



Training and Education: Can Big Data Help Us Compete With What the Web Gives Away for Free?

By Chris Pehura

Do you remember this expression?

“ Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day.
Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”

I sure do. It’s an expression that spoke well on how we teach and educate. But today this expression doesn’t speak well at all. This expression needs an update:

“Teach a man [how to teach himself] to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”

Training and education has changed. Rather than students being immersed in books and lectures, they’re now looking at how-to-do videos and blog posts building their foundational skills for free. Because we charge our students for their education, to stay in business we need to better compete with these free web resources. To do this we need to become pure learning organizations.

“A learning organization is a company that facilitates the learning of its members and continuously transforms itself to survive in a learning society, a society where education is the key to the nation's economic development.”

We need to become learning organizations where we and our students are the members. But how can we compete for what the web gives away for free? To compete we need to provide what the web isn't providing. We must target the problems our students experience when they learn strictly from the web resources.

“Traditionally, knowledge was not free like it is today. We had to go to the library, certain schools, and take specific degrees. Not so today. Today libraries are replaced with social media communities, schools with YouTube channels, and degrees with blog posts. Knowledge is free and free flowing. But this web knowledge comes with a cost.”

What students learn from web resources has a cost. Traditional education provided students with a wide overarching view of inter-related concepts and ideas that build foundational knowledge and skills. Students were given consistent vocabularies and mindsets to solve problems. But, when students learn through web resources, web queries, how-to-do videos, and even certifications, students are only given fragments of knowledge without the needed blueprints on how to expand them. Because there are no common vocabularies or inter-related concepts, students have difficulty expanding their knowledge and applying it when working with others. Students just can't combine these web knowledge fragments into the bigger picture.

“When using web resources for their education, students need to have that right vocabulary and those right words. Students need to know the words and the many flavors of related concepts to find, understand, and apply what they learn from the web resources. Students must be able to see the big picture so they can judge, tailor, and apply what they've learned to solve complex problems.”

Because web knowledge is in fragments, fact checking becomes very difficult, making it very likely that our students are learning incorrect and outdated information and concepts. Worst, some students are learning pure propaganda. Traditionally, authorities with many years of study and research did excellent fact checking. Today, with the social web, fact checking is done inconsistently by those who are proclaimed to be authorities just because what they said is constantly re-quoted on social media.

“The tightness of a social media community is a cult centered on cultural references. The tighter the community, the faster knowledge is shared. A strongly knit community can help reinforce students with the right behaviors, knowledge, and skills... and this works well assuming the knowledge shared is accurate and correct.”

We must change how we educate our students. We must become learning organizations and provide education for how our students will learn complex bodies of knowledge through web resources; how they use keyword searches, blogs, and videos. We must provide our students with the right keywords and the right vocabulary to build their knowledge and skills. And most importantly we must teach our

students how to communicate narratives that share and disseminate complex knowledge; how our students will do this through traditional means, public speaking, and social media. And our responsibilities don't just stop there. Through our social media communities and our sisters' communities we must reinforce our students' knowledge and skills so what they know and do remain correct and credible so our own institutions remain credible.

“We must teach our students to blend what they learn from us with what they learn from their favorite web resources, authorities, and celebrities on social media.”

The only economical way of getting students into our seats, pay us top dollar, and learning what they need to learn is through Big Data. Students are demanding more from their education, more for their education. What they're demanding is constantly changing. To keep caught up and ahead of the curve we need Big Data to forecast what students need to learn, what we need to learn, and what we need to teach our students.

Big Data must mold us into learning organizations so we provide our students with the education they need to better compete.

About the Author



Chris Pehura

Data-centric Business Management



Chris is a management consultant with a data emphasis helping Fortune 100/1000 companies strategically evolve and reinvent their businesses to maximize their revenue growth. Through realignment, to overhauls, to rebuilding things from the top down and ground up, he integrates and solidifies leaders, strategies, and solutions into all aspects of the organization. As practice director for [C-SUITE DATA](#), a Canadian based consulting firm specializing in data and Big Data, Chris serves as a coach, trainer, and the voice for how data is the new capital that drives, multiplies, and maximizes revenue growth.



where leaders, business management, and data converge