

## **The quiet revolution in learning and education.**

As CEO of an educational software development and publishing company that sells products around the world, I have the opportunity to see industry trends as they emerge. One of the most exciting, and perhaps the one that will have the most impact on people of all ages, nations, and cultures, is the quiet, yet revolutionary, change that is happening in learning and education.

A classroom is one of the few places in world where you can have the same experience today as that of 20, 50, or more years earlier. Certainly, some changes have happened, with perhaps the most noticeable being the introduction of computers in the classroom. Yet, over 25 years since the mainstream introduction of the personal computer, schools are still struggling to adopt technology in daily learning.

Research in how people learn is also starting to affect change, as it is increasingly recognized that people have different learning styles. Thoughts on the role of the instructor as a facilitator of learning and self discovery, rather than a provider of facts and knowledge have emerged. And, distance learning, particularly via the Internet, is expanding.

However, even with all of these changes, the underlying approach of how we learn has stayed relatively unchanged as a linear, reading, writing, and listening exercise. A process which most people tend to dread rather than embrace.

The good news, however, is that significant change is coming, and quickly. In fact, this change will be so revolutionary that I predict that learning and education will change more in the next 10 years than it has in the past 100.

This change has three key drivers. The first is gaming and its influence on learner psychographics. The words Nintendo, Playstation, and Xbox have become part of our daily vocabulary. The emergence of video gaming entered mainstream in the mid 70s, and sociologists are now producing research results that show a clear line between those who grow up with gaming and those who do not. This line – at age 36 – marks a statistically significant delineation in how people see the world. Gamers tend to be less risk averse, more willing to strive for success, and are less likely to connect with traditional learning methods.

The gaming generation is estimated to be bigger, and soon more influential, than the baby boom generation. And, while it is often thought that a typical gamer is a teenage boy, the reality is that the gaming generation has significant representation by both males and females in their 20s and 30s.

Coinciding with the emerging gaming generation is that half of all teachers in North America will retire within the next 10 years. This means that new teachers, most who have never lived in a world without computers, and many of the gaming generation, will soon be driving education. The result: adoption of technology and new methods of learning will be fast and furious.

The final piece of the puzzle, the technology industry, is also catching up after several not-so-successful attempts at integrating technology with education. A new industry, called “eLearning simulation” or “serious gaming,” is developing to take advantage of this opportunity, which some estimate will grow 10,000 percent to \$37 billion in the US alone, within the next 10 years.

Simulations enable learning-by-doing, an approach that cognitive experts consider the fastest and most effective way for people to learn. Similar to how pilots train using flight simulators, highly visual and realistic educational simulations enable people to gain skills through simulated experience. Similar to video games, simulations immerse you in highly visual and interactive environments in such rewarding ways that you feel both intellectually and emotionally engaged in the experience — as if you were living it.

Unlike reading a book or attending a seminar, you gain real experience in a simulation. Become the CEO of a virtual business, a stockbroker trading on a virtual exchange, a manufacturer managing a virtual production line, a sales manager interacting with virtual customers, or navigate your way through your financial future — all from your computer.

The availability of content and technology that truly improves how well we learn, combined with the gaming generation’s desire for new and more game-like experiences will result in sweeping changes in how we learn.

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