

“Edutainment”

An experiment in Management Education.

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The lights go down. The music swells. Tapping their way onstage are the Historical Re-enactor, the Zoo Docent, the Play Facilitator, and the Museum Director, who bears a strange resemblance to Fred Astaire. They break into song...

*Everything that you want to learn
we can help you to know.
We can make you laugh
we can make you think
It won't pain you, pain you to go.*

*The guns that blazed at Bull Run,
The mouse in Walt Disney's house,
Or the snake from an African lake
The world is a stage
The stage of a world of ed-u-taaaiiinnn-ment!?!? **

* With apologies to Howard Dietz, lyricist.

The idea that learning can be fun, and fun can promote learning, is transforming attractions that once saw themselves as primarily either education- or entertainment-oriented. It's even spawned a new word: edutainment.

The concept of edutainment is as old as the hills although the word was coined in the early 1990's. As it evident it is a combination of two words namely education and entertainment.

The goal of an edutainment product or experience is to provide some valuable knowledge to the consumer by keeping him or her engaged with entertaining material. People who argue in favor of edutainment suggest that when educational material is presented in a dry way, people tend to tune out, and they do not actually absorb the material or the lesson. For example, people are usually more interested by a brightly colored pamphlet than they are by a single sheet covered in densely written text.

I am making a humble attempt to study the concept with reference to management education. Even a passing glance at the management education structure today will enlighten you with these simple but true facts.

1. A management student learns about 48 subjects in two years at an average of 12 subjects per semester.
2. The first two semesters are common with the effect that a student is exposed to subjects, concepts, knowledge which are new to him .It is reasonable to assume that there is a initial confusion as to how to approach a particular subject or concept..
3. A student has on an average 2 lectures of 3 hours each. It's a challenge for student to be alert and interactive throughout the sessions.
4. A student has to give 48 presentations 48 assignments 48 surprise tests and forty eight written examinations of 60 marks each in four semesters.
5. Every subject is allotted 12 sessions of three hours each. It possesses a great challenge for the faculty to effectively deliver all relevant concepts of a particular subject assigned to him.
6. The average student is hoping to get placed and the onus is on both the student and faculty to increase the employability of the student. Simply put it is a two way process.

A management institute can be looked as a production process designed to produce ideological products. At the same time the success of any institute depends upon how quick it is in responding to the ever-changing, dynamic, complex changes in the corporate world.

In the customer focused and consumer oriented world that we live in it becomes imperative for us to understand the needs expectations, constraints of our consumers and stakeholders.

Generation “Y” as we call them are technologically advanced meaning they are quick and ready to embrace any technology that will reduce human effort or entertain them in some way.

For e.g. reliable studies have shown that the reading habits of the students have eroded to a great extent and the student of today on an average reads 5 pages a day. (This is besides what he has to do for preparing for his exams).But he used to watching media for hours at a time.

Reliable studies have also shown that an average student is more receptive to information and knowledge that he or she receives through media.

The first step towards edutainment in the context of management education would be to use Media and other allied instruments in a more creative way to communicate the concept in a more quick and entertaining way.

How about using You Tube along with Google?

How about two Professors explaining the same concept from different points of view pertaining to their respective specializations?

How about devising some games so as to impart the concept?.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. What we have to focus at is to view not only the curriculum but also the presenter i.e. the faculty as a product which has to present himself in an endearing and entertaining manner to make the sessions more effective.

The Constraints:

Academicians have traditionally looked down upon entertainment mediums as they used to consider them to be distractive. Despite the anonymity media's reach has been phenomenal. We cannot even fathom the results that can be achieved if the medium is used in an intelligent and creative manner to impart knowledge. But for that to happen the faculty must be willing to embrace it with open arms. It is important for us to understand that the content in today's media may be frivolous but the medium is not.

Another constraint is the insecurity that it may render the job of teaching redundant. Here I would like to look at today's corporate world where jobs are being redesigned and re-engineered by the minute and therefore the job descriptions keep on changing. The student of today will not be excited by what Abraham Maslow had to say about self actualization. He is more keen in understanding how he can apply this knowledge to create an edge in the outside world. Edutainment will create interest and clarity about concepts in the students mind. The teacher's job is now redesigned to impart practical aspects of those concepts. In short edutainment will convert raw data into information and then into knowledge. It is up to the faculty to convert the knowledge into skill and then into wisdom.

Some educators have suggested that edutainment may cross a line at times. When material is more amusing than it is educational, students can lose out. The focus on providing entertainment foremost is also viewed as problematical in some communities, with critics suggesting that people may not be able to focus on less dynamic presentations of material because they have been deluged in edutainment. In other words, some critics think that edutainment may create its own market by training people to look for amusement before they seek out knowledge.

Conclusion:

The winds of media & technology cannot be stopped. It would be prudent for us to embrace it and use it to our advantage keeping in mind that the primary goal is to impart education. There cannot be delivery without content. Media is just a tool albeit a powerful one.

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