

## **New Age Learning**

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Book Review on *Hooked- How to Build Habit Forming Products*  
by Nir Eyal with Ryan Hoover

Many B-Schools produce numerous entrepreneurs and business leaders. These business leaders later emerge as inspirational figures for many followers. The MBA schools that shape up these young managerial aspirants, design effective pedagogies after consulting with business leaders to bridge the gap between academia and industry. When students take admissions, they generally have an idea about the courses that they would undergo. But, the challenges that lie in front of the professors are as how to impart the theories and concepts successfully so that their students understand the execution of the learnt concepts and models very well.

The next challenge faced by professors today is the ‘attention span of students’, rather ‘short attention span of the students’. Students are intrigued and attracted by many things now-a-days due to the speed of internet and technological advancement. The so called apps: WhatsApp, Instagram, Youtube, Facebook, Pinterest etc. have been regularly distracting students. For example, when a seminar is in place, students struggle to pay their attention for a long time. It is not uncommon now-a-days to witness that students are using their mobile phones quite often, connecting with their dear and near ones. If one observes closely as to why these distractions happen; it's interesting to note students' time are generally hooked by clever marketing business models by plenty of mobile apps. Students are found to forego their valuable study period and indulge in the usage of these mobile apps.

In a well known book *Hooked* the author Nir Eyal describes a model. This model speaks about four components: Trigger, Action, Variable Reward and Investment. Trigger could be internal or external. When a student suddenly hears a noise or a notification that indeed triggers him or her to

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open the app, it could be WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram or anything. These triggers drive the student for an action. In the action mode, the student simply clicks and with a good intent of spending short time and eventually being sucked into these apps for long hours without even knowing how long they have wasted their productive hours. The third aspect of the model is known as variable reward. This is the real hook in the model. The brain looks for variability. For example if someone goes into Facebook, there could be many unknown pictures, information, and notifications. This variability, unpredictable variability, is what makes the

brain more addictive. For example, the reels that one scrolls through for a while keeps on appearing with different pictures in different contexts; and this is what indeed pulls the users towards such applications. Finally in the hooked model, investment happens. The investment phase increases the time spent by the users on different applications. The investment components could be such as time, data, efforts and money etc.

Professors with good intentions expect their students to perform well in their studies. But, in reality, students don't invest as much time in learning as professors expect now-a-days. This is a big challenge for any kind of institution. MBA schools generally offer a one year or two year programme. These programmes are packed with numerous courses; and each course has a continuous assessment model.

Let's say when a teacher takes a course for 3 or 6 months, there are many components in the assessment scheme starting from simple tests to quizzes, presentations, teamwork assignments and so on. The performance of a good student demands a lot of time as investment. But the distraction by these so called mobile apps causes considerable damage to students' learning progress. This is where a good professor comes in. The same model Nir Eyal described in his book can be taken as an experiment by professors to hook students. As the model advocates, the professor has to devise his or her pedagogy in such a manner where the students have to be motivated throughout. The professor has to devise or rather design his or

her course pedagogy in such a manner that the course design itself invites students to get into action. Further, the professor also has to offer variable reward just to encourage students to maintain the tempo of learning. The variable reward generally could be a kind of quiz or advice to needy students or a simple appreciation in the class and so on.

Student distraction is not a new phenomenon. For many centuries, teachers have been struggling to keep the attention of students intact. But the 21st century adds more difficulties for teaching faculty just because the new technology and the clever design of apps easily distract students.

Therefore professors have to attack this problem with a counter strategy. A good pedagogy that covers these four elements of the hooked model trial, action reward and investment would be ideal for a successful learning process.