



LEADING *the* LEARNING REVOLUTION

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THE EXPERT'S GUIDE *to* CAPITALIZING *on the*
EXPLODING LIFELONG EDUCATION MARKET

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This document contains the table of contents and Chapter 1 of *Leading the Learning Revolution: The Expert's Guide to Capitalizing on the Exploding Lifelong Education Market* by Jeff Cobb (AMACOM 2013).

More information about *Leading the Learning Revolution* can be found at <http://www.learningrevolution.net>.

The book is available for purchase at major booksellers, including Amazon.com.



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CHAPTER 1

THE NEW LEARNING LANDSCAPE

I'VE CHOSEN TO FOCUS this book on lifelong learning partly because that is my background—it is a market in which I have worked for well over a decade—but also because I think it has received surprisingly little attention in all of the excited and often heated discussion about education in the past several years. I take the term “lifelong learning” literally—it means learning that occurs throughout the life of an individual—but for the purposes of this book, I will focus on what I think of as “the other fifty years.” So much of the broader public discussion about education focuses on the K–12 sector and higher education. But the reality for most people is that they will exit these systems with at least another fifty years ahead of them. To say there is a significant—and growing—need for learning during these years would be a vast understatement, and yet you rarely hear politicians, trade and professional association CEOs, college and university presidents, or other potential learning leaders articulate a compelling vision for how we should serve this huge market.

It is clear, however, that this market is changing—indeed, already has changed significantly—and part of what inspired me to write this book





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is the efforts I have seen by entrepreneurial thinkers over the past several years to fill in the gaps left by traditional approaches to continuing education and professional development. In this chapter, I examine five forces that I think are driving these gaps and discuss their impact on the business of lifelong learning. By their nature, the five forces are:

1. Economic
2. Educational
3. Technological
4. Neuropsychological
5. Generational

I believe these forces ensure that the market for lifelong learning will continue to grow dramatically and dynamically in the coming years.

THE LEARNING ECONOMY

The study of economics has offered many important lessons over the past two hundred years, but the one I find most important to education providers as we make our way into the twenty-first century is this: *The nature of work changes with increasing speed as economies mature.* To not recognize and actively address this fact is to wind up in a situation in which there is a significant gap between what businesses need and what the labor pool can provide. Indeed, that is where we find ourselves, both in the United States and many other developed economies, as I write this book.

A September 2011 article in the *Economist* argued that even as unemployment surges, businesses are having a difficult time finding people with the types and levels of talent they need for open positions. “[A] minority,” the article suggests, “is benefitting from an intensifying war for talent. That minority is well placed to demand interesting and fulfilling work and set its own terms and conditions.”¹ This minority, of course, is very well educated and highly capable of adapting to changing circumstances.



In retrospect, we have been evolving toward this point at an accelerating rate for centuries. In the early 1800s—a mere two hundred years ago—the vast majority of the U.S. population lived and worked on small farms or ran businesses that served the needs of farmers. The nature of work, even given a range of technical innovations, was not terribly different from what it had been for thousands of years before. Plant, harvest, process, sell, or do things to support these activities. Only a hundred years later the majority of the population lived in cities, and manufacturing had become the engine of our economy. The demands of this economy—both to do the work of manufacturing and to provide a food supply to support large numbers of people who no longer worked on farms—meant that a wide range of entirely new jobs were created and that the nature of the old jobs had to change significantly. As manufacturing grew and farming evolved, both became increasingly less labor intensive and more specialized in the types of labor involved. Just as important, with the spread of public and higher education and continuing advances in technology, there was a dramatic increase in the pace at which new types of jobs emerged, became increasingly specialized, and then either disappeared or adapted to yet more change.

Skip forward another hundred years, and both rural and industrial life are distant memories for most of us. For decades we have lived in what the prescient Peter Drucker dubbed a “knowledge economy,” one driven by service- and information-based businesses. But just decades later, even Drucker’s term no longer seems quite on the mark. “Knowledge” sounds too finite: Master a body of knowledge and you are on your way. There are professions where that still works, at least as a point of entry, but as any recent college graduate can attest, those professions and those points of entry are becoming harder and harder to find. We now live in what is not so much a “knowledge” economy but rather a “figure it out on a daily basis” economy. Or, more formally, a *learning economy*.

Many of us, even those who remain in the same jobs, see the nature of our work change from year to year, and sometimes much faster. Tech-



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nology is one key driver of this continuous change; globalization is another. Most of us are now all too familiar with the idea that a software program or a lower-paid worker in another country may be able to do our work as well or better than we can. This knowledge, in and of itself, creates a perpetual uncertainty in the labor market. And most of us recognize that we are unlikely to remain in any one job for our entire careers or even for long stretches of time, as was the norm for previous generations.

Indeed, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor indicates that the “average person born in the later years of the baby boom held 10.8 jobs from age 18 to age 42.”² There is little, if any, reason to believe that this number will decline—unless, of course, the drop is driven by the grim fact that so many in the younger generations will be starting work later given the current lack of entry-level job openings. In addition to shifting jobs, many of us may also shift careers at least once during our working years. Either situation creates significant new learning demands.

Increasingly, for individuals, there are two options. One is to stick to the path of traditional employment, but to be as fully prepared as possible for the less secure environment that this path now offers. This is a particular challenge in professions in which the work lends itself to being codified and systematized, as is the case in a growing number of mid-level, white-collar positions. The process of off-shoring or computerizing any job that requires straightforward information processing—from insurance claims to bookkeeping to routine legal tasks—is already well under way. Assuming that robotics finally makes the leap that seems inevitable, the situation will become only more challenging. As technology futurist Kevin Kelly puts it, “Productivity is for machines. If you can measure it, robots should do it.”³

While creativity, critical thinking, and leadership are often cited as aptitudes needed for combating this trend and securing coveted “high-talent” jobs, I’d argue that these are not enough. These aptitudes, valuable as they are, require continual replenishment through learning. Individuals who hope to survive, much less thrive, in traditional employ-



ment in the learning economy must actively pursue educational opportunities that maintain their value to their employers. In many cases, if not most, this will mean seeking opportunities that fall outside of whatever education and training the employer offers.

The other option is to throw off the reins of traditional employment and set out on your own. This is no silver bullet, of course: Individuals who choose this path need all of the same aptitudes and the drive to learn that their more traditional peers need, but they must also have the courage and the discipline to be self-reliant. Whether by choice or force of circumstance, an increasing number of individuals are, in fact, choosing this path. A 2011 series in the *Atlantic* points to a surge in freelance workers and goes so far as to call it “the industrial revolution of our time.” Sara Horowitz, the series’ author and founder of the nonprofit Freelancers Union, describes what she calls the “freelance economy,” in which “over 42 million Americans are working independently—as freelancers, part-timers, consultants, contractors, and the self-employed.” Horowitz goes on to argue:

We haven’t seen a shift in the workforce this significant in almost 100 years when we transitioned from an agricultural to an industrial economy. Now, employees are leaving the traditional workplace and opting to piece together a professional life on their own. As of 2005, one-third of our workforce participated in this “freelance economy.” Data show that number has only increased over the past six years. Entrepreneurial activity in 2009 was at its highest level in 14 years, online freelance job postings skyrocketed in 2010, and companies are increasingly outsourcing work. While the economy has unwillingly pushed some people into independent work, many have chosen it because of greater flexibility that lets them skip the dreary office environment and focus on more personally fulfilling projects.

Because workers in this freelance sector of the economy are not employed by typical companies, Horowitz argues, they fall outside of



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many of the protections that were put in place by the New Deal, a legislative agenda that was driven through by Franklin Roosevelt as an implicit acknowledgment of the dramatic shift in work from the farm to the factory. These workers, whether solo practitioners or operating within small business, also do not have corporate human resources and training departments.

Given economic realities at the time I am writing this book, there is little indication that the situation will change for traditional employees, and there is every indication that the ranks of freelancers will grow. In their promotional efforts as well as in the types of content and learning experiences they offer, smart educational providers have a tremendous opportunity to find innovative ways to target and support one or both of these audiences.

FROM REMEDIAL EDUCATION TO LEARNING

The data concerning how well prepared young adults in the United States are as they exit our higher education systems and become prospects for the continuing education and professional development market are disturbing:

- ◆ A 2010 study by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce suggests that by 2018 the United States will need 22 million new college degrees—but will fall short of that number by at least 3 million postsecondary degrees, associate’s or better. The shortage amounts to a deficit of 300,000 college graduates every year between 2008 and 2018.⁴

- ◆ In a recent survey of more than 400 employers, *only 23.9 percent*—that is, less than a quarter—reported that new job entrants with four-year college degrees have “excellent” basic knowledge and applied skills.

- ◆ In the same study, 43.4 percent of employers reported that the preparation of high school graduates was “deficient.”



◆ Finally, another survey of 217 employers found that half the companies provide readiness or remedial training, but most are not satisfied with the results.

The message from these examples and a range of other research is clear: There is and will continue to be a lack of sufficiently educated people entering the U.S. economy in the foreseeable future. And this is happening at a time when the job market, as already noted in this chapter, is shifting toward “high-talent” positions. If this fact alone does not suggest a major need and corresponding market for continuing education and professional development, I don’t know what does. Add to this the data about the frequency with which people switch jobs—and potentially careers—and it is clear that we face both a significant challenge and a significant opportunity.

Perhaps more worrisome than the issues we face with postsecondary education, however, are the gaping cracks visible in our foundational K–12 systems. At least since the passage of No Child Left Behind, the relentless focus on standardized testing in our schools has diminished the opportunity for teachers to expose students to a diverse, rich array of content and contexts representative of the type of world into which they will eventually emerge. As numerous critics of the U.S. school system have noted (I among them), this obsession with a misguided version of “accountability” is resulting in students who have neither a sufficient command of basic content nor the skill set required to be effective lifelong learners.

Testing aside, the traditional nature of school as an institution is unlikely to produce individuals well equipped to function in the learning economy. While there are notable exceptions, school as it currently exists is based almost entirely upon a *dependency* paradigm. The vast majority of work is structured for the student and delivered to the learner with a much smaller amount being self-directed or at least collaborative. The proportions need to be flipped, or at least balanced. *Self-directedness* is a key aptitude that the successful lifelong learner must possess, but we are not cultivating this aptitude at a sufficient level.



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Even to the extent that our traditional elementary and higher education institutions can, through their own efforts, align themselves more to the times, they will still only be a partial solution because such a large percentage of our learning needs arise in the forty-plus years that follow formal schooling. This is where self-directedness assumes a vital role, but also where there needs to be a rich network of learning and knowledge support that reflects the complex world in which we now live and work. Trade and professional associations are one existing part of this network; college and university continuing education departments are another. Organizations in each of these groups are struggling, to varying degrees, to keep up with rapidly changing needs and expectations. Associations, in particular, face the question of whether they remain relevant in a world where communities of interest can connect readily without them. Organizations need to rise to the new challenges of the lifelong learning marketplace—and there is plenty in this book to help them—but even assuming they do, demand is such that there still will be gaps to fill.

FIVE TECH TRANSFORMATIONS

Technology is a theme that runs throughout this book. As important as the other factors I discuss here may be, it is technology that has so far had the most visible, obvious impact on how we perceive learning and education. The fundamental shifts that have occurred in the global economy or that need to occur in our educational systems can be difficult to grasp, but smartphones, iPads, webinars, TED Talks (discussed in the next section), and degrees earned entirely online are relatively concrete, even if still amazing to many of us. We can point to ample evidence all around us, every day, that technology has made a difference in how we go about learning. And there is no reason to think it will stop.

From the perspective of the market for lifelong learning, I see five key areas in which technology has had, and will continue to have, a dramatic impact.



Access

There is no doubt that technology has dramatically expanded the range of tools and platforms available for delivering educational experiences, and by extension has blown open access to learning opportunities for the average person. The web, in particular, has all but eliminated time and distance—and, in many cases, cost—as barriers to learning, and made it possible for prospective learners to gain access to content and expertise that in the past would have required enrolling at a college or university, attending a conference, or spending a great deal of time in a library. Smartphones and other mobile devices continue to make access easier on a daily basis.

Education providers who continue to shrug off this phenomenon in the belief that educational experiences available over digital distribution channels are of inferior value do so at their own peril. The caliber and range of content, for starters, is truly astounding. With MIT in the lead, a global consortium of universities and colleges have long since (in Internet time) released major—and in many cases, *all*—parts of their curricula online for free and open access. This includes not just syllabi, but recorded lectures, readings, and all of the other supporting materials that go with classes at some of the world's top universities. The content is available through the universities' websites, but also through other popular, usually free distribution channels like YouTube and Apple's iTunes (which features an entire category called iTunes University).

Universities and other traditional education providers are not the only ones with access to digital distribution channels, and they are also not the only ones providing access to top experts. Less than a decade ago, for example, the annual Technology, Entertainment, and Design (TED) conference was an exclusive, high-priced membership event limited to an elite few with money to spare. Since the first release of recorded videos from the event in June 2006, it has become known to millions of users across the web and spawned additional business models, including the licensing of rights for local events under the brand TEDx. More recently,



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TED has launched TED-Ed, a site that enables users to add collaborative tools, questions, and other resources to videos created by a select group of educators and animators (<http://education.ted.com>).

Subject matter experts of all types and all levels are now able to jump into the learning market, creating what I describe as the “Any Given Monday” phenomenon. Just as in the world of sports a seemingly outclassed team can rise to the occasion and beat a favored rival on any given Sunday, individual subject matter experts willing to put in the time and effort are taking their shot at nearly any area of learning you can name. On any given Monday you may open your in-box or scan industry news to find that a new thought leader—and learning leader—has emerged. For organizations like trade and professional associations that have traditionally dominated continuing education in their niches, this can be a particularly disturbing phenomenon. The subject matter experts on which these groups have relied for conference and seminar content can, and already do, compete with them directly more easily than has ever been the case before.

So, while one major outcome of the access to learning that technology provides is a larger and more vibrant education sector outside the traditional sector, the other is a much more competitive environment overall for anyone in the learning business. How to deal with this shift is a key topic in later parts of this book, particularly Chapter 3.

Involvement

While TED provides the ability for learners to comment on videos and potentially to become involved in events at the local level, its success has drawn primarily on the Internet as a *broadcast* medium. A critical extension of expanded access, though, is the scope and scale of *involvement* that technology has enabled. Learners do not have to be content with simply viewing or listening to content delivered over digital distribution channels. Using a variety of tools, ranging from simple chat to threaded discussion boards, multiway video (e.g., in which participants in a web-based video conference can see each other), and the whole universe of social media tools now available on the web, they can easily interact with subject matter experts and with other learners. What’s more, they



can easily become not only learners, but also teachers by actively contributing to the content and dialogue that comprise education experiences, or even by creating educational products to distribute to the world. YouTube, blogging platforms like WordPress, self-publishing platforms like Lulu and Amazon CreateSpace, and entrepreneurial learning marketplaces like MindBites—just to name a few out of thousands of potential examples—make it easy for anyone with expertise in a particular area to share that expertise with the world.

The possibilities for learner involvement and engagement can now scale to a degree that was previously unthinkable. In 2008, for example, two Canadian academics, George Siemens and Stephen Downes, launched the first ever “massively open online course,” or MOOC, an experience that drew on tools ranging from blogs, wikis, e-mail, and an open-source learning management system to create a learning experience in which thousands of people from around the world participated. While Siemens and Downes helped to structure and facilitate the environment, the vast majority of the content was generated through participants blogging, tweeting, and leveraging a range of other social tools. All of this content was then connected by making use of the ability to tag—assigning a descriptive word or phrase to facilitate searching—and aggregate content on the web.

Large-scale learning is also happening in the context of massive, multiplayer games. The Institute for the Future, for example, has run a number of role-based “serious games” in which players tackle hefty issues like what life without oil would be like or how to prevent humanity from spiraling toward extinction. Thousands of people from around the world have participated in these experiences by imagining themselves within the scenarios engineered by the Institute and using a variety of tools to communicate with each other and contribute content. The group’s latest game, *Catalysts for Change*, is set to launch as I am writing this book and will explore how to eliminate poverty globally. Jane McGonigal, the leader of the Institute’s efforts with serious games, argues that game play on a large scale is one of the most effective mechanisms we have for broad societal learning and change.



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Aside from providing for interesting new business models, these highly participatory approaches to learning will almost certainly create new learner expectations over time. To simply sit passively and attempt to absorb information will no longer be acceptable. At the same time, there are also implications for preparing learners properly. As I will note throughout the book, most of us are not well prepared by our experiences in school to be the types of motivated, self-directed learners who can take full advantage of these technology-fueled approaches to collaborative learning. This lack of preparation represents a challenge for learning providers, but also an opportunity for those who act to support learners well.

Chaos

The benefits of access and involvement do not come without a potential downside. There are more than 100 million blogs on the web at this point.⁵ More than an hour of new video is uploaded to YouTube every minute, adding to the more than four billion videos that are viewed daily.⁶ Smartphone usage in the United States passed the 100 million mark in early 2012⁷, and the number of mobile “apps” is growing at a brisk rate daily. There is no accurate count of the number of online courses, webinars, and webcasts that flow through the Internet annually, but they no doubt measure in the millions at this point. For the prospective lifelong learner, the flow of information and choices becomes overwhelming quite rapidly.

A remarkable number of the “victors” in the Any Given Monday phenomenon are people or organizations (though usually with a particular individual leading the charge) who consistently and persistently help people make sense of the flow of information in a particular field, industry, or topical niche. They are there, week in and week out, often day in and day out, with a variety of content and perspectives. On the one hand, they contribute to the overwhelming flow of information, but they also play the important role of *curating* information—a topic I will return to in Chapter 7. They find and highlight the best of what is available, they repeat key themes and lessons, and in general, shape and lead thinking in their areas of focus.



As more and more people contribute to and share the vast quantities of digital content available through the Internet, it seems likely that the need for ways to filter and find focus will only grow. Better search technologies will certainly help to address this need, but actual human beings will also continue to play an important role. There is a significant opportunity in helping learners find their way through the chaos.

Diversity

An often-overlooked silver lining in the chaotic “cloud” of the Internet is the potential for embracing the diversity that it offers. In no previous time has it been possible for people to connect so rapidly, so easily, and so intimately across the globe—or even, for that matter, across town. We now have the opportunity to listen to, interact with, and learn from a much more diverse range of people and ideas than we might ever have encountered had we lived in other times. Since I started blogging in 2007 I have, as a direct result of my writing, connected to and communicated with people from Canada to Malaysia to Japan, and I have no doubt that doing so has enhanced my knowledge and understanding in a variety of areas.

Of course, the opposite can also be true. The web gives us the ability to easily find people and ideas with which we agree, and we often tend to gravitate toward the familiar. Over time, we may find ourselves living and learning in an echo chamber, in which only our own perspective is reflected. For providers of lifelong learning experiences, there is a great opportunity to create value by leveraging the diversity that technology enables and helping people connect with new perspectives.

Intelligence

Finally, there is little that we do in a connected world that is not traceable, whether on an individual level, in the aggregate, or both. While clearly this phenomenon has implications for privacy, it also means that we are able to much more easily track the path of learning and change. At the extremes, this newfound ability to capture and analyze data has led to movements like the “quantified self,” in which people strive for self-knowledge



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through meticulously recording and tracking data points about their diet, sleep, exercise, and other activities day in and day out.

At a less ambitious level, it is possible for the average person to use free or low-cost tools like an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) reader (see Chapter 2) or HootSuite to aggregate streams of information from a variety of places, tag and filter it in a variety of ways, and even generate analytical reports on it. The possibilities for personal learning dashboards—pages, not unlike iGoogle or My Yahoo!, where it is possible to collect and organize a variety of resources—ranging from very simple to highly complex and sophisticated, are practically limitless. This ability supports the access already discussed, but also creates new opportunities for learners to be able organize, personalize, and learn from the endless flow of data on the web.

On the learning provider side of the equation, these same approaches make it possible to assess, monitor, and participate in markets for knowledge and learning in a way that has simply never been possible before, especially for individuals or small organizations. This shift impacts product strategy and planning. It impacts marketing. It impacts ongoing support. In the chapters that follow, I address each of these areas in detail and provide practical guidance on how to leverage them in your learning business.

MIND MATTERS

Through advances in neuroscience and psychology we have come to understand more about the human mind in the past three decades than we did during the entirety of human existence to that point. This new knowledge has powerful implications for how we learn and how we live productive, fulfilling lives. So far, most of the traditional organizations in the lifelong learning market have barely scratched the surface in bringing this new knowledge to bear on how they deliver products and services. The standard lecture model, for example, still prevails in nearly all of the educational programming offered by trade and professional associations, college continuing education programs, and training firms. For better or



worse, the widespread availability of easy-to-use webinar and webcasting tools has made the lecture model pervasive on the web as well.

Lectures do still have a key role to play in adult educations, but what we have come to know about the human mind and, in particular, how adults learn, suggests that most lectures could be improved upon greatly and that lectures in general may be taking up more than their deserved share of the lifelong learning landscape. We know, for example, that:

- ◆ Adults have a “self-concept” of being responsible for their own decisions and along with this a need to be seen as self-directed in their learning efforts.⁸ Most lectures create more of a dependency situation in which both the speaker and the learner expect the learner to listen passively.
- ◆ Our attention span for absorbing new ideas and concepts does not stretch much beyond ten minutes, yet the standard lecture runs fifty to seventy-five minutes.⁹
- ◆ We tend to absorb and retain information much better through active forms of learning that push us to draw on past experience, make connections, and apply what we are aiming to learn.
- ◆ People often learn fastest and most thoroughly when information is conveyed in relatively small quantities and then repeated at intervals over time.¹⁰ A lecture is by its nature a very limited format for this approach.
- ◆ In many cases, social forms of learning are most powerful. We “construct” knowledge based on interaction with others in ways that we may be unable to do on our own.

In many cases, lectures can be improved upon to address these and other issues. In other cases, the lecture needs to be abandoned, or at least supplemented with other approaches.

An emphasis on how people learn is not just a matter of educational practice: I believe it will become fundamental to attracting and retaining customers for learning products. The volume of information and “junk”



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learning experiences available in the aftermath of the web explosion is simply overwhelming. While it may always be possible to hook people with shiny objects and deceptive promises, it will become increasingly hard to sustain and grow an educational business if you are not delivering clear returns on the learner's investment. Based on years of interviewing adult learners, it is clear to me that the average adult wants to walk out (or log out) of a lifelong learning experience having achieved a clear and actionable advance in her knowledge or skills. This often does not happen, or to the extent that it does, any gains by the learner evaporate in the coming days and weeks. Moreover, it is rare for organizations that offer lifelong learning opportunities to actually measure whether learning has happened and whether knowledge and skills have been retained.

It is impossible, of course, for any learning provider to control learning outcomes completely. Too much depends upon the learner and any number of variables that can impact or interfere with the learning experience. Nonetheless, we know enough now about how people learn, how to deliver effective learning experiences, and how to prepare learners to learn as well as possible that not achieving clear, sustainable outcomes is simply inexcusable. For serious producers, I believe the gap between current educational practices in lifelong learning and the outcomes that would be most valuable to learners and those who employ them represents a significant opportunity.

GENERATIONAL BOOKENDS

The final force might be seen as the one that makes the impact of the others inevitable. As generations grow older and new ones come of age in the midst of economic, educational, and technological shifts, expectations and needs are shifting as well.

While too many discussions of generational differences focus on aptitude (“younger people are simply better at technology”) and attitude (“young people like technology more than older people do”), the more salient and accurate point is simply that younger generations do not



think of technology as a distinct, special category of life.¹¹ Generations that have grown up with mobile and social technologies in a truly global economy simply have different expectations for how they will engage with the world and learn throughout their lives. With the range of options now available to them, these people are accustomed to simply checking out from whatever doesn't provide value and going elsewhere at the drop of a hat.

As I've written in *Shift Ed*, the ways that the upcoming generations "go about knowing the world may, in fact, position them to be some of the most effective learners that humanity has yet produced." Marc Prensky, originator of the term "digital native" and author of *Teaching Digital Natives: Partnering for Real Learning*, argues that:

Ironically, it is the generation raised on the expectation of interactivity that is finally ripe for the skill-based and "doing-based" teaching methods that past experts have always suggested are best for learning, but that were largely rejected by the education establishment as being too hard to implement.¹²

While schools may be somewhat slow to address this shift, this does not mean that today's young people will not have different expectations as they enter adulthood. It seems reasonable to assume that Facebook, YouTube, Google, and the wide array of sophisticated games younger generations have been reared on will result in different behaviors and different expectations. We already have generations of adults who are bored with webinars and the typical seminar. That boredom will multiply many times over in the decades to come.

And there is, of course, the other end of the spectrum to consider. The retirement of the baby boomers marks a fundamental shift in what it means to be an older adult, at least in the developed world. There are now more people above the age of 60 than has ever been the case before, and members of this group are much healthier and much more active than were their peers in past generations. Many are interested in continuing to learn, and a growing body of research in recent years shows that



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we are, in fact, capable of learning new things late into life. For some, learning is focused on picking up skills for a second or third career. For others, it is about personal enrichment and exploring topics that there was no time for in earlier years. In either case, with more than seventy million baby boomers in the United States alone, this is a huge market.

THE SUM OF THE PARTS

Any one of the five forces would have an impact on the demand for life-long learning. Put them all together, and it is clear that this is a market already experiencing massive growth and poised for much more. It will not just be a bigger market; it will be a different market, one that is much more competitive and entrepreneurial than is currently the case, and much more driven by technology and by a better understanding of how human beings learn. Certainly traditional providers of education and training will play an important role, but the demand is larger than they can fill, and even they will need to learn new tools and approaches if they expect to thrive. In the remainder of this book, we'll take a detailed look at these tools and approaches.

NOTES

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