

Is technology taking away key experience in learning?

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The new world order revolves around technology. We would be doing ourselves an injustice, as professionals, if we assumed we would be unaffected, we would also be doing an injustice to those who consume our services at whatever level.



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Learning, relearning and unlearning, therefore, like American futurist Alvin Toffler once said, is what will set us apart as professionals in the digital space. His philosophy needs to be applied in the ways in which we learn as well.

The advantages that come with the type of technology linked to the Fourth Industrial Revolution are incredibly vast, for teaching and learning, the strengths lie mainly in flexibility, reach, continuous access and the freedom to pace oneself as they learn.

Conventional workshops in traditional learning environments of various industries require delegates to gather at a centralised location where facilitators are present to teach. These are usually set at a specific time and day, requiring attendees to leave their posts at work to be available for this learning experience.

In most instances, companies will need to book accommodation, transport and meals for those attending at an additional cost. These workshops, though beneficial to industries, often require a lot of sacrifice by those who attend and the institutions they represent. One great advantage, however, that one should note, is the extreme power of human contact and interaction in the traditional learning process.

Learning in the digital world has become less rigid. Contrary to the conventional style of learning is the booming world of e-learning. E-learning allows individuals to learn at their own pace without making too much of a sacrifice. Modules are readily available online for access at the convenience of the student, allowing professionals flexibility on their learning journey.

In addition to the freedom, these professionals have in developing their skills is the omission of sacrifice by the institutions they belong to as they don't pay any extra costs above those of the course. E-learning courses, therefore, also hold the power to reach people in locations that would otherwise never attend due to monetary or time restrictions. This form of learning also allows the student to go back to their study material at their leisure.

Further to this, one of the greatest powers in this method is that suddenly learning is the onus of the individual. Suddenly they have to find the time, suddenly they need to grapple with the content in isolation for understanding. Even though facilitators, videos and learning material are available, a lot of the actual work to learn rests on the individual.

A new way of learning

It is only once we embrace this new way of learning, only once we unlearn what we've always known about how teaching and learning should occur, relearn the fundamental building blocks of learning and how to implement them in a model such as e-learning, that we, as 21st -century professionals, can acquire the knowledge we desire in this unconventional set up.

It truly goes without saying, then, that technology will disrupt how we learn. To determine if it is taking away or adding to the experience is solely dependent on the attitude of individuals. If we embrace it as the tool it is, with the power to transform how we learn for the better, then it will be an advantage.

If we choose to grieve the old classroom setting, which excluded many from industry workshops due to financial constraints and also bore a great expense on individual companies, then it will be a disadvantage.

However, regardless of where we may stand in the debate, e-learning has already begun disrupting the professional learning space to the advantage of numerous practitioners who previously had no means to upskill.

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