

# Social Learning

## Adding value to the L&D process

By Heidi D'Cunha

The foundation of Social Learning was first laid down by Albert Bandura through the Social Learning Theory. According to this theory, individuals learn from observing other individuals, thus forming role models to emulate.

Taking off from this theory, is the concept of Social Learning which is gaining momentum in today's evolving arena of Learning and Development (L&D).

### Social Learning - The Trend

Social Media has now become the primary tool which people use to share information and knowledge.

Social Media in L&D uses web or mobile based technology to support training or knowledge sharing among employees. If an organization wishes to be part of the world of best practices in L&D, they need to consider how to effectively use media as a tool in training.



### Exploiting Social Media for Learning

There are several ways to add that zing to your training program through social media. A few practices are mentioned below.

Start a discussion thread or a blog post a training program to carry the learning forward from the classroom. Comments, ratings and other contributions leads to a rich resource of knowledge sharing and can also serve to be important feedback or information for L&D managers.

After a skill development initiative, trainees may be introduced into a Community of Practice where field-specific experts interact informally on certain projects or real world problems. This would help connect these trainees to specialists in the area thus honing their skill. There could also be a community of high performers who are kept updated with new development activities and questions from them encouraged and addressed.

For new recruits, a forum may be set up for them to share experiences, feedback and also network with others. They may be encouraged to set up their profiles, enlist areas of interest etc which can prove to be a valuable pool of information for HR.

In a blended learning scenario, employees can attend classroom training, and they may then be invited to use a social media platform to discuss projects and assignments. Any project updates could be communicated by the facilitator through this platform. Additionally, documents can be uploaded and shared among the group as well.

Videos can also be used as a training tool and uploaded for the target audience to view. For instance, to train sales force on a new product, a video may be uploaded on a learning platform for all to view and post queries.

### Keeping an eye on your Social Learning Media

Social Learning platforms may have a tendency to turn into grievance forums or a venue for people to whine about their work conditions. Thus, it turns into a wasted opportunity for healthy learning. To avoid it turning into a monster rather than a friend, an organization needs to first have a social learning plan chalked out and resources well allocated to execute the plan. There need to be eyes on the social exchanges taking place on the learning platform. Someone must make sure users are collaborating and strategically partnering for enhanced learning and not otherwise.

If explored in the right way, social media in training has a potential to change an organization's learning culture and drive interaction and positive communication among its employees. It creates a culture of on-demand learning which helps create knowledge workers and accelerates informal learning. **TEL**



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