

*Are*  
**Ready or Not, Here They Come:  
Harnessing the Passion and Skills of the  
Media-Savvy Workforce**

**QuestG's  
Global Media-Savvy Workforce and Learning Project**

***Executive Summary***

**QuestG**  
LEARNING > KNOWLEDGE > GAMES

You'd have to be living someplace as remote as Easter Island to escape the networked, digital and media-saturated world in which we now live. Yet many corporate executives and front-line managers have been slow to awaken to the implications of the omnipresent new media. Even fewer are actively leveraging the opportunities it's creating to change the workplace for the better. So far, there has been little downside for executives who have ignored this trend. But that's about to change – new and rapidly proliferating media and long-predicted demographic changes are combining in ways that will create a seismic shift in the landscape of the workplace.

This global research project was funded by a group of Fortune 100 companies interested in understanding the depth, strengths and challenges of a new workforce with ingrained technology usage abilities. These Media-Savvy are traditionally thought to be the younger generation, but as you will see, they exist in far bigger numbers, across all demographics, with a concentration of capabilities and attitudes that business both desire and must accommodate. Their growing numbers will serve as the catalyst of major business and management process change. This process has already started in some segments of the economy.

QuestG interviewed executives and employees, compiled information from completed surveys of over 3,000 employees in almost 30 countries, as well as an extensive literature review.

For our clients this report is the start of a journey to rethink their business operations and organization so that it better meets the needs, and leverages the capabilities of the Media-Savvy employee.

## **Key Findings**

### ***Many organizations may be squandering the skills, passion and potential of media-savvy workers***

They are not realizing the learning or performance potential nor tapping into the rich reservoir of IT skills and knowledge of this emerging segment of the workforce.

#### ***1. High Media-savvy workers are more self-reliant and decisive***

- They are more comfortable with different decision styles than low media-savvy workers.

#### ***2. High Media-savvy workers of all ages are more engaged by learning***

- They spend more time, in many cases double, on learning and development than the low-MS group both at and outside of work.
- They are eager to learn on their own time.
- They are more comfortable with all methods of learning.
- They greatly value electronically-enabled ways of learning.

#### ***3. Current learning approaches are missing the mark***

- There is a significant gap between the kinds of learning methods people value most and what they experienced in their jobs.
- Employees were generally ambivalent about or dissatisfied with their training and development experiences and see little effect on their own performance.

#### **4. The workplace experience matches low expectations**

- Employers are not delivering the kind of work experience that many employees value most.

#### **5. High-media savvy workers, especially those under 30, are the most dissatisfied and likely to leave their employers**

- Four in ten, high MS workers under 30 are at risk of leaving their employers.
- Media-savvy employees want more challenge, achievement and learning from their jobs.

#### **6. Employers are missing substantial opportunities to leverage the technology skills and acumen of media-savvy workers**

- Games are not merely entertainment but also effective learning tools for high media-savvy workers.
- The best characteristics of video games match well to the characteristics of the most valuable learning programs.
- Employer-supplied technology is viewed as inadequate – especially for high media-savvy workers under 30.
- The media-savvy also believe there are too many restrictions on the use of technology at work.

### **Key Conclusions**

- **Companies already employ many of the workers they will need to thrive in a radically different future business environment.** Our study identified a third or more of the existing workforce as media-savvy. This is a significant and growing group of workers whose skills, learning styles, and work expectations fit the demands of the increasingly dynamic business environment. These employees have mastered technology and bring critical thinking, quick-on-their-feet decision making. They embrace learning and unstructured, fast-paced work.
- **Media-savvy workers have integrated a wide array of technology into their lives and work styles increasing productivity and collaboration.** For high MS employees, the use of technology is as fundamental a part of their personal life as it is their jobs and they have substantially more access to personal technology than low MS employees across all age groups. These people are developing valuable skills outside of work that are not being tapped by companies.
- **Despite their rhetoric about embracing change, most businesses are not yet changing their cultures and work environments to harness the talent of media-savvy workers.** Organizations are quick with slogans about embracing change and innovation but notoriously slow in acting on them. Overly structured ways of working, hierarchy and risk aversion are enduring impediments to progress in many organizations. They are stifling the initiative, development and performance of the growing media-savvy segment of the workforce.
- **It's not merely a generational trend - a distinct segment of older workers are media-savvy.** Adoption of interactive media isn't merely an age-driven phenomenon. It is important therefore to understand and leverage the willingness and ability of older workers to use interactive technology in their work. Many desirable, experienced managers and employees, i.e. driven by learning and self-advancement, are the ones who have acquired many of the

skills and attributes of the media-savvy. Their change resilient nature has driven them to keep pace with and adopt some of the tools and characteristics of the younger generation. These are highly valuable agile workers who have proven they can embrace new behaviors, tools, and ways of working.

- **A major psychographic shift is beginning - it's likely to get worse not better.** Today's youth in their late teens are even more intensely media-savvy than their slightly older brethren, so the workforce over the horizon will be even more media-savvy.
- **Organizations must rethink their learning and performance support strategies.** Learning approaches in most companies need to shift from formal planned offerings to real-time, demand-driven delivery and peer and expert-based learning. Hands-on learning is preferred and experimentation and learning by doing will be the norm. Game-based design principles and functionality should be adopted. A key challenge will be changing work environments and tool sets to provide more fun and real skill development for workers.
- **The key challenge for IT is to implement a next generation of IT systems and tools that leverages the skills and acumen of MS workers.** IT strategies in many organizations are aimed at the lowest common denominator and severely lag in offering MS workers the full range of interactive computing capabilities that they are adept at using. Eventually – the sooner the better – learning and the best principles of video-game design will be embedded into systems supporting work. In the future, learning and IT will need to work jointly to deliver these kinds of performance-enhancing capabilities.

Despite some inroads in using new interactive technologies, many companies remain trapped by outdated thinking and obsolete methods. The learning and performance strategies that worked in traditional corporate settings are woefully ineffective with the emerging media-savvy generation. In order to catch up, many organizations will need to make serious attempts to understand the emerging media-savvy generation – what motivates them, what they expect in the workplace, what they need to excel at their jobs, how they learn, and how interactive media can be used to supercharge their performance and learning. Harnessing the passion and skills of the media-savvy generation will require significant changes in the mindsets of managers and the culture of corporations.

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The Media Savvy Learning Project is an important contribution. The report makes clear that we have to deal with a rapidly changing workforce that is eager to learn and to embrace the opportunities that the new media space offers in this respect. It shows that the mindset and the value system of the new Media Savvy population goes hand in glove with what today's organizations badly need: the ability to act successfully in globally connected "creation nets," the ability to master novel challenges and changing rules of the game, and the ability to constantly learn and adapt to changing contexts. - In other words: being great at playing a multi-stakeholder game.

**- Roland Deiser**

*Founder and Chairman, European Corporate Learning Forum (ECLF)  
Professor for Organizational Politics, Danube University Krems  
Senior Fellow, Center for the Digital Future at the USC Annenberg School*

We have faced over many years an ever swinging pendulum in education, both in schools and workplaces. On one hand, we educate people with lots of telling (direct and overt instruction) and get learners who can pass paper and pencil tests but cannot apply their knowledge in the real world. On the other hand, we engage learners with less overt instruction and more "hands on" immersion in activities and find that they get lost, wandering down garden paths towards alluring but poor problem-solving strategies. The technologies connected to video games allow us to resolve this dilemma.

This report makes clear that many young people today—"digital natives"—are already prepared to learn in just the ways I have been discussing. Furthermore, many of them want their own workplaces to incorporate the challenges, rewards, and the styles of ongoing, non-stop learning and problem solving that the best video games represent.

In today's global, highly competitive world, driven by science and technology, rediscovering ourselves as learning machines, which is what humans are at their best, is essential for survival for our businesses and our world.

**- James Paul Gee**

*Mary Lou Fulton Presidential Chair in Literacy Studies  
Arizona State University*

There was a time when managing, leading and selling was a relatively straight forward task. People knew the key relationships, the rules of the game were clear and so the teaching of these skills could happen with business cases in a classroom.

This is no longer the case for two reasons. First, the job of leading, managing and selling is more multi-faceted, more complex, involving more choices and decisions - so classroom teaching rarely adequately demonstrates the real choices and complexity. Second, for a media-savvy generation soft-wired into technology - classroom teaching as the primary source of learning seems ridiculously antiquated.

Initiatives such as this put a stake in the ground and in the longer term will be seen as pioneer work in this crucial organizational competence.

**- Lynda Gratton**

*Professor of Management Practice  
Director, Lehman Brothers Centre for Women in Business  
London Business School*