



**A GUIDE TO
EFFECTIVELY TRAINING
FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES**

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It's Not What You Say, It's How You Say It.

This expression couldn't be more true when it comes to **training frontline employees in the retail, restaurant and hospitality industries** - employees who are interacting with customers every day.

Friendly and knowledgeable employees are just as much a part of your brand as your logo and store design.

We already know what makes the perfect customer-facing employee. Friendly but not too salesy. Incredibly knowledgeable, but still relatable and helpful to every customer who walks in the door.

Employees like this aren't just a happy accident. They're not born, they're nurtured - through training.

But most training for frontline employees doesn't set them up to be the outstanding employee described here. That's because training isn't specifically tailored to the realities of *being* a frontline employee.

The problem isn't in the material, it's in the delivery.

In other words, you already know exactly what your employees should know. But getting them to **absorb, retain and apply** that knowledge is the challenging part.

Training that empowers your employees to perform their best isn't a "nice-to-have" anymore. It's essential.

This guide will show you how to make your training work for your frontline employees - just as hard as they work for you.



Effective Training: What is it, Why Does it Matter and Why Does it Need to be Tailored to Frontline Employees?

A frontline employee's knowledge and behavior can make or break a customer's experience with your brand. And the training you give your frontline employees can make or break their knowledge and behavior.

Ineffective training presents frontline employees with all the information they need to know.

Effective training doesn't present, it coaches. Effective training makes it effortless for frontline employees to absorb, retain and apply all the

information they need to create an outstanding customer experience, 100% of the time.

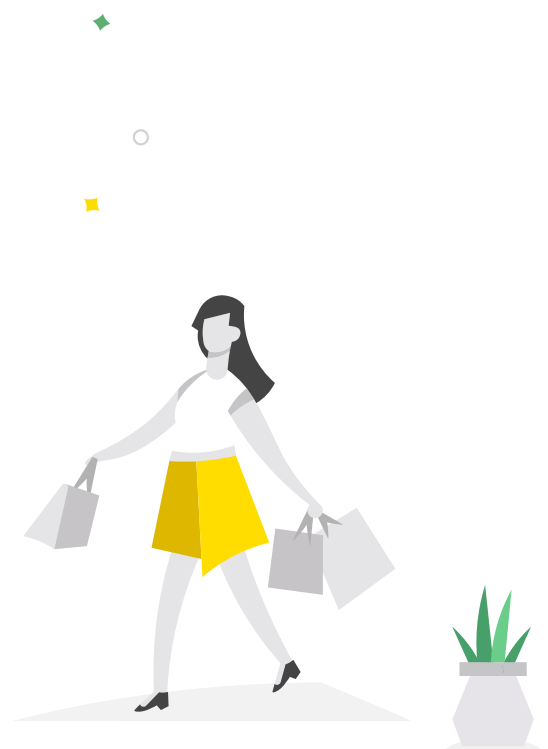
Employees who have been effectively trained are the friendly and knowledgeable experts customers remember.

Training has a profound impact on each of the following in the retail, restaurant and hospitality industries:

What Does Training Impact?

Customer & Guest Experience

- ▲ **94% of consumers** would purchase more from a company if they interacted with a knowledgeable store associate¹
- ▲ **74% always or frequently leave the store** without making a purchase if they can't get help from a knowledgeable employee²
- ▲ A study on customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry found that employee attributes like knowledge and politeness were even more important to customers than anything else, including price³
- ▲ Satisfied restaurant customers make **56% more visits** per month to casual dining restaurants and **28% more visits** to fast food restaurants than unsatisfied customers⁴



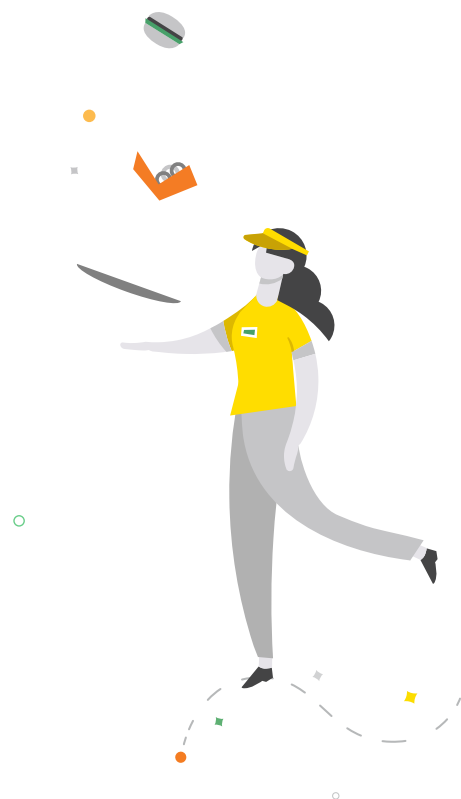


Sales & Revenue

- Value retailer Dollar General ramped up its training program in 2018 to focus on knowing the customer and making the most of experienced store managers' knowledge. **Sales increased by 6.8%**, and customer satisfaction went up by **790 points**⁵
- Investing in an ambitious training program for sales associates was one of the main tenets of electronics retailer Best Buy's turnaround from 2010 onwards⁶
- A study found that sales associates who completed online training saw a **5% boost in sales**⁷

Turnover

- 95% of employees** surveyed by LinkedIn would stay at a company for longer if it invested in their career development⁸
- Deloitte's 2019 millennial survey found that **lack of training and development** was a primary reason over 25% of Gen Z and millennials planned on leaving their jobs⁹
- Retail turnover rose to **81%** in 2018¹⁰
- Restaurant and hospitality turnover rose to **75%**¹¹
- 41%** of retail and hospitality employees hardly ever look forward to going to work¹²



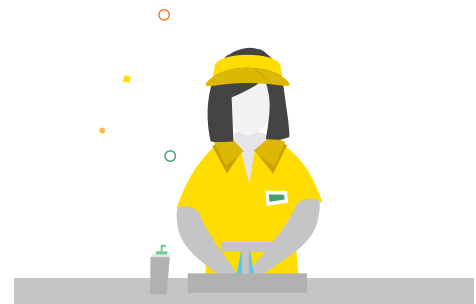


Employee Engagement

- ▲ **52%** of highly engaged companies have employees who spend 31-50 hours per year on training, vs **20%** of low-engagement companies¹³
- ▲ Only **28%** of hospitality employees surveyed by Gallup felt they knew what their employer's brand stood for and what differentiated it from competitors¹⁴
- ▲ Engaged retail employees bring in **69% more revenue** than their unengaged peers¹⁵

Health & Safety

- ▲ A study on the impact of food safety training found that although training initially increased employees' knowledge of food safety, it had little to no impact on employee behavior.¹⁶ But when behavior-based instead of knowledge-based training was used, proper hand-washing increased by up to **52%**



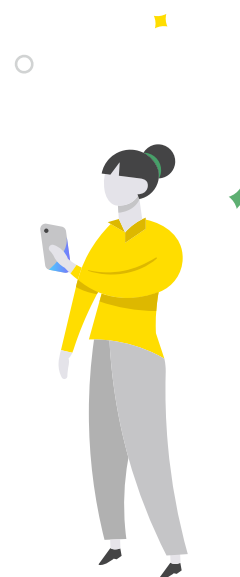
Why is the Effective Training of Frontline Employees a Challenge?

Deskless employees comprise **80%** of the workforce globally - that's **2.7 billion people**¹⁷. And out of these 2.7 billion deskless workers, 619 million work in retail, restaurants and hospitality.

Why does training for deskless employees in retail, restaurants and hospitality need to be different? Let's first take a deeper look at how deskless employees are different than their 9-5 peers:

How Deskless Employees Differ from Office Employees:

- They don't have access to a computer
- They work out in the field - in stores, restaurants and more, spending their time helping customers or traveling between locations
- They typically don't have a company email address
- They work in industries with some of the highest turnover rates¹⁸
- They tend to be younger, working part-time, in shifts or seasonally
- They jump from task to task and don't have the bandwidth to focus on one thing for long
- They have multiple competing priorities, like other jobs, school work and family commitments



Unfortunately, even though deskless employees make up 80% of the workforce, training designed for office workers is still the default in almost every industry.

For this reason, organizations typically run into these 5 challenges with training their frontline workforces:

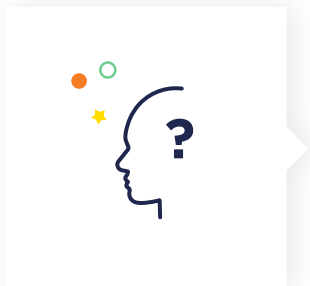
1. Employees' Engagement with Training is Low



Here's what employees are really thinking while you're wondering why they're not reading the material and watching the videos in your training program:

- ▲ I don't know what's in it for me
- ▲ It's a pain to access
- ▲ It's an overwhelming information overload
- ▲ I can't access it when I want to
- ▲ It's not fun or rewarding
- ▲ I don't have time for it (On average, employees can only devote 5 minutes per week to professional development and learning.¹⁹)

2. Employees Don't Retain the Information After it's Learned

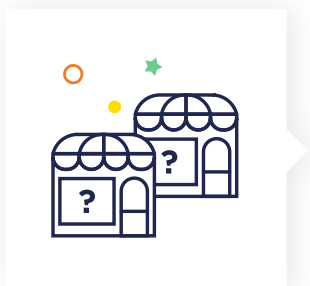


Why do employees still struggle to retain what they've learned after hours, day and weeks of training?

2 reasons:

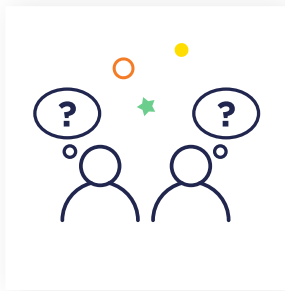
- ▲ Training is based on the presentation of information instead of its practical application
- ▲ Training material isn't repeated or revisited, so employees don't retain it

3. Training isn't Consistent Across Every Location



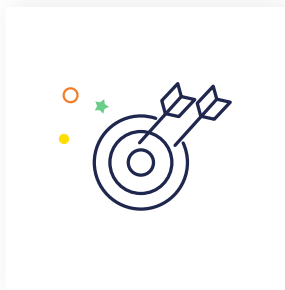
Most multi-site companies have trainers from head office who train employees in-person during visits to individual locations. This gets less and less feasible when hundreds or thousands of locations are factored in. **Unless trainers can visit every location, even the most remote ones, training won't be standardized, so employee knowledge and skills won't be, either.**

4. Training isn't Relevant to Each Employee's Role



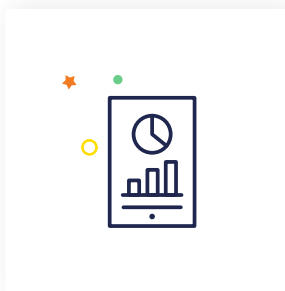
The problem with most training programs is that there's just too much information that doesn't take individual and group roles into account. When too much material is presented, employees don't remember the important things. But when insufficient or irrelevant material is presented, employees never learn the important things. The best way to avoid this is to create learning tracks based on employee role groups, so they learn the basics they need and what's most relevant to their role.

5. Tracking Employee Progress is Limited



It's impossible to link training to employee performance when progress can't be measured. This is frustrating for learning and development executives because they can never be sure how successful training programs actually are. It's frustrating for employees because they know they won't be recognized for going above and beyond. When progress isn't measured, it's impossible to correlate achievements in training to getting a promotion, for example, which impacts retention. If employees know that the effort and time they spend on training pays off, they're less likely to switch jobs.

6. It's Not Easy to Calculate or Demonstrate the ROI of Training



\$87.6 billion was spent on training last year in the US alone.²⁰ **But this spend is worthless if training can't be tied to concrete outcomes, like improvements in key performance indicators (KPIs) for each location.** Many businesses aren't measuring and analyzing the most important KPIs like conversion rate, basket size and customer lifetime value consistently in the first place, let alone correlating them with training engagement and completion rates. Measuring the ROI of training helps organizations make data-driven investments. It also helps them continuously improve training programs, content and formats to better serve employees.

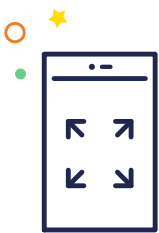
5 Strategies for Designing Effective Training for Frontline Employees



Use Microlearning

Microlearning breaks content into short chunks, typically no longer than a few minutes, based around a common theme or function.

Microlearning has been proven to help learners retain more information for longer.²¹ Shorter sessions reduce the cognitive load on learners, and grouping information by theme and function gives it more context and makes it more applicable. Microlearning also motivates employees to learn, since they know before starting that the session won't take up too much of their time.



Go Mobile to Make Training Accessible

The average person spends over 4 hours a day on their phone.²²

Frontline employees may not have access to a laptop, but they do have their mobile device with them almost all the time. **Mobile learning gives your frontline workforce the ability to train wherever they are, as many times as they'd like.** Unlimited access to training materials empowers employees to learn on their own terms and revisit information as many times as they need.



Gamify Training

Incorporating game-playing elements like badges, scoring and leaderboards into training transforms passive learning into active learning. **When used successfully, gamification helps learners practice the key components of a task and deepen their understanding of core concepts.**²³ It also gives learners an extra boost of motivation to complete the training, because they see what's in it for them - whether it be winning a competition or the little ego boost of seeing their picture at the top of a leaderboard. One study found that gamified websites boosted engagement by a third.²⁴ Another study of game-based learning found that self-efficacy (a person's belief in how well they can complete a task or succeed in a certain situation) was 20% higher than it was without game-based learning.²⁵



Make Learning Social

Working on the frontline with customers is social. Learning should be social too. Chances are if an employee has a question, another employee somewhere will know the answer. Learning from your peers gives information context and meaning, making it more likely to stick. **But to make the most of social learning in an industry where your colleagues could be hundreds of miles away, employers must make full use of tech.** Equally as importantly, employers must foster a culture of knowledge-sharing amongst their employees. Social learning will never take off if employees feel too intimidated or hesitant to share their knowledge. After a knowledge-sharing culture has been established, focus on creating a community where answers and best practices can be crowdsourced.



Give Training Some Context

What's the difference between information and knowledge? Context. When creating training content, you should be able to answer these questions for each piece of information in there:

- **Who** is this information important for?
- **What** strategic initiatives would this information apply to?
- **Why** do employees need to know this?
- **When** should employees know this information by?
- **How** will this information be applied during an employee's day-to-day?

Bonus tip - Coupling internal communications with training content is a great way to give information more context. For example, combining short lessons on a new product range with the details about the launch campaign tells employees why they need to know the information as well as how and when they'll use it.

Key Takeaways

The only way to effectively train frontline employees is to **first understand what being a frontline employee is actually like**. This mindset shift will help you make your training work for your frontline employees instead of against them.

Effective training that's specifically tailored to frontline employees needs to be:



Short, so employees don't dread doing it



Accessible on mobile, so busy employees can do it whenever they have time



Interactive, fun and rewarding, so employees have an incentive to keep learning without being forced to



Social, so learning mirrors the reality of working with customers and guests



Contextual, so information turns into knowledge, and knowledge is successfully applied

Ultimately, when you invest in the way you train your frontline employees, you're investing in your customer experience.



About YOOBIC

YOOBIC is an all-in-one platform that helps multi-site businesses such as retailers, restaurants and hotels deliver the perfect customer experience across every location. With YOOBIC's collaborative, easy-to-use training app, every employee is empowered to continuously improve skills and knowledge and always be at their best.

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