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"Pay-to-play" Educational Software Games?

By Robert Cummings

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Science Academy Software has developed a new business model or paradigm for Education. It is a web-based "pay to play" educational game site named ScienceAcademy.TV for high-bandwidth clients. This article discusses the issues and rationale behind Science Academy Software's educational game portal ScienceAcademy.TV -- home to a new online educational game called "BasketMath V3.

Why "Pay-to-Play" educational games online?

Users get to have a learning experience in the form of a game.
It's appropriate for audiences for instruction, testing, drill and practice.
Web channel distribution allows learning to occur any time any place.
The entertainment value of the software contributes to pleasing user experience.
It's low cost alternative to traditional classroom instruction and educational software distribution.
Everyone benefits from subscribing (learning).

Traditional Educational Software Delivery Issues

A school teacher buying educational software, in the traditional sense, buys copies, lab packs or site licenses. They face a barrage of complex issues related to acquisition and use. Issues like:

1. Is the software appropriate? This requires evaluation in the form of asking: What is the instructional component? Does the software provide testing and assessment capabilities, is there a measurement of achievement? Are results immediate (we all know kids can't wait)? From a teacher's perspective, this means having students practice those areas of weakness to achieve mastery.

2. Can I use it in my class? Issues: will it serve my students? Is it safe? Are there school adoption procedures or bureaucratic red-tape to the software acquisition? What political issues will I have to deal with, if any?

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3. Utilization – how much of this software really gets used by students? Will the software get reused after "newness" wears off? Students generally "burnout" or frequently use the game in the first 24 hours; interest thereafter declines.

4. Need for portability, Can I use it on all my PCs? Web enabled machines make learning possible anytime – at school, in after-school programs, or at home (learning occurs anytime any where).

5 Can instructional material be shared with diverse age groups or learning disabilities (people learn differently)?

6. Can instructional material provide support individualized attention (people learn at different rates)? It is great when you have a teacher, parent or tutor, but what if you don't? Educational software is the next best alternative.

7. Value is based on educational and entertainment elements to the software. Entertainment value is very important to the delivery of educational software: Ideally, the content should engage the user -- a characteristic of most video games. Most children today have a video game orientation.

8. The role of obsolescence: Books and printed materials wear, tear, and go out of date. Software on disk or CDROM also go out of date or may not run on newer machines. Upgrades also contribute to the logistical nightmare to school computers management and support. Not so with a Web application or services that can provide updates in a timely manner or "on-the-fly".

9. Warehousing—the need to track and inventory software, license requirements, serial numbers, the need to enforce copy protection measures and security.

10. Cost? Does fit in my budget? Web-based educational games offer relatively small entry, they are more cost effective when compared to the cost traditional educational software's direct and indirect costs associated with purchase, storage and inventory.

11. Freedom! – Can the software be used by students so as to free me to do other things (e.g. help other students, fill reports, administrative tasks)?

It is not Cheap

Developing web-based educational solutions costs time, money, and purpose. The money, earned from subscriptions, pays for the talent of artists, programmers, teachers, technical and support staff, and the costs associated with housing, hosting, marketing, distribution, security and other web services.

The people involved in delivering web-based educational games make their livelihood by communicating their craft in the only way they know how. They are driven by their desire to produce a product or service and, in a sense, they define themselves by the process and what they produce.

As with video games, kids usually "burnout" or play games most during the first 24 hours. This is why

"Pay-to-play" Educational Software Games?

Science Academy Software has adopted one day subscriptions. The amount of "PlayTime" left is displayed in the login page. This places the impetus on the user, the player or student, to use the software while "the getting is good".

In this "entropy economy" old business models are evolving. An e-commerce implementation use allows subscribers instant access. Payment processing is immediate so users can immediately play the educational game.

Subscribers of pay-to-play Web-based educational games are able to appreciate the educational and entertainment value. They already have DSL, cable, or on a network and may know someone, their children or themselves, who could benefit from playing.

Developers of these educational games are simply using tools that are available for web-based delivery (e.g. Flash, Java, Video, etc.). It also helps if you can have someone handle your e-commerce (e.g. PayPal). Adoption of these technologies make interactive entertainment and education an emerging web-growth industry segment.

Perhaps your audience would be interested in knowing about this new paradigm?

Robert Cummings, President
Science Academy Software
<http://www.scienceacademy.com>
making your Learning Experience FUN!!!

President of Science Academy Software.

Education Software for Kids

By Ratliff J

Education Software for Kids by Ratliff J

We all know our kids love to play video games on the computer. We have also learned that it is hard to stop them from doing something they enjoy. Why not let them play games, but give them education but fun games to play?

Your children can learn and play at the same time. We seem to do this when they are babies and toddlers, then we get out of the habit and only buy them fun stuff that does nothing for the brain. They are tons of educational games available. One of my favorite websites,

sell them

starting at \$4.99. So, if you have kids that enjoy video games, buy them a few educational games and let them learn while having fun.

J. Ratliff is an avid web writer and currently writes articles for dozens of websites.



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