Anyone Can Be Whatever They Want... That's A Bad Thing

A few weeks ago Google announced it would be opening up Classroom to everyone, anyone could create and teach a class on anything. This is the latest in a long line of technology empowering people from any and every walk of life to be whatever they want. It is creating a brave new world where no matter what; you can be whatever you want. Presented in anyway you want.

Disaster.

Already one of the major problems faced by businesses and individuals is the lack of knowledge of whom someone actually is, whom they are connected to and if they can be trusted. This has only been exacerbated by technology. How many times have you encountered someone who swore blind that a falsehood was true, just because they read it online? How many times have people, with no real actual knowledge or experience, presented themselves as the final word on a topic just because they have a platform online?

With the trend towards opening up applications such as Google Classroom and other, closed systems that used to be the preserve of experts, the so-called hot takes of social media are soon to become a norm of everyday life.

Take the example of Google Classroom. I go into the portal and want to learn something, how do I know that person A is qualified? User reviews are consistently an imperfect system for determining this; every company with a review site will be able to provide horror stories of false reviews. But beyond this, when it comes to imparting knowledge people have to be taken out of their comfort zone.

I am currently undertaking an executive MBA. The first step of any new learning endeavour is forcing oneself to actually do it. I know there are people out there with the self-discipline to just do things, but if we are honest, that is not most of us. We need deadlines, pressure and the like, to have the will to work.

While this might shock my colleagues, this is true even for me. Within two months of starting my MBA I hated it, within three months I hated the world, within six months I hated my course mates (sorry). Now however, I have adapted, am getting on with it, enjoying the challenge and seeing the value. Why the change? Why the change? My lecturer and course staff, but first and foremost - my classmates got me to that stage.

The truth is, if I were asked to review that class, it would have taken me until very recently to give it a good review. Imparting knowledge is about getting people to go beyond what they can already do. This takes effort. In a system where anyone can teach anything, the good reviews will go to the nice people, not the effective people.

In a wider context, this poses serious issues for business and the world. So much of how we approach each other is through the prism of trust, built by experience, verified through things such as qualifications. With technology developing how it is, experience and qualifications are becoming harder to verify. For example, how many of those 'web doctors' really have medical degrees can never be known.

As in so many other areas, technology is a tool. One that can solve problems, but employed incorrectly can equally make them worse. The real problem is that there is no clear-cut solution. In a world where anyone can be an expert, no one is.

This creates problems, above and beyond what we have experienced previously.

The entomologist and biologist Edward Osborne Wilson summarised the issue with humanity perfectly when he said:

"The real problem of humanity is the following: we have paleolithic emotions; medieval institutions; and god-like technology."

Technology will continue to exacerbate problems until this is changed. Now, innovation can reshape nearly our entire world but it cannot change us (well, at least not yet) so what we can change is our institutions.

What is needed to combat the rise of self-declared and unverifiable expertise is a new version of self-balance systems. Where we as individuals can access a means to verify experience, expertise and qualifications, in a way acceptable to the demands of a digital society.

The solution is not to withdraw from technology; it is to use it to better serve our needs and those of society as a whole. In line with Clarke's third law, our tech is now indistinguishable from magic in so many ways. The rest of what humans have created, the institutions of society, have to catch up and fast.

For now be wary, go to real experts and as always be wary of anyone who claims to have all the answers, snake oil salesmen come in many guises. In a world where anyone can be anything, those who actually are someone should be sought after at a premium.

Original article can be found here http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dmitry-bagrov/anyone-can-be-whatever-th_b_16985062.html