Kegsoft Briefing: IT Education

How should we engage and encourage the UK's next generation of Information Technologists?

The Problem

Despite the ubiquity of IT in business, industry, science and most areas of society the level of interest and achievement in the basic building blocks of IT and computing is woefully low in UK schools and colleges. This is a serious issue for the UK which already has a extreme skills shortages in some areas.

Much of ICT subjects taught involve the use of basic office tools, we expect students to be able to use word processing and spreadsheets maybe some database theory and web design practice. This is largely end-user IT, and although essential for much employment, is only a basic to intermediate IT skill level.

In our view, traditional programming, even for web technology, no longer has much appeal to the majority of youngsters. In a world where everyone has sophisticated technology on their smartphones; programming in python or java is perceived as something for geeks and nerds and very much a subject for boys. Basic computing - the nuts and bolts of programming – 'Hello World' and move a lego robot arm 2cm to the right, no longer has the same appeal as it did in the 1980s.

A Solution

We believe that to re-ignite enthusiasm in IT, we should fundamentally move away from the 'nuts and bolts' low-level activity which is no longer needed in the vast majority of business scenarios. In an age of reduced attention spans, taking a day writing a routine in a low-level language will lose the interest of most youngsters. Rather, students' expectations should be significantly raised and refocussed on goal-oriented activities to demonstrate that problem solving and learning the elegance of logic can delight and produce end results quickly and with satisfaction.

KBL and its Studio environment is quick to learn and can produce pleasing applications very quickly. For example, put your music tracks in spreadsheet and create a KBL app to maintain it, filter, display by artist and genre – and play your tracks.

In road-testing KBL with young students (aged 16 – 20), we were delighted at the speed of progress and satisfaction they obtained within a few hours of installing and using KSE. The key point here is, that the students were able to concentrate on what they wanted to achieve rather than be hampered by an arcane language or confounded by IT terminology.

Kegsoft welcomes enquiries from Schools and colleges and will be happy to discuss collaboration on projects which will promote IT for the next generation.

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September 2017