

Learning Games and Simulations: Make Adult Learning Fun (May 06)

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For most of you, learning was chiefly considered fun during your stint in grade school when learning games were commonplace. However, once you hit junior high and then high school, learning seemed to be required and was not necessarily fun anymore. Games were no longer commonplace, long lectures, extensive reading assignments and homework became the routine.

No matter what your age, games are fun and naturally give people enjoyment and pleasure. Whether it's a board game, computer game, video game or basketball game, most involve people, inspire interaction, offer challenges, stir a competitive spirit and of course, provide satisfaction. Simply put, games engage people.

That's why corporate learning organizations worldwide increasingly develop and implement learning games and simulations for their employees. Learning games and simulations, much like the ones that were played during grade school, can improve learner engagement, learner participation and comprehension, retention and more. Let's look at some of the top providers of learning games and simulations worldwide.

BrandGames is a developer of custom, high-end multimedia learning games and simulations. The company specializes in translating an organization's values, core competencies, ethics, day-to-day business processes and curricula into games and/or simulations to develop highly effective learning and development sessions. These sessions virtually put employees in real-business scenarios to make decisions and see their results or the consequences of their choices immediately. BrandGames' services can be applied for leadership development, employee branding, recruiting and training. BrandGames' commercial videogame division has developed training games and simulations on PS2, Xbox and CD-ROM. To learn more about BrandGames' services, see www.brandgames.com.

BTS is a worldwide developer of customized business simulations that emphasize growth and profitability. BTS can develop and deliver computer-based simulations in workshops, manual-board simulations, e-based simulations delivered through the Web or on CD-ROM. Computer-based simulations are custom designed to replicate a client's actual business processes and assist in the decision-making process. During these two- to four-day simulations, participants have a laptop to perform budgeting and "what-if" analyses and scenarios. Alternatively, manual-board simulations are non-computerized and also are designed to replicate the client's business process. These four- to eight-hour simulations are designed for people with limited business and finance knowledge. E-learning simulations are primarily developed for individuals but can be used for groups. These simulations are more complex and advanced than manual-board simulations and give participants the freedom to do the training when and where they choose. For more information, see www.bts.com.

Caspian Learning is a training and education software company that combines the best practices of learning and memory research with interactive 3-D computer gaming technologies. Caspian game applications are designed to improve learner engagement and performance, as well as deliver precise performance measurements. By using Qcognition, a four-stage suite of reusable templates and processes, Caspian can take any subject matter and produce learning-based games rapidly and cost effectively. Qcognition's four stages include knowledge mapping, interactive tasks, revision system analyses and performance-management data collection. Participants using Caspian learning games interact with information and objects in a 3-D environment similar to those seen on game consoles. To learn more about Caspian, visit www.caspianlearning.co.uk.

Games2train is a provider of game-based learning products and services. The company offers both customized and ready-made business-learning solutions in the form of online single-player games, online multi-player games, mobile games for cell phones and hand-held devices, meeting and classroom enhancement games, and video games. The range of Games2train's game interfaces vary from solitaire to

board games, arcade-style games to TV-quiz games and fast-moving 3-D video games. The Challenge is a ready-made game that uses a quiz-show interface for one or two players. Move-It is another game that uses a board-game platform. It takes learners around their workday while completing the necessary tasks to make it home. To learn more about Games2train's products and services, visit www.games2train.com.

LearningWare Inc. is a provider of software templates designed to make training more engaging, effective and fun. LearningWare's Gameshow Pro is a software tool to create and play Hollywood-style game shows for any training space. Gameshow Pro allows trainers, team leaders and instructional designers to introduce content, preview material and review content while learners engage in a collaborative learning experience. AllPlay is LearningWare's classroom-assessment game. AllPlay uses a game-show template to deliver content quickly. This game includes music, sound effects and graphics, information screens for each question and immediate feedback. In addition, with AllPlay trainers can add pictures, sounds and videos to enrich and customize learning sessions, track participation and analyze participant performance. For more information about LearningWare's products and services, see www.learningware.com/pages/prodServices.

Management Simulations Inc. is a developer of business simulations for executive education or classroom instruction. With sophisticated and dynamic programs available, the company's simulations are great for learning business fundamentals. Management Simulation's Capstone Business Simulation and Foundation Business Simulation teach business strategies and tactics, accounting, marketing, finance, HR, teamwork, leadership and more in a hands-on learning environment. Foundation is ideal for associates, new hires, supervisors and functional managers. Capstone is ideal for managers, experienced business professionals, senior management and executive teams. The company also offers programs based on these two simulations: Finance for Decision Makers, Business Acumen for Executives and The Leadership Strategy Course. All simulations and programs are available in a face-to-face seminar, online tutorial or through a combination of the two. For more information, see www.capsim.com.

PIXELearning is a developer of training and education computer games and simulations. The company's technology platforms are designed to enable its workforce to develop games and simulations quickly and cost effectively. PIXELearning offers both custom-built or ready-made learning-game and simulation platforms. LearningBeans is a platform that enables non-technical learning professionals to create game-based learning initiatives. Equipped with a wizard-driven design methodology, users need no prior programming or multimedia development skills. The Business Game is a games-based learning product that puts participants into realistic business scenarios where they can develop and market a new product. The Export Game is a CD- and Web-based product that uses a games-based approach for effective and immediate understanding of the main issues that relate to export trade and export strategy-action planning. With The Export Game, participants don't just learn about exporting, they actually practice making strategic and operational business decisions. To learn more, see www.pixelearning.com.

SKA Learning is a worldwide developer of action-learning interventions. The company's TangoNet solution is an electronic, reality-based, customizable business simulation. TangoNet couples technology with learning design to simulate real-life issues facing employees. With TangoNet, participants develop a business plan, implement key strategic initiatives and test their ability to execute in a highly competitive simulation. It is appropriate for corporate universities in conjunction with learning modules on customer-relationship management, project management, human-resources management, knowledge management, measuring and reporting intangible intellectual capital, and more. TangoNet is also ideal for new-hire orientations. This product is available in English, Chinese and German. To learn more, visit www.tangonow.net.