

Serious Games

The History of Games

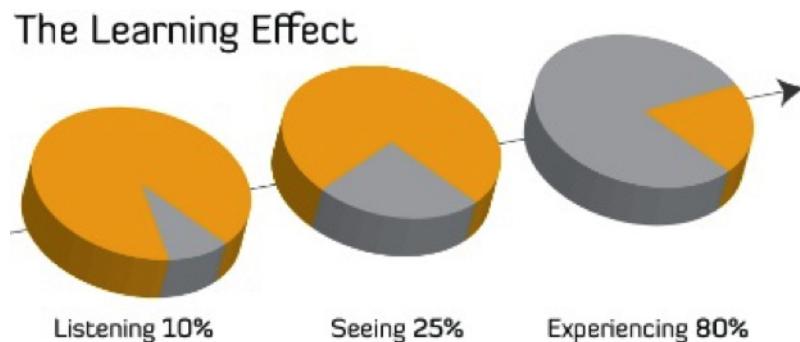
According to historian Peter A. Piccione, games such as Senet were played by early civilizations such as that of the Egyptians for more than 5,000 years. Since that time, games have evolved to become an important part of human interactions and experiences and are now considered a part of all cultures. Games can be played in many forms and can be enjoyed for purely recreational purposes or to help develop practical skills by educating or stimulating the player.

The term “serious game” was first used by Clark Abt In 1970 in his book *Serious Games* ; however, the concept was certainly not new. The military has used war games for training in strategy since the nineteenth century. Since Abt’s work was published, the use of serious games as an experiential learning method has been steadily increasing in formal education, but with the proliferation of computers in the 1980s and 1990s the process has accelerated. In the early 2000s the internet changed the face of serious games forever, extending their educational applications into the realms of professional training and executive education.

Serious games can have a focus that is political, financial, or behavioural. They can concern business process, or change management. The opportunities are limited only by one’s imagination.

The Learning Effect

“For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.” Aristotle once said. The concept of learning through doing, or making meaning from experiences, has been popularized by American educational theorist David Kolb under the term “experiential learning.” The idea is that, as learners engage and interact on a more personal level, there is a drastic increase in the likelihood that learning will occur and that what is learned will be retained rather acquired only for the short term.



The ability of tools such as simulations and serious games to engage adult learners has indeed had a profound impact in corporate training programs. The use of such tools has permanently changed the landscape of how to educate and train “mature-aged” professionals!

Supply chain games such as the Beer Game, about real world operational and executional issues, are now well known as tools for training professionals. Meanwhile, most recently advanced business simulations have proliferated in executive education programs due to their ability to foster retained learning, engage participants, and motivate sustainable change.

Companies are increasingly realizing that to teach new things, new approaches are needed. Without a doubt, the way of the future appears to be serious games.

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