Every day, staff compete with each other, and they want to see their name and their face on the leaderboard. If they see that a coworker is beating them, they’ll discover more courses and they’ll battle each other to gain points, because they want to be on top.”*

Ruhshana Parker, Visual Merchandising Manager  
@Sportscene




# sportscene

**+32%**

increase in engagement with training content



Improved relationships with big footwear brands as a result of increased sales in-store.

# Effective Frontline Employee Learning: Key Takeaways

**When learning isn't tailored around the realities of being a frontline employee, it's completed inconsistently, information isn't retained, continuous learning is scant and adoption of new learning tools is low.**

That's because training is inaccessible and disruptive, formats prevent information from being retained, continuous learning isn't built into the flow of work and tools aren't built specifically for frontline teams.

To effectively train their frontline teams, organizations should:



**1. Use mobile learning** to make training accessible and less disruptive.



**2. Use microlearning** to reformat learning content, so it's easier for busy frontline employees to absorb, process and retain knowledge.



**3. Use learning content curation and the right tech tools** to make learning part of the frontline employee flow of work.



**4. Use a variety of content formats and gamification** to make learning fun and engaging.



**5. Use connection, collaboration and competition** between peers to make learning social.

No one wants to do poorly at their job. But organizations need to set frontline employees up with the tools to achieve their learning goals, improve their skills and accelerate their careers.

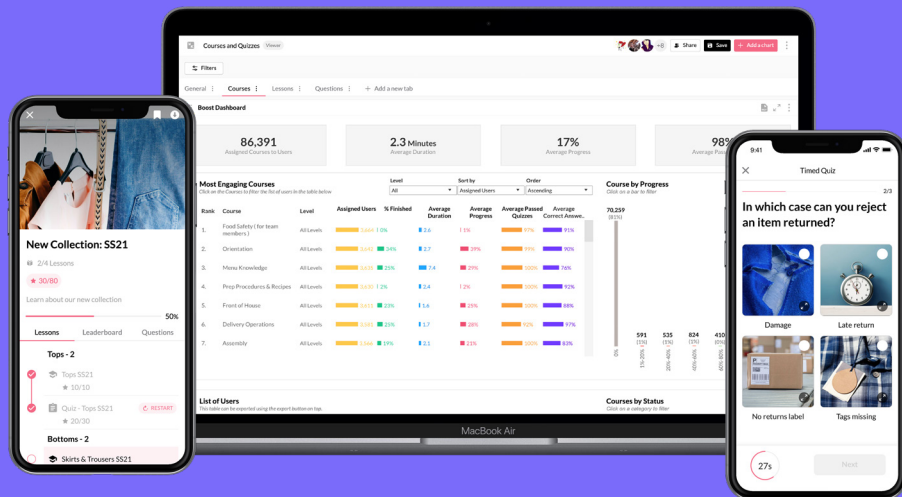
# ABOUT YOOBIC

YOOBIC's digital workplace helps companies like Lacoste, Boots, The Kooples, Peloton and Redner's Markets effectively train their frontline employees with a mobile microlearning app that makes learning part of the flow of work.

With YOOBIC, frontline teams learn 50 times more frequently, with a 33% higher adoption rate than the average LMS.

See for yourself how YOOBIC can help you empower frontline teams and accelerate your business through learning.

LEARN MORE



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