**Envisioning the future:**

**QUBE Inspiration Monthly worqshop**

Have you ever been to an event where you’re not sure what you’re going to see, but get the feeling it might be something special? Thursday’s Inspiration Monthly event, a gathering designed to stimulate innovative thinking, gave insights from a leading company and offered excellent networking opportunities.

QUBE is a virtual learning environment – think of the landscape of a computer game, but with real people represented by ‘qubots’, endearing block-shaped avatars.

David Gram, Future Labs Director at the LEGO Group, gave a fascinating talk about how LEGO came back from the brink of bankruptcy to become the world’s largest toy company.

However, it was in the virtual networking before and afterwards that the real business opportunities became apparent. The ‘room’ is set out with chairs and tables so you can move around, discuss the presentation, spark ideas off each other.

You do genuinely forget that you’re not really there after a while. I managed to say ‘nice to see you again’ to someone I realised I’d never actually met – but felt I knew, from talking to them before on QUBE.

Usually, business events like this use up a lot of time and effort. You travel to the venue, lose time in waiting for it to begin, or feel you’re missing out if you’re late. But in the virtual environment, you just arrive and suddenly you’re walking around, getting to know people, and having your mind exercised by talking to a mixture of similarly-minded professionals.

It’s going to take a while for virtual learning environments to become mainstream. Remember the resistance in some quarters when social media first came along – the view that Facebook or Twitter were gimmicky and would fade away once the novelty wore off. It hardly needs saying how untrue that belief was, and how ubiquitous social media has now become.

The same can be said for virtual learning spaces, of which QUBE is ahead of the curve. Having this space where you can assemble people together, quickly and easily – regardless of geography, ability to travel or needing to line up diaries – is an incredibly useful resource, and one that I think companies will embrace more and more as they experience the benefits that it brings.

ENDS

368 WORDS