

Using tech for visual storytelling is a powerful learning tool

 By [Glenn Gillis](#)

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Visual storytelling is fundamental to the human experience, and one of our oldest forms of expression. From using fire to animate cave art, to Greek theatre, film, and television, we've adapted the principle to every new technology available to us.

This makes it a little odd that educational institutions and workplaces have only recently started to embrace the learning opportunities visual storytelling can provide. After all, there is a considerable body of evidence showing that visual storytelling is incredibly effective in helping people understand and retain new concepts.



Glenn Gillis, CEO, Sea Monster

With digital technologies allowing much easier access to mediums like custom-made games and animation - visual storytelling is becoming fundamental to education. As augmented and virtual reality (AR and VR) become more common, visual storytelling could experience an educational explosion.

Visualisation + storytelling

In order to understand the real power behind this educational revolution, it's important to take a step back and look at the role visualisation has always played in education.

Throughout history, educators have understood that it plays some role. Think of the illustrations of cells in a biology textbook or the landscape models you might've built in your geography class.

While those visualisations undoubtedly have value, they can only go so far. Do you really understand a cell if your only experience of it is a line illustration on a chalkboard or in a textbook?

What if, using an affordable VR headset, you could travel inside the cell and get up close with each individual component? Would you not have a better understanding of the cell? Would being able to relate back to a "personal experience" of the cell allow you to better remember its components later on?

Similarly, maths problems are no longer just boring symbols on a piece of paper, but exciting puzzles in an AR adventure.

Playing at work

Digital methods of visual storytelling aren't just useful in the formal educational space either. They also have a serious role to play when it comes to education and skills development in the workplace.

If, for example, you're looking to test and develop skills, VR can once again come to the fore. Let's say, for example, that you're an oil company and you want to ensure that your employees are ready for life on a rig.

Using a VR-based game, you could familiarise them with the tasks they'll have to perform without exposing them to an industrial rig in the middle of the ocean. With a compelling enough storyline, they'll likely grasp those skills as fast (if not faster) as they would by learning on the job, making them more comfortable and productive from the get-go and picking up on any problems (like claustrophobia) well in advance.

Lifelong learning

Not that long ago, most people thought that learning was something that only happened at school. In today's working world, it's a lifelong pursuit.

If, as a society, we're serious about building a workforce that embraces lifelong learning, then we need to make it as compelling as possible. And there's no doubt that the best way to do that is by using digitally-enabled, visual storytelling.

ABOUT GLENN GILLIS

Glenn Gillis is the managing director of Sea Monster Entertainment, one of South Africa's pre-eminent animation, gaming and augmented reality companies. He has a Business Science degree from UCT and has been an entrepreneur, hired gun, and consultant with growing, knowledge-intensive businesses around the world for over 25 years.

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