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CONVERSATION STARTER

The Gamer Disposition

Posted by John Seely Brown and Douglas Thomas on February 14, 2008 10:09 AM

Today's multiplayer online games are large, complex, constantly evolving social systems. Their perpetual newness is what makes them enticing to players. Each generation of games begets a new generation of participants who develop what we call the gamer disposition. It's exactly the disposition you should want in your workforce.



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The gamer disposition has five key attributes. More than attitudes or beliefs, these attributes are character traits that players bring into game worlds and that those worlds reinforce. We believe that gamers who embody this disposition are better able than their nongamer counterparts to thrive in the twenty-first-century workplace. Why?

They are bottom-line oriented.

Today's online games have embedded systems of measurement or assessment. Gamers like to be evaluated, even compared with one another, through systems of points, rankings, titles, and external measures. Their goal is not to be rewarded but to improve. Game worlds are meritocracies where assessment is symmetrical (leaders are assessed just as players are), and after-action reviews are meaningful only as ways of enhancing individual and group performance.

They understand the power of diversity.

Diversity is essential in the world of the online game. One person can't do it all; each player is by definition incomplete. The key to achievement is teamwork, and the strongest teams are a rich mix of diverse talents and abilities. The criterion for advancement is not "How good am I?"; it's "How much have I helped the group?" Entire categories of game characters (such as healers) have little or no advantage in individual play, but they are indispensable members of every team.

They thrive on change.

Nothing is constant in a game; it changes in myriad ways, mainly through the actions of the participants themselves. As players, groups, and guilds progress through game content, they literally transform the world they inhabit. Part of the gamer disposition is grounded in an expectation of flux. Gamers do not simply manage change; they create it, thrive on it, seek it out.

They see learning as fun.

For most players, the fun of the game lies in learning how to overcome obstacles. The game world provides all the tools to do this. For

gamers, play amounts to assembling and combining tools and resources that will help them learn. The reward is converting new knowledge into action and recognizing that current successes are resources for solving future problems.

They marinate on the “edge.”

Finally, gamers often explore radical alternatives and innovative strategies for completing tasks, quests, and challenges. Even when common solutions are known, the gamer disposition demands a better way, a more original response to the problem. Players often reconstruct their characters in outrageous ways simply to try something new. Part of the gamer disposition, then, is a desire to seek and explore the edges in order to discover some new insight or useful information that deepens one's understanding of the game.

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Together, these five attributes make for employees who are flexible, resourceful, improvisational, eager for a quest, believers in meritocracy, and foes of bureaucracy. If your organization is receptive to these traits (and it should be), look for gamers and the disposition they will bring you.

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People tend to demean gamers in general; however gamers often tend to be the best team players. The one thing about gamers though is that they tend to not do well in social interactions due to some feelings of inadequacy. Due to this they are often looked down on and passed over for more persuasive less qualified people.

- Posted by LL

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