BUSINESSES MUST PREPARE TO WELCOME GENERATION ALPHA

By BILL MAGEE

Far-sighted companies are inventing now in Generation Alpha even though the first full batch of tomorrow’s digital workforce will not be available for upwards of a decade.

Gen Alpha, categorised as born since 2010 and until 2035 and nicknamed “Millennials on steroids”, are increasingly being recognised by the more enlightened organisations as special due to their potential technological ingenuity.

Like RT and SkyScanner who view the “zomers” tech kids as nascent gold dust when it comes to their future commercial success. It is the knowledge that the years ahead surviving in the digital world is likely to become more — not less — challenging.

When information technology skill sets incorporating data science, IT engineers, product designers, mobile and software developers, are in greater demand and more essential than ever. But there’s a rub.

Cyber psychologist Monica Whitby gave a conference keynote lunch in Edinburgh: the worries that learning through elimination of time-and-place constraints to enable flexible and innovative channels for interaction.

However things can get problematic: “Children and teens, compared to adults, have in some ways a very different understanding and experience of digital technologies.”

Whitby points out that grown-ups have known a world before the net but for children and adolescents the impact is more profound.

“They have grown up with a range of technologies, used to educate them, build friendships and with which they learn about their identities.

She spells out the implications: “It makes it difficult for parents to advise young people, in an informed way, about potential dangers they might encounter in everyday.”

Alphas fully integrate tech very much as second nature into their young lives. Deeply interacting and
Nurturing tomorrow's workforce must engage all interested parties – employers, educational institutions, politicians – knowing what to focus their resources on can be hard to predict.

Kirsty Scott, University of Dundee (below)

Companies will be confronted with the most demanding employees and customers...expecting speed, responsiveness and customisation as standard.

The pay-off is Alphas, more than any previous generation, will be able to deal with such complexity thrown up by all the multiple inputs from digital sources.

"Facilitating that complexity into what's simple and essential with the ability to process larger amounts of data.

"Not bogged down in the detail and work with what is important will be a fundamental Alpha quality."

Kirsty Scott, in charge of industrial liaison at University of Dundee, urges: "Nurturing tomorrow's workforce must engage all interested parties – employers, educational institutions, politicians."

The market - in her case technology industries – must plan ahead: "Knowing what to focus their resources on can be hard to predict."

Alphas are central to a drive based on overcoming challenges they are facing: "Whether it is the need to address a skills gap...or an infrastructure issue preventing growth development," Scott adds.

However, the jury remains out as regards the psychological impact of such enhanced digital lives; how to balance a relentless immersion involving innumerable tech devices with an expected lack of face-to-face contact.

Author Thomas George in his book Digital Soul hopes for such a balance. Tech devices might not necessarily have gained the capacity for autonomous decision-making or emotional responses (yet).

"At the moment, we seem largely in control...yet in many ways, this control is slipping away as we leave more and more decisions to machines." Worth serious thought in this digital age...

From a business perspective it must be all about getting the absolute best from Alphas, whilst helping them to avoid the dangers of sensory overload. Stronger mentoring and support from employers is one solution. If such a generation of super techno geeks can be persuaded to agree to that rare occasion of downtime from smartphones apps-whipping..."