



Three Learning Trends to Watch in 2008

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As we enter 2008, what trends should we be aware of in managing a high-performing learning organization? Here are three trends to follow (and participate in) this year:

Paperless Colleges and Universities

Today's college students — part of the “net generation” that was born between 1980 and 1994 — have grown up with technology. They were born around the time the first PC was introduced, and approximately 20 percent were using computers by the time they were 6 years old. Today, as they enter the university classroom, they are experiencing a brave new world of learning without textbooks. Case in point: Assistant Professor Jerry Kane at Boston College teaches a class titled “Computers in Management,” which uses no textbooks. Instead, Kane has replaced books with wikis as the primary learning tool. This allows for improved collaboration among students, as well as a way to integrate RSS news feeds directly into class, making learning more relevant. As a corporate learning professional, you should take note and think about how learning can be similarly redesigned for the net generation.

Web 2.0 Tools for Corporate Learning

According to a recent ComScore Media Metrix report, teen usage of Web-based e-mail dropped 8 percent in 2007, and IM usage is expected to reach 46 billion messages by 2009. Members of the net generation are almost exclusively using an arsenal of Web 2.0 tools, such as instant messaging, blogs, wikis, Facebook posts, and podcasts, to network, learn and communicate.

One company using Web 2.0 tools for learning in an innovative way is Intel Corp. They have created an in-house wiki called Intelpedia. This is a way for Intel employees to share knowledge, collaborate with employees and post need-to-know company information in a safe, behind-the-firewall space. Within the first six months, more than 10,000 page lookups were tracked and Intelpedia has quickly become the go-to

place for new recruits who need to know what an Intel acronym means or want the latest update on a project.

Free Offerings in Corporate Learning Portals

There is a plethora of free learning your organization can link to on the Web. One of the most comprehensive of these is MIT Open Courseware Consortium. (You can find this at <http://ocw.mit.edu>.) MIT Open Courseware was created in 2001, just as many other universities were launching their own for-profit Web-based universities, like NYU Online and Temple Online. While those have long since closed, MIT Open Courseware has thrived by sharing free lecture notes, exams and other resources for its more than 1,800 courses in areas such as engineering, computer software, economics and health sciences, to name just a few. There also are more than 100 universities around the globe that have added their content in local languages to form the MIT Open Courseware Consortium. While MIT originally designed this for faculty usage, it turns out more than 50 percent of users are corporate “self learners.”

Another free resource is the Free Management Library, <http://www.managementhelp.org/>. This is a free online resource of 650 topics, spanning 5,000 links. Topics include areas such as leadership development, change management, marketing, finance, training and development, performance management and crisis management. In addition, each topic has recommended books and related library links contributed by community members.

The thread running across all three trends is this: Social software is transforming our world and allowing for new forms of learning and collaboration. Corporate learning departments must embrace new ways of learning and working — in other words, innovate or become irrelevant. ■

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