A background image showing a man in a brown blazer and glasses working on a laptop in an office setting. Other people are blurred in the background.

*“It’s not just business — it’s personal”*

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We’re exposed to an overwhelming amount of information every day. Between billboards, banner ads, and email marketing, it’s a miracle that anything can cut through the noise. How we decide what is most important—and what sticks—is becoming more and more difficult. Personalization is a clear way to stand out in a world crowded with constant information; but how can we leverage personalization to make corporate learning more effective?

### **THE “COCKTAIL PARTY EFFECT”**

Imagine you’re at a loud party buzzing with conversation. It all blends together into white noise, until suddenly you hear someone say your name or mention something you’ve been talking about recently. Suddenly you perk up, you’re tuned in, and you can hear the conversation clearly. This is something called the “cocktail party effect.”

Psychologists say that our brains are hardwired to filter the constant white noise we’re exposed to so that the information that matters most to us is immediately put at the top of the information pile. Incidentally, the information that matters most to us is the information that directly relates to us.

*“Remember that a person's name is, to that person, the sweetest and most important sound in any language.”<sup>1</sup>*

The more personally relevant the information, the more we tune in, and the more of that message is passed to our brain. Talk about efficiency.

## WHY PERSONALIZE?

With our brains hardwired this way, it's no wonder that personalization has become a key indicator to how well we absorb information—especially topics that may not interest us otherwise.

*According to Spherion Staffing's 2016 Emerging Workforce Study, as many as 45 percent of employees said their current internal training offerings are not relevant to their daily responsibilities.<sup>2</sup>*

If almost half of the training employees receive isn't relevant to their jobs, it's not surprising that training is ineffective—if the information you're providing in training isn't relevant, you're not engaging the “cocktail party effect,” and your information is falling to the bottom of their pile. Why would employees pay attention to training that doesn't help them do their job?

Organizations spend valuable time and money to onboard and train employees. Studies show that the average cost of onboarding just one employee is over \$5,000<sup>3</sup>. When training processes are irrelevant and impersonal, you're not just wasting your time—you're wasting your hard-earned money on training that simply won't stick.

Now, if training was relevant, how much easier would it be to apply those newly learned skills to your job? If the information you received was personalized to your job title, previous experience, and current skill level, that's the cocktail party effect in action! Personalized information = engaged employees = effective training.

It's simple: employees are invested in a solution that's invested in them. Personalization eliminates wasted time and energy on unnecessary training and gets your message across in the most effective way.



## PERSONALIZATION IN ACTION

*60% of company executives note they struggle to personalize content in real time, yet 77% believe real-time personalization is crucial.<sup>4</sup>*

The pivotal importance of personalization is clear, but according to that statistic, the majority of people don't know how to implement it. Tailoring our approach to personalization can appear to be a daunting task, but it can be broken into simple steps.

## GIVE THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT

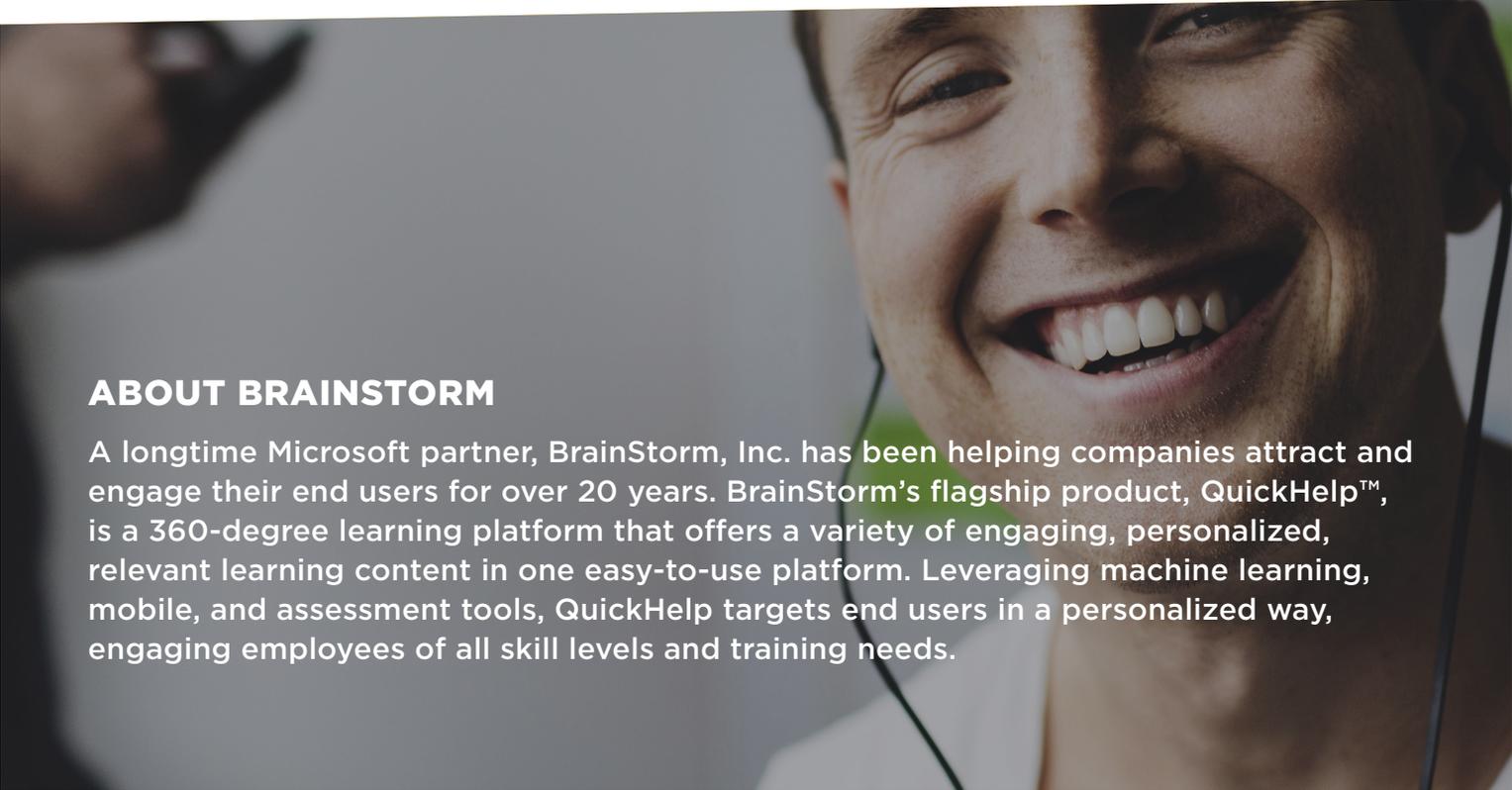
**ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL** — Users of different ages, job roles, and skill levels all work differently. Learning experiences should be just as unique as each of your employees.

**KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE** — Take an initial assessment to better understand your employees. Find similarities in job roles, applications used, and pain points to create groups that would benefit from specific content.

**CUSTOMIZE, CUSTOMIZE, AND CUSTOMIZE** — Now that you know your audience, create a wide variety of custom content for them during every step of the training process. Content should be diverse and include live trainings, video content, and reference guides.

**ADJUST AS YOU GO** — Get feedback! Don't be afraid to change your strategy, add new content, and update information you're giving based on real-time user feedback. If users feel heard, understood, and that their feedback is important and implemented, you're engaging them to interact with the information even more.

**A personalized approach to learning helps users to feel understood—and users who feel understood are more likely to find meaningful value in the solutions provided to them. Taking the time to learn your audience, and taking time to make the content you give them relevant, updated, and adjustable is the key to engaging an audience of any kind or scale. Your message and your training is important—going the extra mile to ensure that message hits home is worth it every time.**



### ABOUT BRAINSTORM

A longtime Microsoft partner, BrainStorm, Inc. has been helping companies attract and engage their end users for over 20 years. BrainStorm's flagship product, QuickHelp™, is a 360-degree learning platform that offers a variety of engaging, personalized, relevant learning content in one easy-to-use platform. Leveraging machine learning, mobile, and assessment tools, QuickHelp targets end users in a personalized way, engaging employees of all skill levels and training needs.

#### Sources

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4. Neolane & DMA