

The year of collaborative learning

By [GetSmarter](#)

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By the year 2020, more than a third of the desired core skill sets of most occupations will be made up of skills that aren't yet considered vital to the job today. The current Fourth Industrial Revolution is the most disruptive of its kind to date. Previous industrial revolutions have taken almost decades to build up the kind of training systems and markets we are seeing today to grow skill sets on such a large scale.



In the year 2017, 73% of CEOs declared 'the skills gap' as a major concern. This can also be described as the large gaping hole between a business's current capabilities and set of skills, compared to the skills and talent needed to remain relevant and competitive.

With the amount of pressure placed on professionals to frequently update themselves to remain relevant, the online education sphere is growing rapidly. Just this year, the 2017 Distance Education Enrolment Report revealed over six million students completed at least one distance education course.

Build up your skills in half the time

Online short courses allow busy working professionals to pick up new, industry-relevant skills without having to leave their job or put in less hours at work.

Such working professionals have noticed this gap both professionally and personally. Michele Galloway, a past student of online education company [GetSmarter](#), challenged generational identities when she took an online course in graphic design once discovering the education she received years before needed to be updated. In her profession, where it took just a few years to move from Magic Markers to Macs, Michele realised her 35 years' experience in the industry, albeit impressive, was not going to be enough to keep herself above the rest in this competitive environment.

"I've always had a positive attitude towards continuous learning. After starting my own business, I saw the quiet November and December months as the perfect opportunity to upskill and learn new things. Business people spoke about technical terms I didn't understand, and that just made me want to learn more. I had work experience from working in advertising

years ago, but needed technical training,” she says.



Specialised knowledge in our economy is increasingly rare and highly rewarded, with the world shifting toward favouring those who seek professional development and continuing education in a number of areas. Michele chose to build up her skills, which in turn made her more specialised within her industry. The journey of lifelong learning exposes professionals to the latest trends and knowledge in their field of interest, offering the opportunity to remain relevant in a working world that is changing faster than ever.

The modern economy will be further characterised by swift and frequent technological innovation, implementation and change, making it almost impossible to rely solely on one qualification. But often, when one imagines online learning, they envisage themselves sitting and staring at a computer screen – frustrated, alone and completely in the dark.

The solution? Collaborative learning.

What is collaborative learning?

Online education that focuses on collaborative learning does so through the creation of a digital hub for continual discussion and reflective interaction. Through this platform, you no longer have to try and fit everyone's opinions into the minimal time you have to come together in face-to-face meetings. By sending each other material online, everyone is free to reflect on what has been said in their own time and gets to participate, whether that is with fellow students, or the professors and industry experts themselves. Collaborative learning enhances the educational experience and fills the gap where face-to-face interaction might have been.

What are the outcomes of collaborative learning?

- Course material is easier to grasp and understand. It's likely you'll probably remember what "Shannon" said on the topic more than what was written in the notes.
- You have the opportunity to test your understanding of the material with your classmates and get exposed to their understandings of the material.
- Questions form a huge part of learning. You can benefit from the inquisitiveness of others.
- Networking and supporting opportunities arise, making giving up or suffering alone a lot harder.
- Communicating in forum posts improves your online communication skills. This skill is transferable to any work environment.

Once the effectiveness of an online environment is established, students can focus then on the actual education part to continually gather new and informed skills and rapidly growth hack their careers.

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