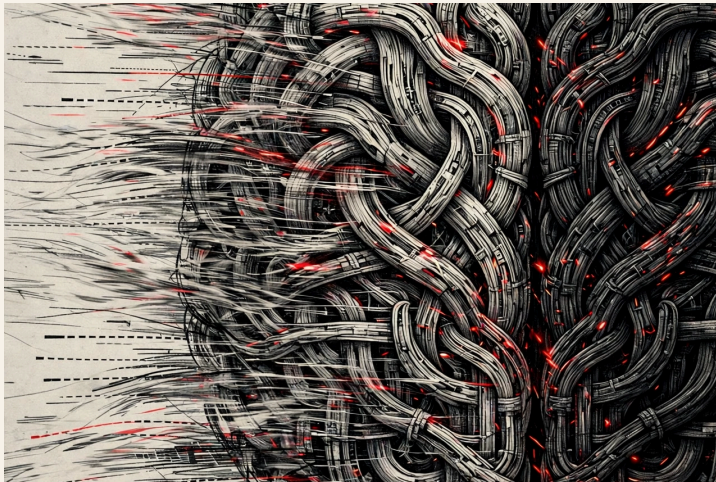


First, the signal. Then **the nuance.**

Cognitive neuroscientist Dr. Jared Cooney Horvath argues Gen Z is the first modern generation to score below the one before it across attention, memory, literacy, numeracy, executive function and IQ, despite more time in school. Treat that as his claim, presented in Senate testimony. The adult lesson underneath it does not depend on the strongest version being right.



WHERE TEAMS DIE

Leaders hear this as a schools story and move on. It is a revenue story. The same adult brain that skims a long article skims a call recording, a deal and a customer problem. Skimming feels like work. It builds almost no judgment, and judgment is what closes complex deals.

1. HEAVY USE IS THE PROBLEM, NOT ANY USE

OECD PISA findings are more precise than the headlines. Limited to moderate device use for learning can score above no use. The relationship turns negative as hours climb, and leisure use at school is linked to lower scores much sooner. Dose and purpose matter.

2. TRANSFER RUNS HARD TO EASY

Horvath's most useful idea for enablement: learn the hard version first and the easy version follows. Handwrite before you type. Do the math before the calculator. Run discovery unaided before you lean on AI notes. Start easy and there is nowhere harder to go.

3. ADULTS BRING BAGGAGE CHILDREN DO NOT

- **Speed pressure:** 12 meetings and a forecast reward shortcuts.
- **Expertise illusion:** watched it, read the summary, feels known. Live is different.
- **Old habits:** veterans must unlearn before they can relearn.

4. ADULTS LEARN DIFFERENTLY BY DESIGN

Malcolm Knowles' adult learning principles still hold: adults need to know why, direct their own learning, use their experience as a resource, learn what is relevant now, solve real problems and respond more to internal motivation than grades or completion badges.

80%

Design target for human practice in a program. Keep screens and reference to the other 20%.

5 to 7 hrs

Daily device use for learning in PISA data where scores fell below the 3 to 5 hour group.

Since 1800s

Generations rose cognitively until recently, in Horvath's account. Gen Z is where it first showed up in the data, not where it stops.

Build the thinking muscle.

At work and in life.



REPLACE THIS	WITH THIS HUMAN-FIRST DESIGN
60-minute e-learning and a quiz	10 minutes SEE IT: a manager breaks down a real call live. 30 minutes PRACTICE IT: reps run discovery in pairs with coaching. 20 minutes PROVE IT: a live deal inspection, no slides.
AI summary as the learning	AI as the sparring partner. It drafts, roleplays the prospect and gives feedback. The rep still has to inspect, challenge, verify and decide.
Completion as success	Cold performance as success. Measure what reps can do without the tool, then track behavior and outcomes, not views.

THE SAME RULES RUN YOUR LIFE OUTSIDE WORK

READ LONG

Finish the long piece.
Summaries train skimming.
Depth trains attention.

WRITE FIRST

Draft your own thinking
before AI touches it. Your
first draft is the learning.

LEARN HARD FIRST

Do it unaided until you can
judge the tool. Then let the
tool make you faster.

ADD FRICTION

Phone in another room.
One tab. One problem.
Attention follows design.

RUN THE COLD PERFORMANCE TEST THIS WEEK

- ☐ Pick one rep and one live deal. No deck allowed.
- ☐ Ask them to defend the pain and the economic buyer from memory.
- ☐ Remove the AI notes. Can they still reconstruct the call?
- ☐ Have a peer challenge the business case out loud.
- ☐ Score what they can do, not what they watched.
- ☐ Coach the gap live, then run it again within 48 hours.

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING: Horvath episode and testimony summary: <https://ryanvet.com/show/episodes/jared-cooney-horvath-the-digital-delusion/> / OECD PISA 2025, student and school life: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pisa-2025-results-volume-i_73451bc5-en/full-report/student-school-life-and-beyond_861e5904.html / Knowles andragogy overview: https://mcblogs.montgomerycollege.edu/thehub/fundamentals-of-teaching/instructor_resources/theory-of-andragogy/ Note: Horvath's generational claims are his interpretation of test data and are debated. OECD findings are associations, not proof that devices alone cause lower scores. The design principles above stand on adult learning research independent of that debate.