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Immersive Learning vs Experiential Learning (what's the difference?)

November 14, 2015 • 41 Likes • 9 Comments

These days with every passing day we hear new buzz words. Some words that stick and some that just trickle off our backs and we never hear again. On the surface, it may seem "Immersive Learning" is just another one of those buzz words. I don't know if it is or isn't, you decide.

I first came across 'Immersive Learning' while learning about augmented reality and how it can be used in learning through a [TEDx Talk by Joost Uitdewilligen](#). Before I had watched this video, I was already skeptical about the way learning was currently happening because it had clear evidence that it wasn't nearly as effective - even with the use of experiential learning. Joost in his video talks about how learning can become authentic when we can live the life of another. See and experience things through their senses (eyes, ears, etc)

In the corporate environment, tools like 70/20/10 had also been created to help show how important or unimportant classroom-training really is in the grand scheme of things. Simply put; it shows that classroom training is only 10% of the entire learning journey because the focus is on creating a tangible result from the learning experience -an outcome.

So while we ensure that the 90% of the learning journey is supportive through a robust mentoring program or on-the-floor manager assist, it's also important for us to look at the starting point of that journey which may, in most but not all cases, begin in a classroom. One of the reasons why I believe learning doesn't stick is because it isn't authentic. In an average training program, the participant is incredibly detached from the learning. "How about in experiential learning?" you might ask. Yes, maybe a little better because the person is engaged and is experiencing something in playing the games. But I still see it as a fragmented form of learning -incomplete and insufficient in creating an authentic learning experience.

Why? Because here's how it works: 1. You play a game. 2. There's a debrief. 3. You reflect. 4. You play another game. 5. There's another debrief and so on. "Well I don't see anything wrong with that!" you might say and I agree to some extent. There's nothing wrong with that because it's better than a regular classroom training where you receive a download of information and play no role in the receipt of that information other than that of an audience. When looking at it from an angle of what we've done and what we're doing now, there's nothing wrong with it. But when compared to how 'real' those learnings are, we can make some significant improvements.

I believe Immersive Learning has the potential to change the way learning happens. In an immersive environment, you're not playing a series of disconnected games which may have been carefully chosen. Instead, you're engaged in one life-like scenario which has many separate and disparate components to it. It's a simulation of sorts -based on your actions, you discover key information that has the potential of changing the way you handle the situation. Moreover, while you evolve your strategy and approach on how to handle the situation based on your understanding of it, the scenario is also evolving based on several external influencers. One such example of Immersive Learning is [Thrive](#), which depicts an end-of-times scenario and places the participants in a spaceship that is going to Mars. Every action from the selection of 'who goes' and 'who stays' to what activity should be performed on the spaceship plays a role in the outcome of the game. Another example is [The Void](#): a large studio in Utah which creates scenarios and experiences based on augmented and virtual reality. You get to go inside and physically protect Earth from an Alien invasion or slay the dragons who are causing havoc and disturbing the peace. Pretty cool huh?

The way I see it is, it's not about moving to Mars or protecting Earth from Aliens. The idea is to create an environment which is immersive in nature. One that engages people from all angles, one that binds them utilizing all their senses (or at least most of them) and engages them emotionally so they become invested in the result of the game so much so that they forget their current reality. When we can create something like that, we can create learning through realization (inside-out), learning that is authentic because it originates from an action you took towards an outcome you truly cared about -'protecting the planet' or 'saving mankind'.

And when looked at a little closer, we learn that the crux of the matter is not even about 'immersive learning,' it's about building an environment that get's people so invested that it makes them care...

Written by



Mohsin Memon

CEO, Chief Game Designer, TEDx Speaker, Immersive Learning for Leadership Development

Like



41 likes 9 comments



Add your comment



Riaz Mulla

Delivery Head (Training) at Tech Mahindra Ltd and Writer

I think you capture it all in your last sentence. The mode of learning is only a tool. If you can manage to get your participants involved, even a classroom can produce better results than 10%. I haven't yet experienced an immersive learning exercise the way you describe it but I understand whether Immersive or Experiential, it is the debrief and its effectiveness in making the participants reflect which will determine how much they internalize.

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I couldn't agree more! I meant to invite you but have been slipping my mind to pick up the phone and call you. You're welcome to join us on the 28th if you're in town for a glimpse of an immersive learning experience.

Like November 14, 2015



Michael Sutton

■ Game-Based Learning Innovator & Architect ■ VR/AR Researcher ■ Edupreneur ■ Tekno-Filasofur

Mohsin Memon

Very useful contrast and compare. Since I use serious games and experiential learning for much of my educational work, I was initially put into a mental defensive posture. However, the more I read on, the more I became convinced of the value proposition you have suggested. My only reservation is costs, since a board game or lego game are much less expensive than setting up a Void environment.

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I do agree with what you're saying [Michael](#). Cost will play a big role using making augmented reality for learning but I'm an optimist. "Anything that the mind of man can believe, it can achieve." ;)

Like November 14, 2015



Rohit Roy

at

[Mohsin Memon](#), this is a great post. I didn't know previously that immersive learning can have such a great impact. I thought it was limited to gaming and interactive marketing. But, your post throws up some really interesting insights. Kudos and thanks for sharing.

Like(1) Reply(1) November 14, 2015



Mohsin Memon



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You're welcome [Rohit](#). I'm glad you resonated with the post. I'm just so excited and convinced that the future of learning is utilizing technology in just the right way.

Like November 14, 2015



Debasish Majumder

beBee Ambassador at beBee, Inc.

nice insight.enjoyed reading.

Like(1) Reply November 15, 2015



Mohsin Memon



Kartic Vaidyanathan

Games based Learning advocate | Change enabler with fun & empathy | Concept Simplifier | Learning Consultant | Trainer

Thank you [Mohsin Memon](#) for this lovely article where you have laid down beautifully the different kinds of learnings and their effectiveness. As you have rightly summarized, its about getting people to care and engage in learning.

Like(1) Reply(1) November 15, 2015



Mohsin Memon



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That's right Kartic! Making them care..

Like November 15, 2015



asli telli aydemir

knowledge dweller<experience seeker @Guniversite2016 et alibi

Immersive has always meant the synthesis of participatory technologies and interactionist tools implemented to create inviting ecologies for the user. The user becomes the exploiter and explorer, reforming the ecology by adding new gestures and means of belonging. The producer learns from the interacting and exploring user.

Like(1) Reply November 17, 2015



Mohsin Memon



Jonathan Camilleri

IT Professional

How would you go about designing immersive learning?

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Mohsin Memon

CEO, Chief Game Designer, TEDx Speaker, Immersive Learning for Leadership Development

To be honest, it's a work in progress... we're still figuring out what goes into an immersive environment. But this is what we've found so far: <http://www.mem-corpibg.com/#!/what-we-do/j5r3j>

Like November 16, 2015



Joost Uitdewilligen

We figured out some basic rules on how to design for immersive learning, if you would like to know more feel free to ask!

Like Reply December 1, 2015



Sameer Chougule

Program Manager-Process Improvements- North America Region at Sitel

Nice read. Would like to know more about it.

Like Reply December 19, 2015