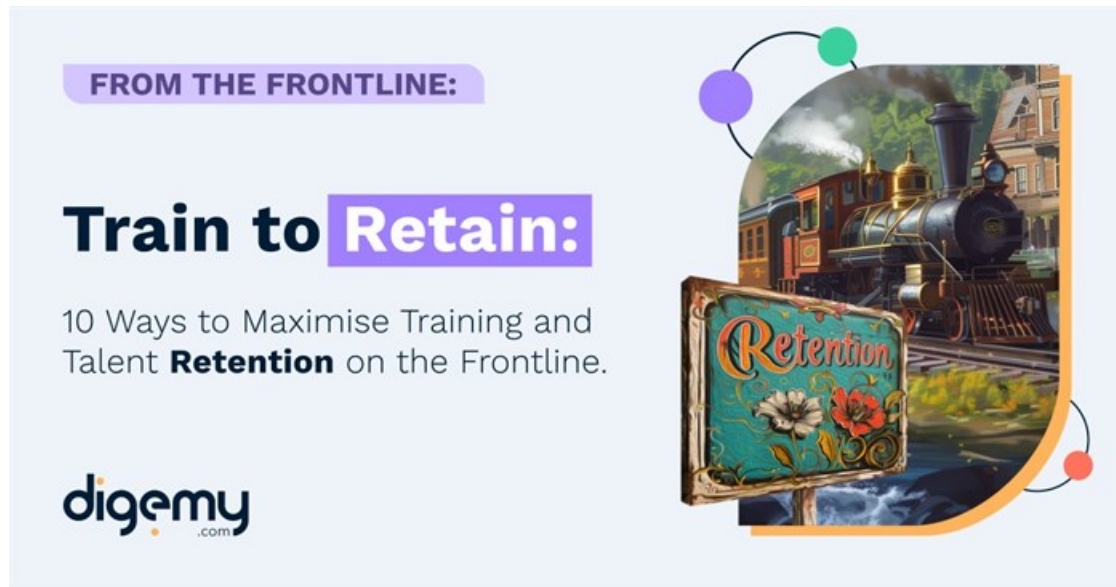


Train to retain: 10 ways to maximise training and talent retention on the frontline

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Key Takeaways

- **3 in 10** of your frontline employees will **resign every 12 months**.
- The global average **cost-per-hire** to replace these employees **exceeds \$2700**.
- Despite big investment, **lack of skills and career development** remains a **top reason for attrition on the frontline**.
- **Traditional training** is failing at the **frontline**.
- By redefining the **key performance metrics** for frontline training, you can transform training for **talent and knowledge retention**.
- The **7-key features of impactful frontline training** - mobility, microlearning, gamification, spaced repetition, tailored reinforcement, manager feedback and data analytics.

The Real Cost of Attrition at the Frontline

PwC's 2023 [Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey](#) found that one in four (26%) employees are likely to change jobs in the next 12 months, up from 19% the previous year. And this figure only increases on the frontline. A 2023 survey by global customer experience consultancy, [COPC](#), found that 29% of frontline employees were **unlikely** to remain in their current roles in the coming year, a figure that climbed to 41% in South Africa. For Retail, the situation gets worse, with [Mckinsey](#) citing attrition rates of 60% as 'not unusual' for the sector.

But at what cost? PwC's annual [Saratoga Workforce Index](#), put the average cost per hire including recruitment and talent acquisition at USD 2,700. But this doesn't include indirect training and benefit costs. With these taken into account this figure is estimated at over USD 5000. And, of course, there's also the direct salary costs incurred while an employee undergoes training and is not performing at peak to consider.

[Career Development](#) (or lack thereof) remains the second most cited reason for frontline employees seeking greener

pastures, with dissatisfied employees demanding greater access to skills development and internal mobility.

Against this backdrop, training emerges as a powerful tool when it comes to keeping talent, and keeping talent engaged. But we know this. Indeed, the global [Frontline Workers Training Market](#) is projected to grow from USD 21.9 billion in 2023 to USD 46.7 billion by 2028.

Why is this sizable investment not yielding return when it comes to retention?

Why Traditional Training Fails at the Frontline

The answer is twofold.

Firstly, it comes down to the very nature of frontline work - deskless, demanding and dispersed. Frontline work is often task-based and time- and location-dependent. Traditional training - whether blended, in-person or online - fails to fit into the hectic flow of work and life on the frontline. What we need is training that integrates seamlessly with workflows at the frontline, and provides real-time access to processes and procedures where they are applied.

Secondly, it comes down to how we measure the efficiency and impact of training. All too often, training metrics are limited to attendance, pass rates and cost. To harness training as a driver of retention, we need to measure what matters most - engagement, training retention, application and return on training investment. Let's explore:

4 Key Frontline Training Metrics for Operational Excellence:

What we focus on expands. Making sure that you measure the right metrics for maximum training impact will ensure that you not only design training with purpose, but that you are able to optimise training for performance and continual improvement over time:

1. **Learner Engagement** - learner engagement is the rate of participation by learners in training. In traditional in-person settings, this is often synonymous with attendance. Learning Management Systems and e-learning platforms provide ways to expand this definition to include frequency and completion rates.
2. **Training Retention** - Training retention is the rate at which learners remember training over time. Most learning management systems are not geared to measure training retention. Knowledge is shared, and immediately tested. If learners pass tests and assessments, it is assumed that they are both competent and will remember and apply their training.

This assumption is at the heart of the problem with traditional training. According to [Ebbinghaus' Forgetting Curve](#), learners forget 90% of material within 1 month of training. This tells us that measuring pass rates immediately after training is a poor reflection of competency and knowledge retention.

A better measure of training impact includes training retention over time. And best of breed training solutions will have inbuilt mechanisms to both measure and reinforce concepts according to individual knowledge retention levels.

3. **Application** - Application is the rate at which learners apply their training in the workplace. This is the ultimate measure of impact and, done right, will provide insight into ramp time (the time it takes an employee to go from novice to peak performance). It is also a great measure of the appropriateness of training. If you cannot link your training material to behaviour in the workplace, you should question the relevance of that material, and the value of the time it takes to conduct training.

Measuring application requires close collaboration between Learning & Development and Line Managers. This presents its own challenges on the frontline where line managers and supervisors are often not in the same building as HR. You can overcome this challenge by ensuring that your e-learning solution includes mechanisms to collect

manager feedback from the field. You should also ensure that training material is outcomes-based and developed in close alignment with frontline KPIs.

4. **Return on Investment** - When it comes to training, ROI is calculated as the income generated or savings realised through training. Often, when implementing a new training solution or methodology, it is useful to benchmark quantifiable, trackable metrics at the outset. These will vary according to function, but in a retail setting, could include revenue generated or sales conversion rate, or overall basket size. This is a good example of a performance metric, but operational metrics like employee retention rate and ramp time are equally useful when it comes to proving and maximising ROI.

In all instances, accurate measures of **training impact** demand data. Your training interventions should be measurable on an individual learner, department and branch level. You should set goals for your training, make them measurable, benchmark and ensure that your learning experience design process is centred around achieving them.

Now that we know which key metrics matter, we can consider the key features of effective frontline training solutions:

7 Ways to Maximise Training and Talent Retention on the Frontline:

1. Byte-Size, it just tastes better!

Micro-learning is training delivered in relatively small, focused units on multiple devices. Typically designed and delivered in rich media formats, micro-learning is a learner-centric approach that provides just-in-time on-demand training. A 1999 study in the [Journal of Educational Psychology](#) showed that people learn and perform better when they can access short and engaging content at their own pace, instead of vast complex information in one session. On a demanding frontline, micro-learning means that learners can upskill between shifts or on breaks or lulls in workflows without compromising output.

2. Gamified for the win!

Gamification is the practice of applying gaming strategies to learning to incentivise engagement. By activating the reward centres of learners' brain, gamified platforms like Digemy see increases in engagement of up to 42x. But the real benefit of consistent engagement is in the power of habit formation. By finding ways to keep learners engaged on a daily basis, learning becomes habitual and organisations benefit from a culture of daily learning.

3. Mobile and data-lite for training on-the-go

For deskless workforces, mobile training is a must. And in most emerging markets, access to technology and connectivity are no longer a disadvantage. In South Africa, for instance, smartphone penetration has exceeded 80% and internet connectivity is available to over 90% of the population. But data-poverty and digital literacy levels remain a constraint. For successful frontline e-learning, your chosen platform and provider should take a learner-centric approach to ensure accessibility and appropriate data-usage when it comes to content creation.

4. Overcome the Forgetting Curve with Spaced Repetition

Spaced Repetition, or reviewing and refreshing training regularly, is the most effective way to overcome the Forgetting Curve. At each review, forgetting slows, and over time, knowledge is transferred in long term memory and is retained.

Automating the repetition of information at key intervals stretches recall and strengthens the memories encoded in learners' brains. By assessing retention over time, you are also able to identify knowledge gaps and reinforce information accordingly.

5. Get personal with Tailored Reinforcement

Spaced Repetition is great, but without personalised or adaptive learning, it can be unnecessarily time consuming and frustrating for learners who've grasped and remembered certain concepts. By tracking individual learner retention and tailoring repetition to close unique knowledge gaps, you can significantly reduce training time. We call this Tailored Reinforcement. It's the automated, algorithmic repetition of concepts on an individual learner level and its essential for optimising training performance.

6. Mind the gap with Manager Feedback features

To measure the impact of training on the frontline requires feedback *from the frontline*. It's critical that you incorporate feedback mechanisms to close the gap between Learning & Development and frontline application. Creating a mechanism for manager feedback also gives you a consolidated view of any operational pain points that can be addressed with training interventions. In this way, you will lay the foundation for continual improvement and operational optimisation.

7. Act on insight for data-led optimisation

Having a smart micro-learning platform that learners love to engage with generates *a lot* of data. That data should provide actionable insights for training and operational optimisation. It should help you track, manage and optimise training ROI by providing performance insights at an individual, branch and organisational level. It should aid with performance improvement and with HR matters for more informed conversations and decision-making. Finding a platform that makes interpreting and visualising these insights is key to achieving operational excellence.

IN SUMMARY

In summary, retaining and growing talent at the frontline is key to both continuity and continual improvement, but without effective knowledge transfer to the frontline, we will continue to contend with low morale and high attrition rates. Training is the answer, but it offers much greater potential - the opportunity for data-led operational optimisation.

Realising this benefit requires a platform that offers mobile micro-learning, gamification, tailored reinforcement and manager feedback features. We've built a multi-award winning platform that includes all of these and more. We also pride ourselves on a customer-centric approach, with support and learning experience design services that will help you elevate and transform your frontline training into a vehicle for operational excellence.

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