

Meeting Summary

Shaping the Future Implications of Digital Media for Society

Improving End User Digital Media Literacy

31 October, 2016, World Economic Forum Offices, New York City



Introduction

On 31 October 2016, the World Economic Forum hosted an interactive, full-day session on the topic of building end user digital media literacy. This event was the first of two workshop-style meetings to be held as part of phase 2 of the project *Shaping the Future Implications of Digital Media for Society*.

Participants joined from all four sectors – business, government, civil society, and academia – to address a critical question: how can both governments and industry improve end user digital media literacy and why is this important?

After a morning of brief presentations, focused on framing the issues and

providing a cross-section of organizations leading progress in this field, the attendees spent the afternoon sharing their thoughts, through a series of breakout sessions and roundtable discussions.

The meeting had four objectives:

1. Increase awareness of gaps in end user digital media literacy and the importance of addressing them;
2. Explore promising initiatives that are already driving progress in end user digital media literacy;
3. Discuss concrete actions that government, industry, and not-for-profit organizations can take to support each other to remove obstacles and achieve results;

4. Establish actionable recommendations for closing end-user literacy gaps around usage of digital media services and platforms, and in valuing personal data; such recommendations are to benefit from public-private collaboration

The remainder of this document is a summary of the key issues, experiences, insights, and other points of discussion that surfaced throughout the day.

Overall insights

The Forum's early survey findings indicate that up to 50% of respondents in the US and Brazil could benefit from efforts to build their digital media literacy. This matters to industry, because end users with higher digital

media literacy are more likely to be frequent users of online platforms and services, according to the survey. More education seems to result in higher levels of understanding of online presence and derived data, and there is a similar, but weaker, connection between digital media literacy and employment.

The public, private, and civil society sectors all feel a common need to increase digital media literacy, and all can benefit from evidence-based, cross-sector collaboration as they address their respective needs.

End user digital media literacy drives usage of products and services – an industry participant acknowledged that this has been their experience and provided support to the project's hypothesis (“when people feel empowered, this is directly beneficial to us”)

Digital media literacy is not as complex as it sounds, and realizing increases is actually a very actionable goal that

includes addressing knowledge gaps in key areas like control and privacy.

There is a mismatch between the actual and perceived value to businesses created by using personal data; similarly, there is also a mismatch between the actual and perceived cost to individuals that comes from losing control of their data.

Helping end users to decode the “black box” of derived data could help to restore trust in the end user community by dispelling misperceptions about derived data's degree of complexity.

Efforts to provide more access to digital platforms and services must be coupled with digital literacy building in order for programmes to be successful – it is not enough just to distribute devices to people.

Digital *media* literacy must be considered and addressed within the broader context of overall digital acumen, as it is an important aspect of 21st-century skills development.

The World Economic Forum has a clear role to continue to play in this area of Informed Societies, principally in convening stakeholders, fostering collaboration, and taking stock of gaps and opportunities. There is a need to meld different but adjacent issues into a cohesive approach and the Forum could be the catalyst to help make this happen.

In order to impact as many people as possible, there needs to be an intersection of the expertise from civil society with the scale that is possible from platforms and government education programmes

In reality, the stakeholders involved are more complex than the basic divisions between industry, government, civil society, and academia might suggest. Any new initiative needs to map out the specific stakeholders within each sector who would bring something unique to the table. Further, the stakeholders to be engaged, and the best approaches to do so, may differ by market.



Presentations from NGOs

Research from Project DQ in a pilot study in Singapore confirms the idea that higher levels of digital literacy beget higher levels of digital citizenship. However, in contrast to what was found in the World Economic Forum's research this year, children in the Singaporean

pilot showed an inverse correlation between digital literacy and usage levels. Could it be that digital media literacy leads to greater usage in adults, but not children?

The interpretation of self-reported levels of digital media literacy is complicated

by the possibility of a disparity between “competence” and “confidence” – users with low levels of digital media literacy “don't know what they don't know,” while users with higher levels may have better awareness of their knowledge gaps. Such trends, if significant, would distort their answers to survey questions about their own levels of digital media literacy.

The discipline of public health, which draws a distinction between “how to survive” and “how to thrive”, is a useful analogy for thinking about education. In the digital arena, the less positive conversation about “survival” – protecting people from harms – needs to be supplemented by a conversation about “thriving” – empowering people to get the greatest benefit out of connected life.

Solutions to the issues quantified by the project’s survey (i.e., low levels of digital media literacy) will not come purely from improved literacy; there is also a need to more effectively communicate, explain, and obtain end-user buy-in on privacy policies (“the average privacy policy can take up-to 40 minutes to read”).

There is overlap between the resources available to children and teens, and the needs of adult digital media citizens. Material targeted at older teens (e.g., 12th grade) should be relevant to many adults, and indeed teachers sometimes share content of lessons with colleagues who are personally interested in the topic.

Breakout group insights

Breakout session 1: “What gaps do you see in digital media literacy, what are your obstacles to addressing them, and how can other stakeholders (e.g., industry, governments, not-for-profits, academia) help?”

1. Public sector and academia

Industry can help educate end users by moving from a defensive approach to a proactive one. Instead of providing information only when a user clicks a “help” button, services could make the first move to engage users. Facebook’s privacy check-up is an example of a more proactive approach.

In different countries, governments are investing separately in solutions to common challenges, and a “global controlling mechanism” is needed. Private sector organizations that span borders can play a large role in coordinating a more combined, global effort. Governments must continue to be a part of this, but realistically they are slower moving, because they require hard evidence and wide agreement from stakeholders. Civil society has its own limitations and it, too, cannot match the private sector’s speed of development.

Corporate planning cycles can present an obstacle: how do you make lasting improvements to end user digital media

literacy on a twelve-month cycle? A consortium or a grant approach operating on a 3-5 year time frame would be better aligned with the timelines needed to make initiatives successful.

Countries vary in terms of degree of maturity, organization, and number of voices in their ecosystem for promoting digital media literacy. For countries with less developed ecosystems, even just engaging in the conversation is valuable in and of itself, because it generates momentum within local governments. The local academic sector can help to spark and fuel this conversation.

2. Civil society

At a macro or societal level, there is a lack of awareness of the value of personal data, and limited visibility into how it can be used to make decisions about “you”. Further, governments do not fully understand the importance of investing in this kind of digital media literacy-building effort. Decision makers may not understand the value of personal data themselves, and they need to manage many other priorities. As a result, there is less research and funding for this issue than would be ideal.

At the end user level, there is a lot of difficulty in educating parents – and this translates into difficulty in educating their children.

Digital media literacy education by governments has historically been more reactive than proactive. Instead of efforts being evidence-based, governments sometimes react to anecdotes, high-profile media coverage, or one-time events. A better approach would be to discuss risks in a systematic way, by using an agreed-upon taxonomy of harms. This alternative approach should also include a message of positive empowerment. We should “fear a fear-mongering approach”.

Universities can help to produce common language and issue framing. True interdisciplinary research is rare to see but would very much change the conversation. Obstacles include funding that tends to follow traditional organizational divisions in educational institutions, limited dissemination of evidence, and difficulty in evaluating the success of efforts.

When different stakeholders are put together, even if they are from the same sector, the conversation becomes

broader than a specific issue, such as focusing just on online gaming or cyber-bullying.

3. Industry

There is a difference between having an awareness of personal data and taking actionable steps to manage it. When people perceive that the technologies collecting their data are hard to understand, they may decide just to use the web without worrying about it. However, improved management of one’s personal data is attainable – although online systems are complex, there are simple ways to protect personal data.

There is a perceived dilemma surrounding the concept of control: (a) “The online world is out of control,” (b) “I don’t know what I can do to gain control,” and (3) “I think others are controlling me.” From an industry perspective, this results in a significant loss of trust from the end user.

Solid end user understanding is needed to build trust. Education to understand what is going on, education on how to take control, and a sense of protection if something goes wrong can all be helpful in increasing trust.

Industry can help by providing more transparency about certain practices. Privacy policies that require 40 minutes to read are an issue, but they are a result of strict regulation. Improving transparency means doing things that are more innovative in engaging end users in better understanding personal data.

Civil society can help industry by framing the conversation around digital media literacy in a way that is positive and actionable, not complicated or fear driven.

Government can help industry by acting as a check on industry and providing recourse when something goes wrong, through awareness, enforcement, and security, especially where offline laws apply to the internet. Despite levels of digital media literacy, “something bad might still happen and we need a solution” – for example, when funds are stolen from an online account, law enforcement may need to get involved.

Industry on its own can struggle in building end user digital media literacy. Besides potentially lacking expertise in specialized education, the risk of seeming self-serving should be considered. Involving the broader

ecosystem of stakeholders provides more expertise and more diverse partners, which can improve credibility and legitimacy.

Breakout session 2: Presented with a recommendation to increase end user digital media literacy, how would you action it and what would you change?

1. Recommendation: *Governments should introduce existing not-for-profit programs into education systems and/or incorporate digital media literacy concepts into existing curricula, with the expert advice of not-for-profits and support of companies*

Rationale: *Raising the digital media literacy of citizens can have wide-ranging effects, such as higher digital citizenship (e.g., political engagement), benefits to workers, (e.g., more effective professional networking) and greater levels of overall participation in digital life.*

The breakout group primarily explored the recommendation by examining an initiative already underway – the Government of Mexico has been rolling out educational technology, including devices and content. Because this initiative provides a clear case of a government agency successfully working digital media literacy into an educational programme, the group concluded that the recommendation, in general, is attainable.

Where this recommendation has already worked, several ingredients were key: (1) assembling a clear long-term vision at the front end, (2) identifying early on a community of action, including stakeholders with something unique to contribute (agencies, teachers, and schools; non-profits; parents and other community members; businesses with existing technological solutions), (3) building a compelling story for stakeholders, and (4) conducting a minimum viable pilot to test the approach and (5) leveraging the data from the pilot to show a success story and bringing additional stakeholders into play.

From a technical standpoint, it was also important to have a platform to consolidate data and content, ensure data standards in order to match datasets from different places, and define key metrics and analyses early-on.

A pilot should be low cost to ensure smooth sailing, and can be funded jointly (e.g., government provides resources for measurement, companies provide in-kind contributions). Once the pilot demonstrates the desired outcomes, then a case can be made for additional government funding to scale up the project.

How do you build it to last once the initial champion is no longer around to carry the torch?

The best way to engage industry is not to ask them to make things or to change their platform.

2. Recommendation: *Organizations providing online platforms or services and companies with an online presence (e.g., digital advertising or e-commerce) should leverage their own online presence to deliver digital media capacity building, or sponsor other digital media literacy efforts*

Rationale: *Raising the digital media literacy of customers and end users can increase digital engagement with a brand or service, while publicly demonstrating a company's commitment to its values.*

The breakout group approached the task broadly and discussed a general formula for multi-stakeholder collaboration to drive progress.

Individuals know what they are supposed to do but they do not do it for many reasons. In order to change behaviours, you have to follow the public health model: people need to see what success looks like, and they need to hear a positive, optimistic message from someone they know and trust.

A 3-year action plan for multi-stakeholder collaborations was outlined by the group:

- Start with 3-year outcomes in mind: help consumers understand, take control, and respond when something happens; create a trusted environment; and create community-based advocacy
- First 18 months: convening stakeholders and knowledge resources, performing needs assessment, and aligning priorities
- Next 12 months: design and deployment, local engagement (action happens in the local community), top-down support (policy leaders open doors), top-down measurement

- Final 6 months: complete pilot evaluation, gain support of leaders, tailor outputs to stakeholder communities

Many organizations want to follow such an approach, but fall short by trying to move the needle in one issue area without understanding the others. It cannot just be about adding devices to a community or about children's safety. There are four key things to think about: where is the end user (policy situation, social norms, etc.), what are the risks and opportunities, what is the device, and what is the application itself?

When it comes to implementing technology, there is nowhere to go to learn which methodology works best. Governments have to learn from a combination of places, such as international organizations, industry, focus groups, and trial and error. The knowledge is in pieces; nobody has the whole view in education technology.

Eventually, the right ecosystem must be built in each nation. To begin to do so, baseline data is needed. Non-profits can act as a bridge to get the data, use it to understand the status quo, and then frame a conversation about the gaps and respective solutions. This allows you to compress the evolutionary scale of policy development.

3. Recommendation: *Organizations should partner with existing not-for-profits to incorporate critical digital media literacy concepts into employee training and development programs*

Rationale: *Raising the digital media literacy of employees can help to (i) mitigate risks (e.g., protect brand equity and better manage sensitive information and cybersecurity) and (ii) unlock benefits (e.g., productivity improvements and employee advocacy).*

It is in the interest of any company – not just technology companies – for its employees to be digitally literate (e.g., knowing how to use two-factor authentication or how not to fall for phishing scams).

Regarding cybersecurity, everyone is at risk, from corporations to governments – indeed, governments also have employees. Any office close to a public official faces an especially high risk of attack. Besides defending themselves from attack, governments are also interested in how to best collaborate with other sectors that have critical

infrastructure – those communication channels are not effective yet.

A major gap globally is that organizations have well thought-out internal policies (e.g., to protect sensitive data), but no program that teaches the policy. As a result, the policy does not translate into action.

Existing corporate training can be used to scale new initiatives. However, tactics like tracking course completions and performance on assessments may not be the most effective motivators. A key enabler for these programs to succeed is leadership role modelling: “if the CEO commits, then the rest of the staff feel empowered to make it work.”

The breakout group identified three key steps to implement employee training:

1. NGOs/civil society develop standard curriculum package to help companies (e.g., what are unknowns? what do employees need to learn?)
2. Reframe to companies/ organizations why these trainings are important (e.g., “trust and safety are good for business”)

3. Bring employees on board by offering and highlighting personal benefits (e.g., “protect your employer from hacking, protect your family and community”)

One related challenge of non-profits is accessing adults to get data on skill gaps. Large employers present a possible solution, as they are well positioned to leverage their workforce to take a low-cost snapshot of their employee’s skills.

Several examples of employee digital literacy efforts by big business were highlighted: (1) formal training on protecting the privacy and security of the data held about other people, with an annual test to keep knowledge fresh, and (2) a team that “attacks” employees from a security perspective (e.g., simulated phishing attacks).

Several examples were highlighted of cross-sector collaborations under development: (1) A non-profit (Project DQ) is working with a telco (Singtel) to develop its employees’ digital media literacy, using an awareness-based (vs. a sanctions-based) approach, (2) a non-profit (Project DQ) is working to measure

and develop the digital media literacy of medical professionals, and (3) a non-profit is working with a technology company to use corporate training to teach people to become better digital citizens in their community.

Preliminary outcomes

It was suggested that platforms themselves could be used to enable digital media literacy building in countries where education systems are fragmented. Digital platforms could be the main channel for collaboration among educators, and a partnership model could be of value to industry as well.

An opportunity was identified for not-for-profit organizations working on adjacent, if not overlapping topics to “join forces” and create a more comprehensive solution for other stakeholders.

A public sector representative indicated that there could be value in mirroring successful work being done in other geographies by non-profits that measure and teach digital media literacy.



Appendix: List of participants

Organization	Role	Country
Civil society and academia		
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY	Director, Research, Tow Center for Digital Journalism (2015 – 2016)	USA
IKEEPSAFE	President and CEO	USA
WITNESS	Programme Director	USA
FAMILY ONLINE SAFETY INSTITUTE	Founder and CEO	USA
COMMON SENSE	Eastern Regional Education Director	USA
INFOLLUTIONZERO	Founder and CEO	Singapore
Industry		
MCKINSEY & COMPANY	Partner, Media and Entertainment Practice	USA
PERCOLATE	CEO	USA
DOGAN TV HOLDING	Executive Vice President of Strategy	Turkey
PUBLICIS GROUP	Chief Strategist	France
FACEBOOK	Deputy Chief Privacy Officer	USA
Public sector		
OFFICE OF MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT	Urban Planner, Land Use Division	USA
UNDERSECRETARY OF BASIC EDUCATION, MEXICO	General Coordinator of @prende.mx	Mexico
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT, MEXICO	Head, Unit of Innovation and Technology Strategy	Mexico