Foreword

First and foremost, I am a teacher. Teaching is where I found my voice. I have dedicated myself to traveling around the world to teach timeless, universal principles and inspire people to fulfill their potential and their unique purpose and mission in life. From boardrooms and government chambers to classrooms, family rooms, and community halls, I have met people from all walks of life, from all four corners of the world. In each of these special engagements, I have been humbled by the transformational power of principle-based learning.

The pursuit of knowledge is an exciting process, and the speed and demand for learning is ever increasing, especially in our fast-changing world. Daily, we all search for answers to questions and problems as we face new challenges. With technological advances, a wealth of information is now available that can quench this thirst for knowledge and connect people for information sharing. Because of this technological network, there is vast and growing potential for learning to flow to all humankind. It is our opportunity and responsibility to help this knowledge flow reach learners so they can achieve their potential.

I am amazed at the different types of technology I am able to use to teach and instruct people around the world. Online delivery of lessons and content is allowing me to teach people I would never reach otherwise. This is very exciting. As a result of this real-time, on-demand learning, people have the ability to acquire insights quicker and immediately apply their learnings to their specific problems or opportunities.

There will always be a need for in-person interaction. Yet, for learning to occur, it does not need to happen solely in a classroom made of bricks and mortar. Learning is happening in your organization right now. People are finding sources of knowledge all around them on the Internet, in books, on a conference call, and in virtual classrooms. Although I will always enjoy physically shaking the hands of people and seeing the excitement in their eyes after they have obtained new knowledge, I believe we have reached a point in our lives where the act of learning has changed, and we need to accommodate people's needs.

This book will give you the principles and mind-set to understand how learning is changing and exploding. It will explain the way learners acquire information and how you can provide it to them through the use of a new virtual-classroom rule-set.

I encourage you to think through these concepts and use them to improve the reach and quality of your learning and teaching. I am thrilled to have this body of work and excited to be taking part in new learning technologies to make a greater contribution in the world.

Stephen R. Covey

Dr. Stephen R. Covey

Introduction

When we started researching the feasibility of moving face-to-face training to virtual classrooms, we attended numerous online events and spoke to many experts. We then set out applying the best of what we heard and read and omitted the ineffective practices we experienced firsthand. Since then, we have actively been testing, modifying, retesting, and fine-tuning our virtual-classroom programs while training instructors and launching virtual-classroom initiatives worldwide.

The purpose of this book is to share the principles and practices we've discovered with everyone who has been tasked with moving traditional training to virtual classrooms.

Virtual classroom [vur-choo-uhl klas-room] -noun

A virtual classroom is a learning environment created in the virtual space. The objectives of virtual classrooms are to improve access to advanced educational experiences by allowing students and instructors to participate in remote learning communities using personal computers, and to improve the quality and effectiveness of education by using the computer to support a collaborative learning process. The explosion of the knowledge age has changed the context of what is learned and how it is learned--the concept of virtual classrooms is a manifestation of this knowledge revolution.[1]

Do we have all the answers, anecdotes, and instructions you will need? Probably not. But the rules, tools, and practical tips we share in this book will hopefully form a sound foundation from which to start or improve your own virtual-classroom initiative.

The first—and most important—learning principle we wish to share can be summarized in just three words: "Keep it short." Over the past decade, we have all been conditioned to learn in short, bite-size chunks, thanks to the billions of learning fragments available to us at the touch of a screen and with the click of a mouse. This is the new learning reality—the way most people want to learn, like to learn, and choose to learn.

You have probably noticed by now that we have followed our own advice. This book is fairly short. This was intentional. Think about how many times you have bought a business book, only to read the first couple of chapters and then put it away. We have been conditioned to read fast, to skim, and to find relevant nuggets.

Another valuable principle we have learned is to provide opportunities for learners to apply what they have just read. We have done this by providing a Learning Explosion Action Plan at the end of each chapter.

We recognize that all of us are at different stages of virtual-classroom development. And we all have varying needs and requirements. It is our hope and mission to provide you with new insight to help you succeed in this exciting and ever-changing modality of training.

From the blackboard to the Web;
from the desk to the virtual classroom;
from prescriptive instruction to self-directed;
from traditional to informal:
this is the new learning reality —
the way people want to learn, like to learn,
and choose to learn.

Understanding this ever-changing
learning dynamic will require a new mind-set
and a new rule-set.

The
New
Mind-Set

The Learning Explosion
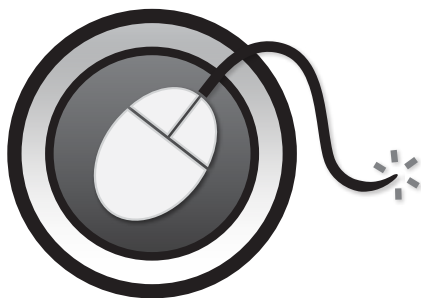
TWITTER SUMMARY ≤ 140 CHARACTERS

A creative explosion is taking place. For the first time in history, pieces of knowledge and information are accessible to nearly everyone.

Right now, a teenager in Kobe, Japan, is learning a new skill on his mobile phone. A small-business owner in Sydney, Australia, is asking his professional network of online associates which Learning Management System (LMS) he should buy. A mother in Johannesberg, South Africa, is searching a medical website for how to treat her feverish child. A woman in Copenhagen, Denmark, is sharing information with others around the world through her blog, website, or wiki about a topic she is studying. Instantly, this piece of information—this learning fragment she has created—will generate interest in an online community. It will facilitate discussion. It will fuel new ideas, innovation, and learning. In this way, one learning fragment shared online will continue to explode.

We call this extraordinary event the Learning Explosion™.

<u>The Learning Explosion</u> [the lur-ning ik-sploh-zhuhn] -noun

The perpetual explosion of knowledge into countless learning fragments. Fueled by ongoing technological advances, this explosion is resulting in the worldwide distribution of new ideas, innovation, and education.

THE LEARNING EXPLOSION

Technological advances are taking the traditional learning model and breaking it into billions and billions of pieces of information that we now call learning fragments. In fact, all of us have probably discovered new learning fragments today. They are being created and discovered every minute of every hour. Learning is everywhere and accessible to nearly everyone. This is the new learning mind-set. This is how learning takes place today.

In your travels, you've probably witnessed the effects of the explosion firsthand. For instance, in 2009, while in the villages outside New Delhi, we saw some of the poorest people in the world accessing information on mobile phones. We've seen this same phenomenon in other parts of Asia, Central America, and Africa. The paradox is startling.

With tools like mobile phones and the Internet, information and knowledge is easily accessible to all classes of people worldwide. The Learning Explosion has no boundaries. This omnipresence of learning fragments al-

lows for limitless opportunities to learn, grow, and increase your personal knowledge.

The Catalysts That Sparked the Learning Explosion

But how did this Learning Explosion occur? It didn't happen overnight. In fact the catalysts have been evolving over half a millennium. A brief introduction to the catalysts and how they have changed the way we learn is beneficial as you begin to understand how to take your corporate learning online.

The Learning Explosion Catalysts
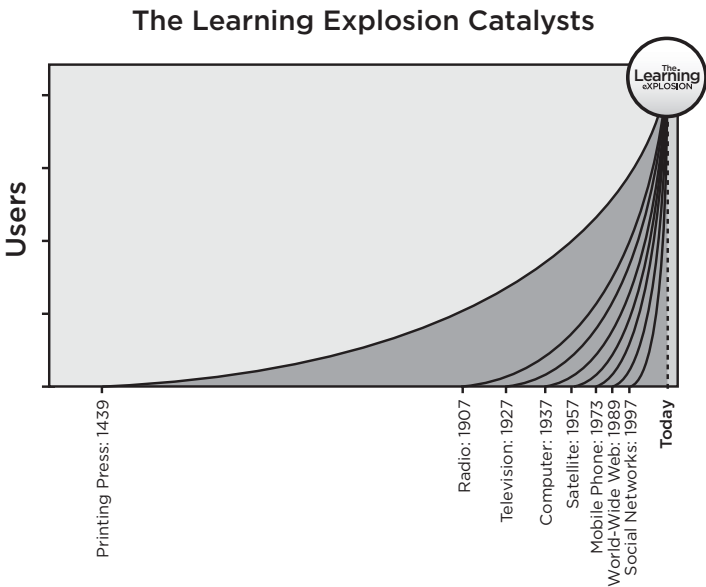
Catalyst 1, Year: 1439. While there may be some valid arguments for several earlier catalysts, we suggest the Learning Explosion can be traced back to a small German town when Johannes Gutenberg fired up the first printing press.

This first stage of learning evolution had the most profound impact of any of the stages, so much so that Gutenberg is considered the father of mass media. Mark Twain said this of Gutenberg: "What the world is to-day, good and bad, it owes to Gutenberg. Everything can be traced to this source, but we are bound to bring him homage...for the bad that his colossal invention has brought about is overshadowed a thousand times by the good with which mankind has been favored."

Catalyst 2, Year: 1907. Guglielmo Marconi successfully learned how to transmit and commercialize radio waves over extremely long distances.

Catalyst 3, Year: 1927. Philo T. Farnsworth developed the first working television system.

Catalyst 4, Year: 1937. The first computer was invented by George Stibitz at Bell Labs.

Catalyst 5, Year: 1957. The Soviet Union launched the first satellite, Sputnik, into orbit.

Catalyst 6, Year: 1973. The original cellular "brick phone" was invented by Martin Cooper at Motorola.

Catalyst 7, Year: 1989. Tim Berners-Lee established to-day's framework for the Internet—the World-Wide Web.

Catalyst 8, Year: 1997. The first social networking site, sixdegrees.com, is founded by Andrew Weinreich.

This list of catalysts will continue to grow over time. Although we don't know for sure what will occur next, we are assured that our quest for innovation will drive us further than we could every imagine.

> ### Learning Fragment
>
> **WIKIPEDIA.COM**
> Search Wikipedia's open-source encyclopedia for a history of each of the eight catalysts, written collaboratively by volunteer contributors and online users. Most of the information shared also cites the source of that learning fragment, whether it be from a study, book, or other reference.

The Explosion Is Growing

The abundance of research overwhelmingly supports the Learning Explosion's influence in the move to the virtual classroom and other online-learning platforms. Consider, for a moment, the number of people with access to the Internet. Based on ITU data, in 2010, the number of Internet users will surpass the 2 billion mark, of which 1.2 billion will be in developing countries. Usage has actually doubled between 2005 and 2010.[2] Plus, worldwide Wi-Fi coverage has grown over 155 percent since 2006.[3]

As younger generations enter the workforce, we will see a widespread shift in the way workers want to learn. In a 2010 report, the U.S. Department of Education estimated that more than one million students from kindergarten to Grade 12 were enrolled in online courses in 2007. The study also found that students in an online-learning format actually tended to outperform students learning in a classroom environment, earned higher grades, and displayed an overall greater understanding of the course materials.[4]

In just a few years, these students will be filling the offices of your organization. Are you ready for them? If

not, be proactive and find out how you can be prepared.

Corporate America is also seeing a big jump in the use of virtual classrooms. For example, their usage increased from 45 percent in 2008 to 59 percent in 2009.[5]

The Learning Explosion is showing no signs of slowing down. In fact we see just the opposite—it will continue to speed up and grow exponentially. New statistics, research, and reports continue to support this. To get an idea of how the Learning Explosion has impacted you, take a moment to complete the technological self-assessment on pages 11 and 12.

Learning Fragments

LIST OF RESEARCH SOURCES

Here are just some of the many learning-fragment sources to which we have turned to learn about research and trends associated with the Learning Explosion and virtual classrooms, specifically.

- Pew Institute[6]—Publications on Internet and Technology
- ASTD[7]—Annual State of the Industry Report
- The eLearning Guild[8]—Annual Reports and White Papers
- Bersin & Associates—Annual Corporate Learning Factbook
- International Telecommunications Union (ITU)—White Paper, "The World in 2010: ICT Facts & Figures"
- Sloan Consortium[9]—Annual Online Learning Surveys
- Blackboard—Learning in the 21st Century Annual Report
- The National Broadband Plan[10]—Broadband Usage in the U.S. Report
- USDLA[11]—Education Research Reports
- The World Data Bank[12]—Data and Indicators on Almost Everything

Learning Explosion Action Plan

TECHNOLOGICAL SELF-ASSESSMENT

Place a check mark next to all the statements that apply to you. Then add up all the check marks and refer to the scoring key to find how you score on the Learning Explosion scale.

- ○ You have taken a picture of something interesting or funny just so that you can share it with your Facebook friends.
- ○ You have used your mobile phone to find the answer to a tough question.
- ○ You have used Skype to talk to someone in another country.
- ○ You reach for your phone whenever you hear a chime.
- ○ You have had a conversation with one person while texting another.
- ○ You claim Microsoft® Outlook® as your productivity tool.
- ○ You have not used a paper map in at least three years.
- ○ You have chosen a place to eat based on a stranger's recommendation found on an application on your mobile phone.
- ○ You have felt the urge to criticize or praise a business through an application on your mobile phone.
- ○ You pay your bills online.
- ○ You feel withdrawal symptoms if you leave your phone at home.
- ○ You own the domain for a personal URL.
- ○ You "Google" to find the answer to everything.
- ○ You have used YouTube to learn something new.
- ○ You have anxiously waited for a status update on a social network site from someone whom you have never met—like a celebrity on Twitter.
- ○ You own an iPad, a Kindle, or other type of tablet.

Learning Explosion Action Plan

TECHNOLOGICAL SELF-ASSESSMENT (CONT.)

◯   You have started a group discussion on LinkedIn.

◯   You frequently read someone else's blog.

◯   You have stood in line for at least two hours to purchase a new "gadget."

◯   You have contributed to a wiki of one kind or another.

☐   **Number of Check Marks**

SCORING KEY

How many statements did you check?

0–3   You must be living in a cave or studying tribes in the jungles of the Amazon.

4–9   Not bad, but you still have a long way to go.

10–15   You are starting to evolve quite nicely.

16–20   It looks like you have fully embraced the Learning Explosion. Kaboom!