

Digital Age Learning

What is Digital Age Learning?

Regis Chasse

We live in the information age (aka the digital age), which is a period in human history characterised by a shift from industrial production to information and computerisation, changing significantly how people interact with businesses and each other.

Today, information is readily available and free. The democratisation of access to information has resulted in a shift in the distribution of power between government and citizen, retailer and consumer, manager and employee, teacher and student. Today, there is too much information for any one person to handle and that information becomes obsolete very quickly. Continuous, just-in-time access to the latest information has become paramount for all actors in society.

The digital age is the age of the empowered customer, who can now make intelligent choices about the right product for the right situation with all of the relevant data, just in time. In this new age the consumer, rather than the brand, controls the interaction. In order to survive and remain relevant, companies now need to quickly adapt to a constantly changing market. In this new era, being really good at learning how to do new things results in a competitive advantage.



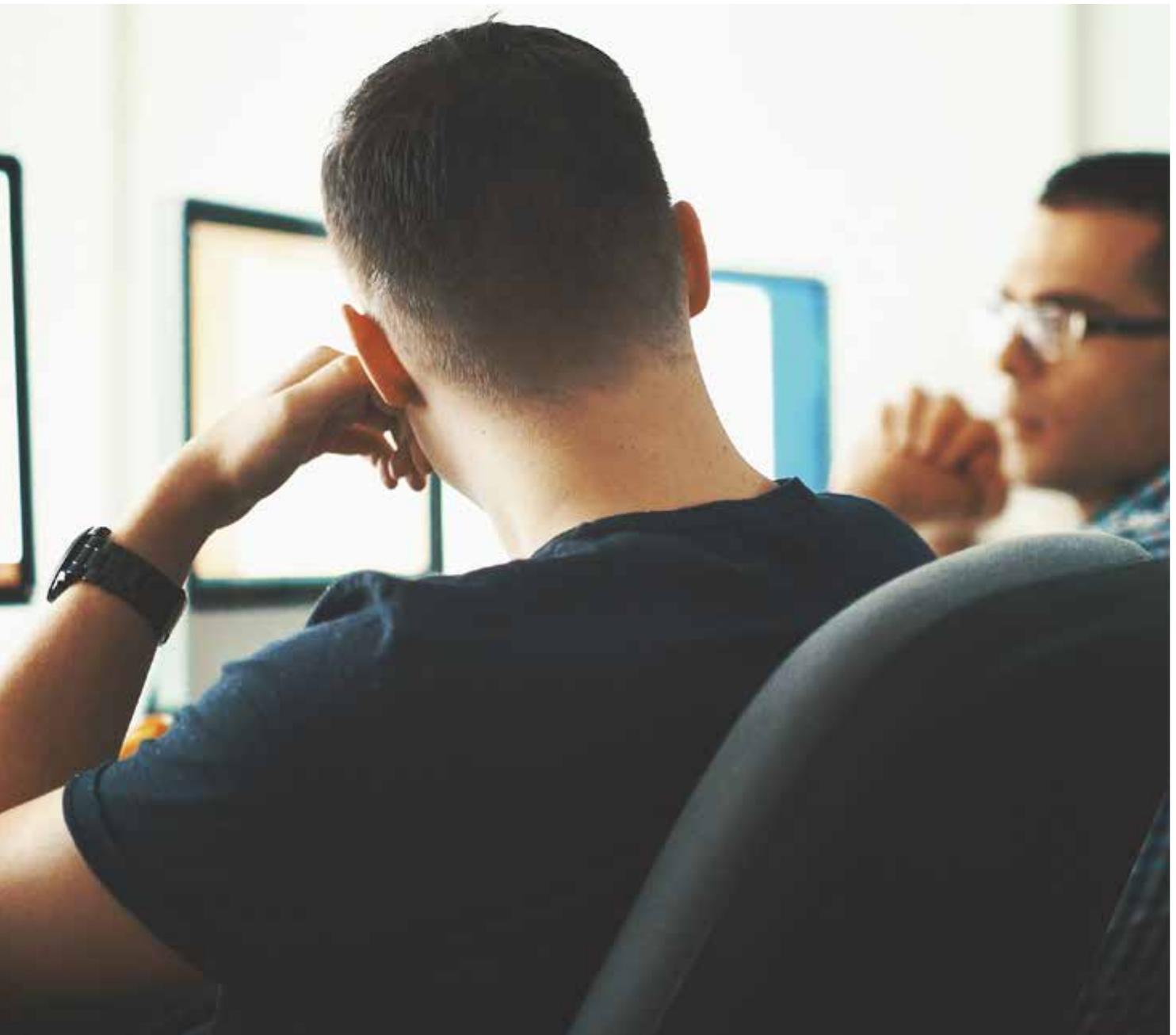
Beyond corporations, individuals must also adapt their skills to remain relevant in the job market. The digital era requires individuals to be lifelong learners. It also stresses the importance of creative problem solving and the ability to make connections across domains in order to drive innovation. In the digital age, individuals must not only be able to find and navigate information but they also must be able to critically interpret that information. They must also be able to express their ideas effectively through digital media. In the digital age individuals must be digitally fluent.

Additionally, when thinking about digital age learners, we must understand that they are more overwhelmed, distracted and impatient than ever before. Today, digital age learners want to be empowered and collaborative.



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Given this context, we have identified six characteristics that define learning in the digital age:

1. Engaging through an exceptional and relevant learning experience

An attractive employee learning experience will generate intrinsic gratification, motivation and the active engagement necessary for more effective learning. To sustain that engagement, the act of learning must be relevant and meaningful, both for the learner and for the organisation. This is enabled through learner-centric design and business aligned objectives.

2. Empowering, personalised and self-directed

The developments in digital technology have enabled learners to choose what, how and when they learn. They seek learning that is personalised, that fits their individual preferences and needs: they want a "one size fits one" learning solution. A culture of self-directed learning is strongly emerging with individuals directing themselves towards which learning to follow.

3. Ubiquitous, just-in-time, on-demand and in context

Digital learners want to learn at the time of need when they encounter a specific skill or knowledge gap that prevents them from completing a task or from achieving a desired tangible result. Learning must directly support the activities that the employees perform in the real world and on-the-job rather than focusing on teaching knowledge and theories. Individuals should be able to access this specific learning within their own context, when they need it.

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4. The right blend of experiential, social, informal and formal

Learning happens continuously, in a multiplicity of contexts and modes, supported by technologies that enable any learner to easily access internal and external information and interact with networks of experts and peers. Mixing formats makes learning more effective. Choosing the right format for the right purpose is critical.

5. Hyper-connected with analytics everywhere

Digital age learners must be able to connect with learning resources, information, peers and experts to effectively learn in the digital age. Providing simple tools that enable these connections is important for learning organisations. Additionally, analytics can provide insights on the learners, their own development needs, what assets can meet their needs, how those assets are consumed, how learning can be improved and how effective learning activities are.



6. Continuous, based on inquiry, exploring and doing.

It is critical for individuals to own their development and continuously learn. A company must be a place where constant learning opportunities enable workers to stay relevant in their jobs and in the industry. Learning design must promote inquiry, exploring and doing so that learners are able to research solutions to specific situations and build their own answer based on collective experience and existing knowledge.

