

Games, I love them in training. We have used off the shelf games (non-electronic I should point out) in the past during training sessions to promote team work and collaboration and improve coaching skills. They always change the atmosphere in the room, generating energy, engagement and discussion. So I'm a fan. I can really see how games like second life can be used to create real life situations for trainees. For example I'd like to see it being used for health and safety inspection scenarios to allow employees explore potentially dangerous situations from the safety of their own PC or laptop. In addition I can see how it could be used for sales training, with sales reps competing against the opposition to retain business and increase sales. So I can see where it would work but how to get it to work is the next topic for discussion. From my own experience I joined second life as part of this module. I arrived in second life and suddenly I didn't want to be there. It took me time to figure out how to do things like walk and run, sit or chat and I was unsure about where I needed to go. My own slowness in getting used to second life was frustrating me. Today in class, we discussed the time it takes to orientate a learner to the new environment will take up precious learning time. But yet the learning gained could be so valuable, one of the statistics quoted in moving learning games forward was that retention jumps to 90% when a learner is immersed in the situation in a game.

Reflecting on my own situation I need to look at existing learners and how games can be introduced more into their learning. As mentioned we have used games already in training scenarios but the jump to second life could be a step too far too quickly. The majority of our learners would not have experienced gaming technology at all or perhaps only in recent times through their children using game consoles. There is a need to start small not only from a learner but also from a trainer's perspective to ensure successful integration of gaming technology into training. One way of starting small could be looking at what off the shelf games can be used. It was mentioned today that Angry Birds can be used to teach physics, a valuable exercise could be to explore what is currently available and how it could be used.

It would seem that games are in a difficult position, parents or in my case corporate management can tend to look on games as a waste of time giving the impression that valuable teaching and learning time is wasted playing games. So called educational games are not appealing to students as they tend to be created in such a way that requires students to answer a number of questions before they get to play. How do we please everyone? The moving learning games forward report suggests the secret is to create something fun that provides learning, easier said than done but the report does give some valuable information on what should be considered.

I've mentioned our existing learners but as I reflect about the future I realise I need to think about the learners we will have in the future who may have extensive experience with gaming technology from a young age. Will they embrace second life as a training tool or will they have other issues and like students using social media in education, will they feel that gaming is part of their relaxation time and not want to see it used as part of a training programme.

As I begin to read more about games and gamers it seems that writers are highlighting the beneficial effects of games on children. Carstens and Beck (2005) highlight how the gamer generation think and how gaming has positively affected the way they make decisions. Prensky too suggests that gaming can create positive habits. Perhaps through research like this, gaming will become more acceptable in academic and workplace learning.

Carstens, J. Beck, J. (2005). Getting Ready for the Gamer Generation *Tech Trends*, 49(3), 22-25.

Prensky, M. (2004). The Seven Games of Highly Effective People. How computer games help you succeed in school work and life. Retrieved from [http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky-The\\_Seven\\_Games-FINAL.pdf](http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky-The_Seven_Games-FINAL.pdf)