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Money Matters **RSS**

## Start-ups add a dash of 3D fun to classrooms and workplaces

Learning management systems are increasingly using interactive content to attract the tech-savvy student

Shraddha Nair

Mumbai: Education through use of immersive technology such as gaming and Second Life (the 3D virtual world) is taking centre stage for start-ups in India that are seeking to change the way lessons are taught in classrooms.



Targeted platform: Indusgeeks' Siddharth Banerjee. The company's product, Metamersive, delivers a 3D experience on low-end computers. Ashesh Shah/Mint

Siddharth Banerjee, founder and CEO, Indusgeeks, says the gaming market worldwide is estimated to be worth \$9 billion (Rs42,120 crore) by 2011. The existing e-learning market is already estimated to be worth an annual \$52.6 billion, according to industry estimates, he says. Current figures for the Indian market were not immediately available.

Indusgeeks' product Metamersive is a multi-user platform comprising 3D classrooms, games and simulators. "We are looking to target MNCs (multinational corporations), educational institutions, and we have a separate platform coming up for SMEs (small and medium enterprises)," says Banerjee.

Metamersive delivers a 3D experience on low-end computers at low bandwidth. This is important for the education and enterprise training market, because typically, schools and offices do not have the latest high-end hardware.

Thirteen-year-old Angad Singh, who studies at Delhi Public School, Noida, loves basketball and gaming, and recently discovered that geometry and chemistry can be fun. Singh pilot-tested some games in an initiative undertaken by **Educomp Solutions Ltd**, an education solutions provider. "There was a rocket going into space which had to land on a planet and we had to calculate the area, distance, diameter and radius," he explains.

Children of the present generation adjust faster to technology, says Bindu Rana, director of research and development at Educomp. The company has tied up with gaming company **LakshyaDigital Pvt. Ltd** to develop education content through games for schools that Educomp caters to. Schools with an international curriculum already apply this technology.

Jetu Lalvani, director at **Kaizen Management Advisors Pvt. Ltd**, an education-focused fund, says, "My son goes on to Mathletics, which has live games of maths to solve division and multiplication problems, and competes with children across the world."

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Imagine a computer game that teaches the Ramayan and Mahabharat, or a field trip to the South American jungles sitting in a classroom, or a B-school student making a virtual business presentation on Second Life.

These are some examples of the way start-ups such as **GoLive Gaming Solutions Pvt. Ltd, Indusgeeks Solutions Pvt. Ltd** and **Connect2MBA** are combining e-learning and gaming as they

seek to tap a potentially lucrative market of tech-savvy students. "Our idea is that a child should play such a good game that he gets immersed in it, and unknowingly, starts understanding the concept, and realizes that if he hadn't understood it, he wouldn't be able to win," says Ravi Kiran, founder and CEO, GoLive, which is making games on the solar system, kinetic motion and zoology.

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"When you do a course online you just read and answer. That's why e-learning (in India) never took off and more and more learning management systems are having interactive content," says Lalvani.

According to Prithwis Mukerjee, professor at Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, 3D immersive technology could introduce a whole new way of learning. Indusgeeks is in talks for an initiative with IIT-Kharagpur. "What we envisage is that when our students go for summer internship and get dispersed outside the campus, we could use Second Life as a 'fun' medium through which we can have meetings where students can come and share their experiences of working in the corporate world," says Mukerjee.

Two years ago, Ankur Jain, then an engineer at French information technology services firm **Atos Origin SA**, was a typical MBA aspirant—a regular on all online MBA forums, discussions and websites. "I did some research and found out that among the 2,600 B-schools in India, good quality education is imparted at only the top 20 B-schools. The other B-schools may have good infrastructure, but not necessarily good teaching faculty," he says. Jain, who is now in his final year at the Institute of Management Technology, Ghaziabad, decided to create a virtual MBA ecosystem of students, aspirants, professionals, recruiters, institutes and coaching institutes on Second Life called Connect2MBA.

His intention is to address the needs of college students who are not in the top B-schools and are unable to interact with the same industry experts or recruiters. Connect2MBA recently concluded a B-school event where the finalists made their presentations to professors on Second Life.



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