



Liquid Skills

Learning is more fluid: skills are easily upgraded, evolved – or discarded.

How we learn is evolving: skills can now be easily upgraded, gained or discarded. Brands are invited to position themselves as partners in the consumer's search to attain skills more quickly and easily.

In our digital age, majorities of consumers we survey agree that they first turn to the internet when they don't know how to do something. With near instant access to knowledge, consumers are progressively trained to become agile learners.

This trend is largely a response to the conditions created by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Rising automation of jobs, a more volatile labour market and the growing democratisation of access to information make continuous personal skills upgrade a must for all ages. The value of one's education no longer lies in gaining necessary knowledge but in developing dexterity for learning. In particular, rapid growth in demand for technologically skilled workforces has prompted many to focus on upskilling digital competencies in CVs.

This new approach to learning does not just inform consumers' working lives. There will be no excuse for ignorance of grape varieties, what to wear this season or how to best invest in cryptocurrencies...as society's expectations of knowledge-retrievability are forever lifted higher and higher. In 2018, 47% of GB consumers agreed that they can teach themselves anything they want via free online resources. Tech innovations, from augmented reality tutorials to analytics driven personalised courses are continually evolving learning tools and make achieving competency in a particular area ever less onerous and time-consuming. This means fewer skills will remain in the domain of just experts – accomplished results are just a life hack away.

In this context, the desire for self-serve learning intensifies. Rather than looking to outsource tasks and skills to expert brands wholesale, the Liquid Skills mindset encourages consumers to look instead for brands that support them to achieve their desired results themselves. To remain relevant to agile-minded consumers, brands must share their expertise, and ultimately impart relevant knowledge onto the consumer in easy, accessible ways.

Tracked since: June 2015



What will happen next?

10 years ago

Apps simplify learning allowing consumers to fit study into small moments of downtime. Duolingo, the gamified language learning tool, launches in 2011.

Google launches auto complete function on main search site. Mobile search begins to take-off as smartphone ownership grows.

Employers recognise the need for more adaptive employees who can learn fast in a more volatile market. Skills gaps appear as technology skills grow in demand.

Now

Slick how-to video tutorials are designed for on-the-go viewing. The first immersive learning tools appear in VR and AR.

Mobile search is the first port of call for knowledge retrieval for the Mobile First generation. Consumers increasingly expect personalised search results.

Employers place a greater focus on learning on-the-job. Consumers have become accustomed to showcasing commercial skills online, upgrading CVs with online course certificates.

in 3-5 years

VR and AR are more widely used tools, used to make learning as relevant and experiential as possible.

Predictive, personalised search makes instant info-retrievability even easier.

Analytics can tailor employee training programmes to suit personal needs and learning style.



What this means for: Communications

Make skill acquisition easy. Consumers are looking for brands that can help them acquire the skills they need quickly and easily. Ensure you communicate expertise in ways that consumers can apply, pick up and ultimately use themselves. Consider using video to offer how-to demonstrations and educational tutorials in bitesize formats to make learning accessible and fast. Reinvent methods of achieving an accomplished result -see how Thinkable has redesigned a way of building an app without the need to learn to code.

Be passionate about learning not knowledge. In the age of Liquid Skills, consumers look to acquire skills in an agile way, as and when they need them. Feed consumers' passion for learning by refreshing the skills you offer, aiming to stay aligned to the skills currently "in demand".

Break down barriers to learning. Help consumers who may have particular barriers to learning - such as particular genders or ethnic groups who are not traditionally attracted to a certain subject area - by targeting your learning tools and campaigns to their specific needs. Identify marginalised groups and introduce them to your expertise. This is also a mechanism for building trust.

Consider voice as a new learning tool. Voice assistants are disrupting how consumers retrieve information. Consider how knowledge and skills can be delivered or accessed through voice. Smart voice assistants are giving people access to a variety of downloadable courses, quizzes and educational games—such as those offered via the **Alexa** Skills platform. As voice assistants enter more homes they will surely be integrated into more casual learning moments.. See sector trend [iTeachers](#) for more.

Explore how VR and AR can enhance learning. Video is an established medium for delivering tutorials, however VR and AR offer brands a more immersive medium through which to engage and tutor consumers. Expand the range of content available to consumers by exploring how these technologies can allow you to project scenarios and guides into consumers' own worlds and spaces..



What this means for: Customer Experience

Ensure your staff are knowledgeable and can facilitate learning. Ensure your customer facing staff have the right skills and knowledge so they can share and pass this onto customers. Consider offering expert workshops or expert customer support services to facilitate consumer learning, following the example of **Apple's** Today at Apple programmes.



What this means for: Leisure

Infuse leisure offerings with learning opportunities. The implications of this trend have already moved out of consumers' professional lives to affect their leisure time as mapped in our trend **The Leisure Upgrade**. Consumers seek skills-building as a leisure pursuit in itself. Show consumers how your leisure offers double up as opportunities to gain skills.



What this means for: Work and Skills

Support continuous learning. We expect the pressures of automation to accelerate this trend in the coming years. Those currently leaving education must maintain a mindset of continuous learning for the rest of their lives in order to stay competitive in the workplace. Employees will expect employers to support them with opportunities to regularly up- and reskill. Ensure training feels continuous and accessible.

Make training immediately applicable. To encourage adaptive mindsets in the workplace, courses and training need to be easy to absorb but also easy to apply into roles and real work tasks. Consider modular courses that can be fit into employees schedules in flexible ways. Does your organisational culture encourage dexterity and flexibility in problem solving?

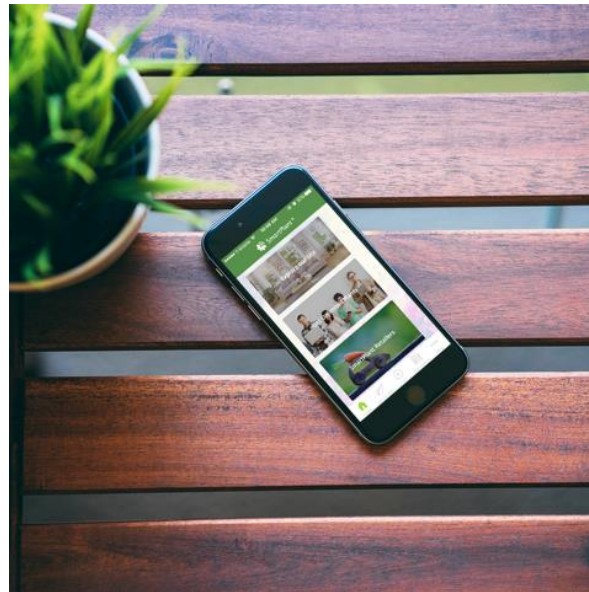


What this means for: Consumer Tech

Consumer Tech

Upgrade consumer skills in line with product updates. As consumer tech product cycles quicken, consumers need to keep abreast of how to use and master new technology and features just as fast. Ensure you provide the right support to help consumers master key technology skills associated with your products. After all, tech skills are considered a vital component of a future-proofed résumé. Communicate new features of product or software updates as they happen to enable consumers to get the most out of your products as they evolve.

Support the demand for learning digital skills. Consumers are becoming aware of the desirability of digital skills such as coding and analytics as employers talk of a “technology skills gap”. Find ways of opening up learning opportunities for these in-demand skills. In particular, parents looking to help their children will appreciate support in the skills areas they may themselves lack.



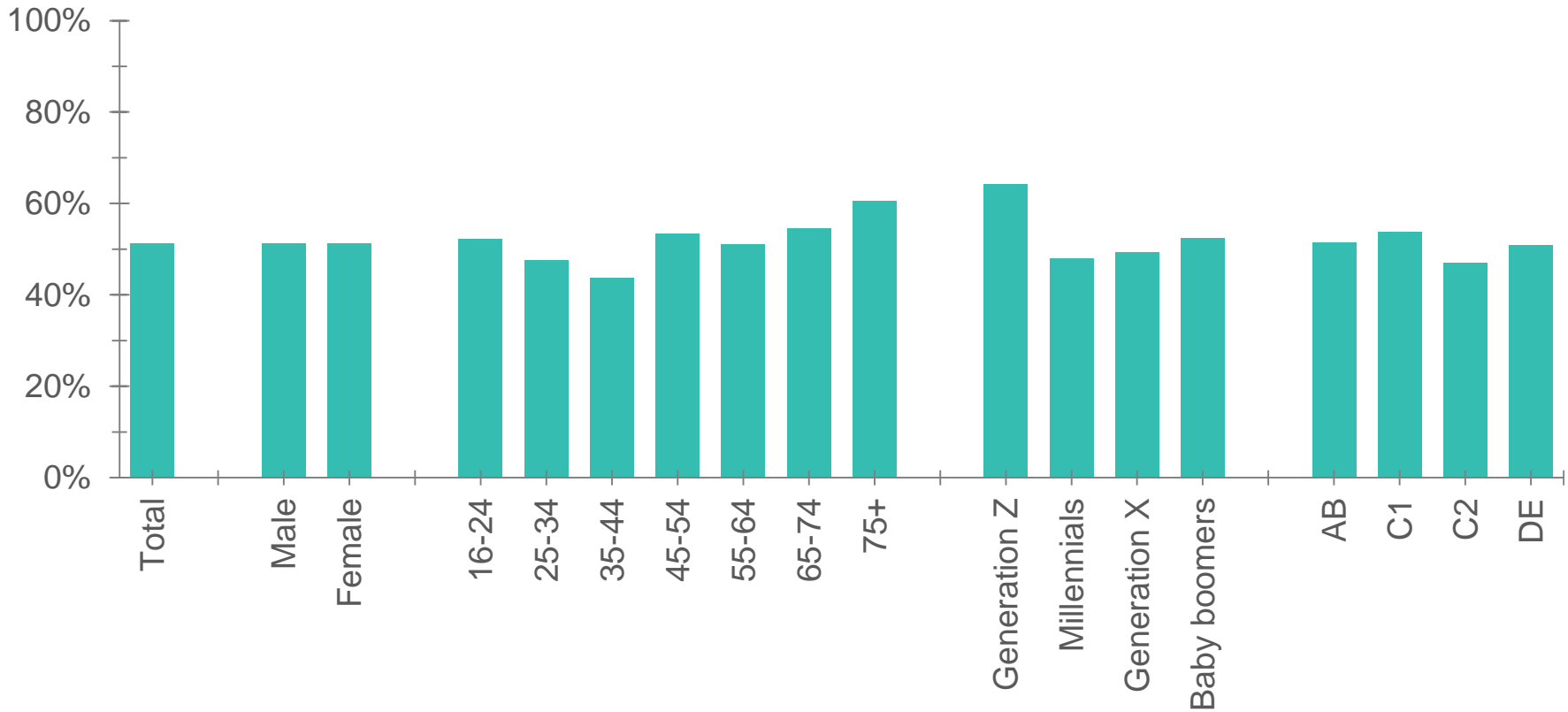
What this means for: Banking and Pensions

Empower consumers with financial skills support. New financial management tools and content marketing that simplify the world of finance are introducing varied finance knowledge to a wider consumer base. Consumers are looking for brands that can empower them in their quest to more skilfully manage their money. Consider tailoring content to different audiences' needs – such as guides for first time buyers or content that demystifies new investment opportunities such as cryptocurrencies for more traditional investors. See **Fresh Financial Education** for examples of how financial brands are providing bespoke educational content for Millennial customers.



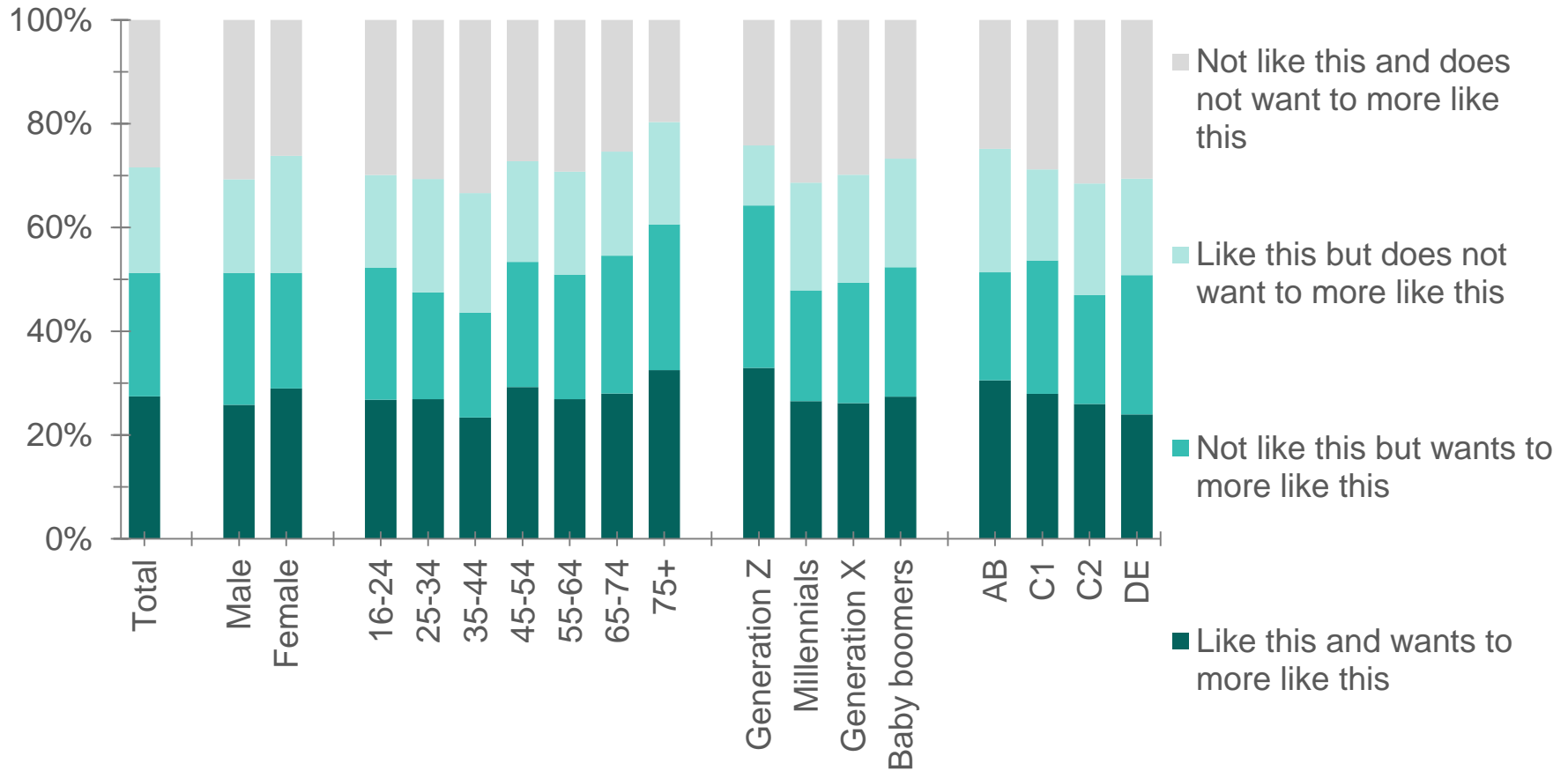
Wanting to be more knowledgeable

"Which of the following do you want to be more like? Please select the top three things you most want to be more like in order of preference, then select any other things from the list that you want to be more like."
Knowledgeable | % selecting wants to be more like this



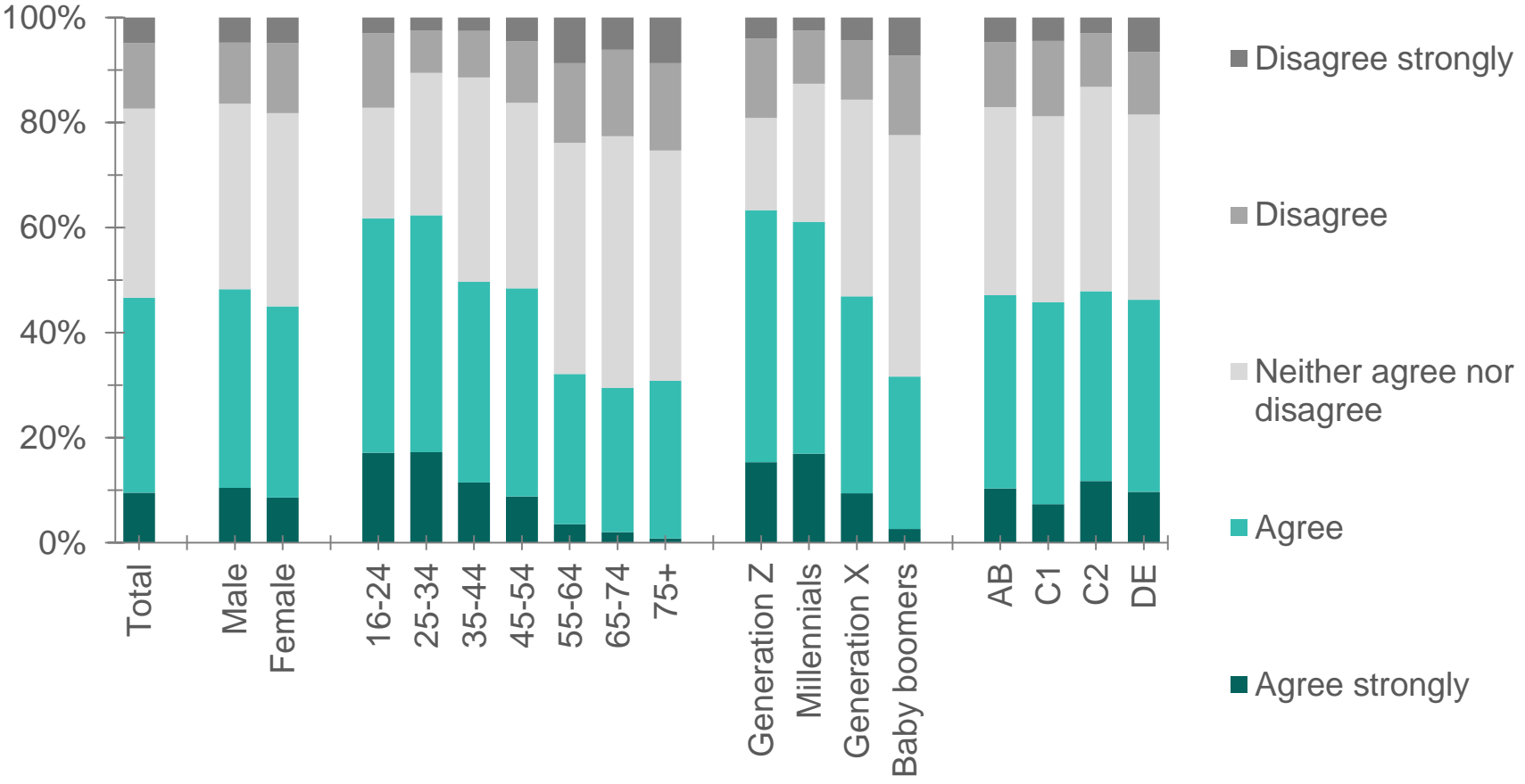
Being and wanting to be more knowledgeable

"Please indicate how well this describes you and if you want to be more like this." | Knowledgeable



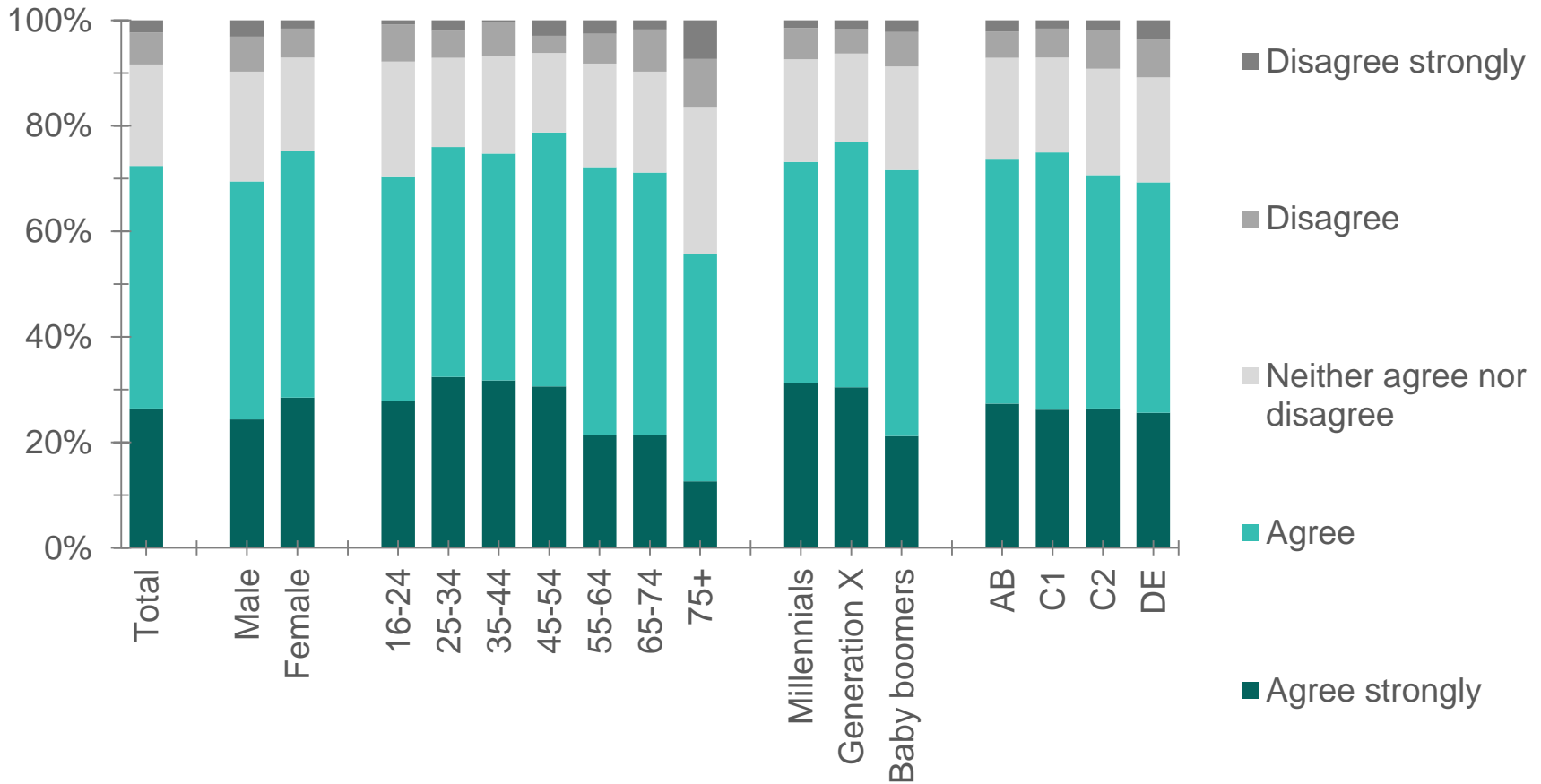
"I can teach myself anything I want with free online tutorials"

"How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?"



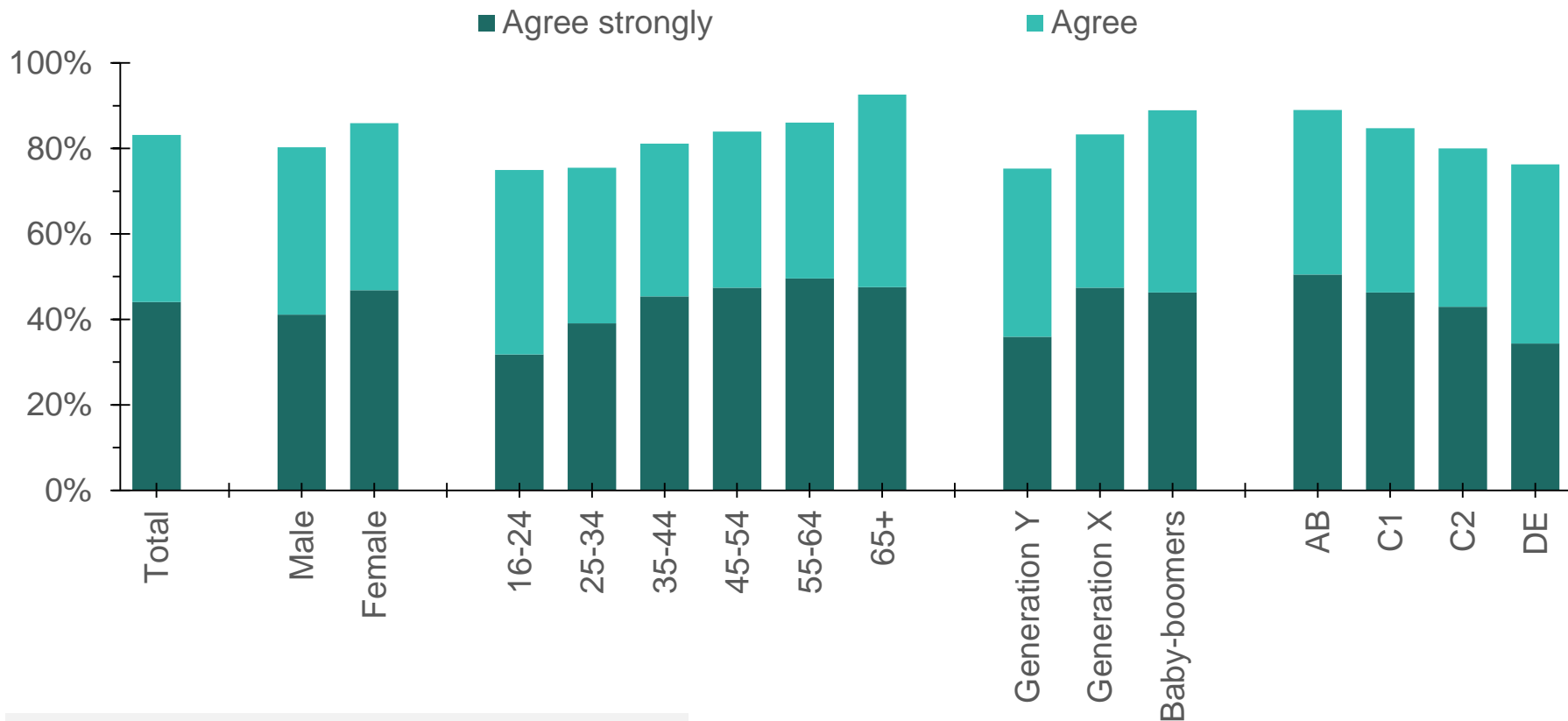
"When I don't know how to do something the first thing I do is search for an answer online"

"Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?"



"Learning to drive is an important skill to have"

"How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?" | % who agree strongly or agree | 2016



Right-click on chart and select [Edit Data](#) for demographic data



Girl Scouts introduce STEM related badges

Girl Scouts introduce 30 new science and technology badges | USA

In Summer 2018, **Girl Scouts** in the USA introduced 30 new skills badges focused on science and technology skills. Girl Scouts aged 5-18 can now work towards earning badges in areas such as cybersecurity, coding and robotics.

The new badges are designed to encourage female interest in areas of study where women are currently underrepresented as well as respond to new skills that are more desirable to learn.



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Today at Apple free courses

Apple offer in store workshops run by “Creative Pros” employees | Global

In Summer 2017, **Apple** launched **Today at Apple** globally, a series of free in-store courses aimed at helping consumers to learn how to use Apple products in areas such as coding, design, photography and project productivity. In June 2018, Today at Apple won the **Cannes Lions** “Brand Experience and Activation” award.

The programme aims to infuses learning opportunities into the Apple customer experience. The courses are run by “Creative Pros” who are skilled Apple employees, a creative equivalent of their tech support “Genius” employees. As well as running workshops, Creative Pros also run open sessions in which people can get advice on their personal projects.

Courses are open to the public but also include sessions target at kids & families and teachers.



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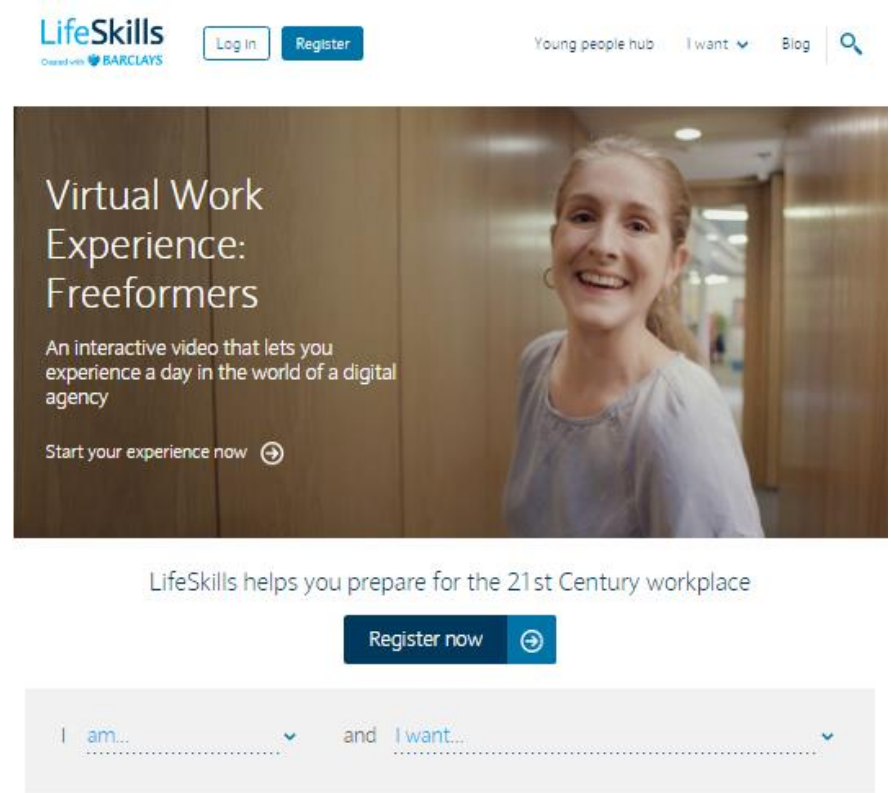
Barclays LifeSkills

Barclays provide resources to help young people get into work | UK

Running since 2013, **Barclays LifeSkills** is an online platform of resources designed to help young people prepare for working life. With resources ranging from CV templates to interview tips to interactive work experience videos, Barclays aims to simplify and aid young people in their skills acquisition for the world of work.

The platform also includes sections for parents and educators with resources designed for use in schools.

In 2018, the LifeSkills platform will expand to include resources to help people in work – such as advice on changing career or building an online personal profile.



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Barclays fraud awareness campaign

Barclays provide resources to help people avoid fraud | UK

In Spring 2017, **Barclays** launched a nationwide campaign aimed at building awareness around banking fraud. As well as national TV ads, Barclays hosted digital safety workshops for individuals and businesses via its network of technology experts.

More broadly, Barclays commits to helping people improve their digital skills via their **Digital Eagles** and **Digital Wings** services. These provide free learning resources on technology skills from tutorials to 60 second quizzes.

Speaking in September 2018 Ross Martin, Barclays' Head of Digital Safety, said: "*Barclays has stepped up its mission to educate customers about the growing risks of scams, investing more than £18 million during the past two years on our national fraud and scam prevention campaign*".



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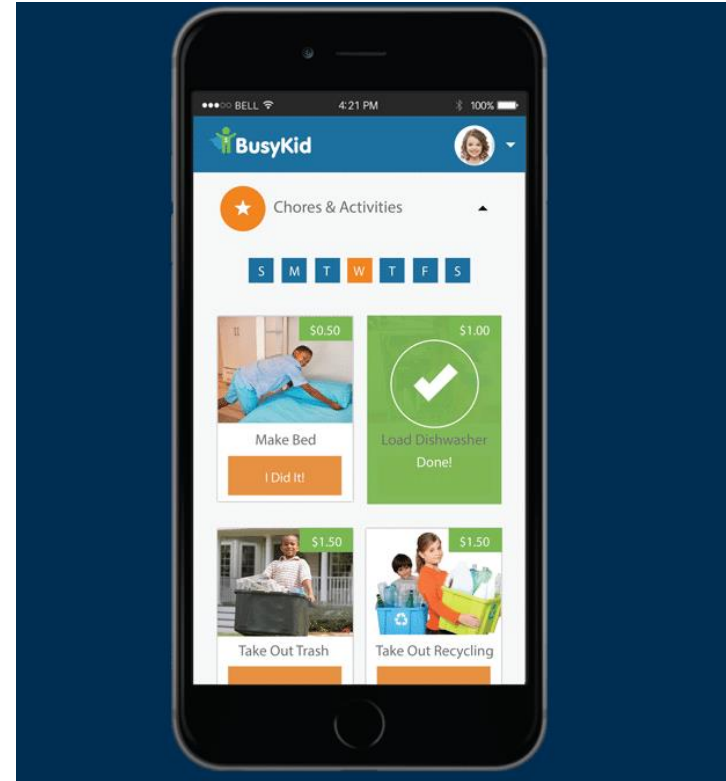
App teaches children financial literacy

BusyKid helps children to earn, save and invest money | USA

Launched in 2017, **BusyKid** partnered with **Great Hearts Academies** in Spring 2018 to improve financial education and literacy for young children.

BusyKid is a platform which allows children aged 7-15 to complete chores to earn money, then invest and manage their earnings. Parents set up weekly chores in the mobile app, and children receive an allowance for each completed chore. Savings can then be spent on the pre-paid card, invested in real stocks, or donated to charity.

BusyKid sets children up so they are ready to be financially independent when they reach adulthood. The app teaches key financial skills that are often omitted from the school syllabus.



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Yakult AI Vending Machine

Users rewarded with free Yakult for learning Japanese words | UK

To celebrate its Japanese heritage, probiotic beverage brand **Yakult** created an AI-powered smart vending machine in early 2018 that rewards passers-by with a free bottle of Yakult if they are able to correctly pronounce a variety of Japanese words.

The machine – which has an integrated touch screen, camera, microphone and speakers – uses natural language processing to interpret what users are saying and comes to life when somebody walks past. The machine was scheduled to travel through the UK and Ireland in 2018. Emma Dita, PR manager at Yakult UK and Ireland says: “We want to offer Yakult drinkers a fun experience whenever we have the chance to interact with them. We are constantly looking for new ways to deliver our brand messages in an authentic and entertaining way”.

We see here another application of voice-activated AI – and a neat example of customers “talking” to brands in new ways.



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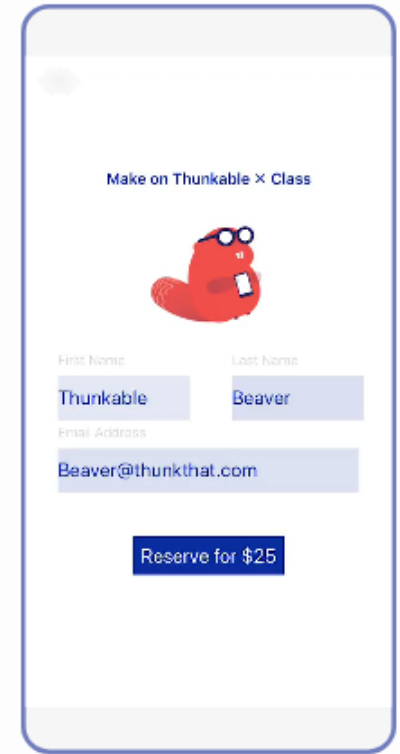
Build a customised app

No need to code with drag and drop interface | Global

Launching in June 2018, **Thunkable** allows users to build their own apps in an intuitive way, without the need to code.

Users drag and drop their favourite components to build a custom-made app, and join them together with blocks. Every app created through the application will work on both iOS and Android, while **Google** Maps and other third party apps can be integrated with new creations.

Thunkable allows individuals to be creative with app-building without needing detailed coding knowledge. This opens up the app creation space to many more consumers, and allows start-ups to create good looking apps with minimal cost.



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Cult of Creativity

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Sony gives staff time off to improve mental health

Employees are given extra days to improve work-life balance | UK

In May 2018, an internal memo for staff at **Sony Music** in the UK announced staff would receive two additional days off to help them improve their work-life balance. This was done to mark Mental Health Awareness Week.

These “premium days” were described by Sony as “dedicated time off which can be taken in order to pursue personal development”.

Initiatives like this follow on from broader debates in society about the importance of mental health and the impact demanding work environments can have on it.



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Mastering the Mind | Liquid Skills
Murdered by Modernity

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VR retail store training

Walmart trains employees for Black Friday with VR | USA

In mid-2017 **Walmart** announced it would be rolling out virtual reality training in all of the Walmart Academies.

The VR training allows Walmart to train employees for exceptional situations such as Black Friday shopping, which they wouldn't otherwise experience. VR allows new employees to be placed into the scenes of disruptive incidents or difficult situations, without having to disturb the shop floor in real life.

The company states this helps to deliver the best customer experience possible, and showcases a new use for VR technology.



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Immerse Me | Liquid Skills | The Death of Risk

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Women's only learning holidays

Adventure holidays where women learn from female mentors | USA

Launching more affordable weekend mini trips in 2018, **Damesly** is a women's only tour operator that organises workshops in different destinations to allow travellers to use their trip to up-skill or work on a passion. The workshops are run by professionals in photography, writing, cinematography, curation and PR - who happen to also be women.

Connecting groups of up to eight per trip, Damesly encourages solo travel by offering room buddy ups and a pre-made community in destination of people who share the same creative or profession pursuit.

Helping women to travel solo is a concern of a number of tour operators. Mini trips will help women who do not want to commit the time or money to a week long Damesly adventure.



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The Leisure Upgrade | Liquid Skills
Solo Living

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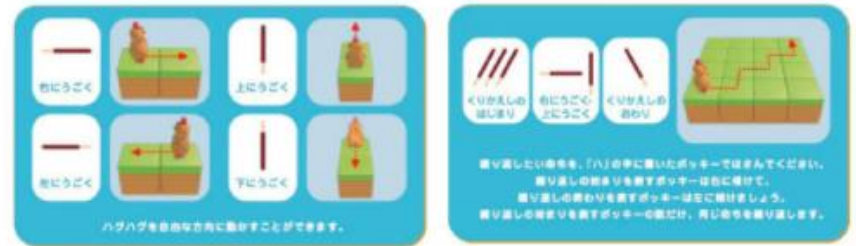
Learn coding with snacks

Glicode uses Pocky sticks to teach coding | Japan

Promoted in 2017 by Japan's **Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication** as part of the promoting programming initiative in schools, **Glicode** combines coding with popular **Pocky** snacks.

Intended for children as young as six year old, Glicode teaches children to use sequences, loops and IF statements. Children lay out Pocky stick treats to write code that is read by the Glico's app. The commands written in Pocky sticks control the movements of Glico's mascot HUG HUG in his virtual world.

Imparting the fundamentals of algorithmic thinking is considered important at a young age, but often parents and teachers lack these skills themselves. Glico aims to make coding fun by combining a cute mascot and real life treats that presumably, become a reward for completing levels.



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The Leisure Upgrade | Liquid Skills

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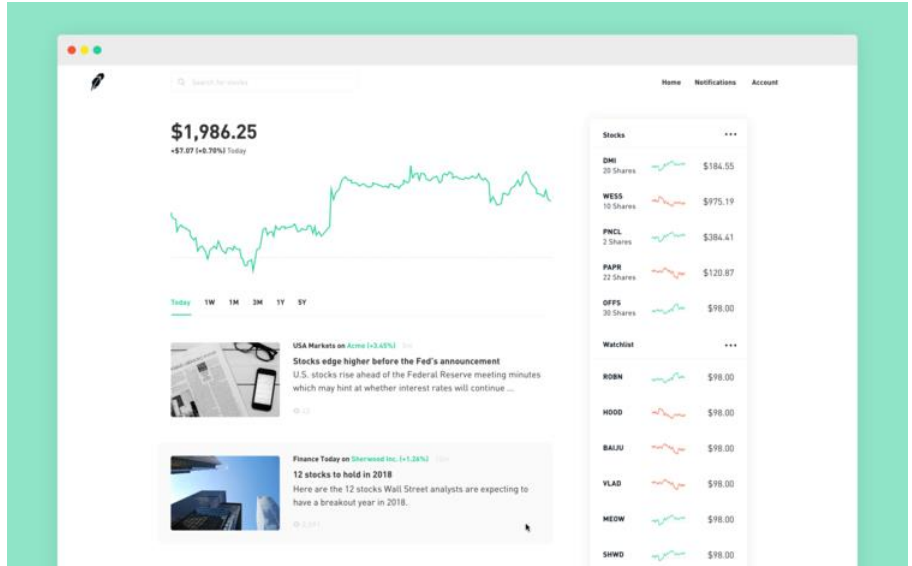
Robinhood for Web

Stock investing app launches web platform for research and discovery | USA

In November 2017, app-based stock investing tool **Robinhood**, launched **Robinhood for Web**, a new platform with more extensive research and discovery tools.

The web-based platform aims to help users become better-informed investors. Highlights from the new service include Collections, which help people discover new stocks in certain categories, Analyst Ratings from Wall Street and **Morningstar** analysts, and Earnings, which reveals a review of past and upcoming expected earnings for each company.

At the time of writing (November 2017) the platform is only available by invitation, but is expected to be rolled for general access in early 2018.



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