

Digital Immigrants vs Digital Natives

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Abstract:

Christie Vilsack (wife of Governor Tom Vilsack) gave a speech to the First Friday Breakfast Club of Des Moines, Iowa on June 2, 2006. She was speaking with regard to how technology has evolved our ability to learn and to multitask. She talked about how parenting and technology need to come together. Where has our society gone? Today, we have a five-word name for every condition and even for some that do not exist. We can network with people around the globe. We have learned to regress reality, ideas, and concepts (audio or visual) into data models.

Today, I had the privilege of hearing Christie Vilsack (First Lady of Iowa or wife of Governor Tom Vilsack). She was speaking with regard to how technology has evolved our ability to learn and to multitask. She talked about how parenting and technology need to come together. There are parents that, for whatever reason, are so scared of the Internet that they ban it from their kids, which puts the child at a disadvantage in this increasingly technology world. There are those that allow the child to roam without consideration, which puts the child at risk to predatory tasks.

She used the terms above to describe how people who did not grow up with technology have different abilities to those who have. I think she may be on to something more profound than simply "older generations do not use technology as much as younger ones". She gave an example. While she is reading the local newspaper, her son has flew through 5 publications. (All thanks to the Internet).

Our brains are becoming more and more plugged into the digital world. This has allowed us to become more multi-tasking and more multi-dimensional in ways we would have never imagined in our grandparent's generation. Today, I can have a cell phone/(Blackberry if you are so inclined) that has Internet access, iPod for music, and PDAs or laptops for a virtual workspace where ever I go.

I grew up learning on Apple ][ systems (with BASIC and LOGO) and Atari 2600. Today's world moves exponentially faster and contains virtual realities that mimic Star Trek ideas and dreams of Roddenberry. I recall the days of command line bbs that look nothing like MySpace but conducted much of the same idea. As well, I program applications for the web and such. The technology sophistication has dramatically increased since the 1990s where we see now, in some case, software demands are outpacing hardware capabilities.

### **It is called speed!**

We, as humans, are evolving with it. Our attention span seems to have grown shorter and our need for stimulus has increased. The technological marvel of Star Wars Episode III does not have the same impact as the technological marvel of the original Star Wars in 1977. Why? In 2006, it is not as groundbreaking as it was since we see it all of the time now, and thus, the marvel does not seem so marvel to many. How many Xbox and Playstation games already do similar techniques as SW3? Perhaps it is because in those virtual worlds, we are the characters instead of just watching them on the big screen.

Is it because our attention span has reduced? Web marketing / developers know that you have only a few seconds to grab a persons attention for a web site before we move on to something else. (How many times have you actually read a EULA before clicking the button I agree or I accept?) We are more apt to give me the news headlines across the bottom of the TV screen rather than read the whole article. If it does not fit on that line, it may not be read. Spammers and virus writers know this too. Put that catchy line in the subject. I get bundles of email everyday, but less than 20% of it is non-spam. The spam is, of course, loaded with useless information or sometimes with destructive code.

### **Of plagiarism...**

Lets look at education for a moment. Academics have always had to deal with plagiarism and credibility of information. Today, we have the same issues; we just have more opportunities to do it (and we can do it quicker). A common site used as a "reference" is Wikipedia.org, which is a nice source of data, but its credibility is questioned since anyone can submit information regardless of their knowledge of the situation. This has a potential for heavy bias, and if you read some material there, it is not difficult to find.

I just read an article in the Wall Street Journal Online, "Watching the Pollsters", about credible statistics. With the many sources of available information, we have to be conscious of where we are getting information and how we are getting it. I can post and publish my own work as can anyone with an Internet connection. Reputable sources of information will need to reveal where they base their work. It is nice to be able to email the author of a book that you are studying when you have a question about its context.

### **Direction?**

Where has our society gone? Today, we have a five-word name for every condition and even for some that do not exist. We can network with people around the globe. We can operate a business, research an idea, play games, and more from our desk, bedroom, coffee house, or wherever we are (all at break-neck speeds from the click of a button). The dazzling speeds allow us to be capable of any or all of it simultaneously. We have the capacity to be more efficient and more productive with our time.

We also have the ability to lose focus and we have easier access to bad information. The amount of information and the speed of its delivery smacks of growing tendency toward Orwell's 1984. We cannot go without statistics. 23% disapprove of this and 48% approve and the rest are unsure. There is an occurrence of something every bunch of minutes. Sample population distribution of something somewhere is doing something that is being reported and recorded to be used for reference later.

We have learned to regress reality, ideas, and concepts (audio or visual) into data models.

It is amazing that we have become accustomed to automatically filtering information in our heads. There are many questions that are inferred here that should be examined further. We

must always keep in mind that sometimes the question is the answer. The primary caution is that we must always question.

References:

Vilsack, Christie. (June 2, 2006) Lecture before First Friday Breakfast Club.

Myspace.com. (2006)