



The
NEW
Social Learning

A Guide to Transforming Organizations Through Social Media

Tony Bingham and Marcia Conner

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Introduction

Training often gives people solutions to problems already solved. Collaboration addresses challenges no one has overcome before.

Beyond the hype, buzzwords, and entertainment value of reconnecting with old friends, people in organizations across the globe use social media to collaborate and learn. Emerging technologies enable a new kind of knowledge-building ecosystem with people at its core.

Classic business models presumed that relevant information is created and shared either through management or training. But classic isn't enough: there's too much to know and make sense of, too little time to gain perspective, and information changes too fast to dispense. A virtual water cooler becomes a gathering place to share ideas and ask questions beyond the limits of formal organizations, company meetings, or classrooms.

Our inherent drive to learn together can be facilitated through emerging technologies that extend, widen, and deepen our reach. More so than any other technology, social media allows us to embrace the needs of changing workplace demographics and enables people of all ages to learn in ways that are comfortable and convenient for them.

Today, networks of knowledgeable people, working across time and space, can make informed decisions and solve complex problems in ways they couldn't dream of years ago. By bringing together people who share interests, no matter their location or time zone, social media has the potential to transform the workplace into an environment where learning is as natural as it is powerful.

While most writing about social media focuses on how to use it for marketing, we believe there's a larger story to tell. This book is for people who are specifically interested in how social media helps people in organizations learn quickly, innovate fast, share their knowledge, and engage with peers, business partners, and the customers they serve.

We came together to write this book because the topic matters deeply to each of us even though we come to the subject from unique vantage points.

Tony leads a large professional association whose members help organizations achieve sustainable competitive advantage by building the knowledge and skills of their people. He is committed to helping executives and the training and development community align learning with the strategic priorities of the organization, and to ensure they have the tools to build the capability of the workforce to achieve growth and success. And, as a result of years spent working in the technology sector, he has a personal passion for the power that collaborative tools have to create big change.

Marcia leads a small agile consulting firm that educates public and private sector clients about opportunities that emerging social media affords. She brings clarity to product strategies and market positions, and facilitates a cultural shift to prepare organizations to adopt social media, removing barriers in their path to succeed. With a long history in the workplace learning field,

often inside large enterprises, she brings a cognitive perspective to industries that seek to do more than just inform.

We wrote this book for senior executives, managers at all levels, and the people rising quickly to those posts. Rather than simply address leaders focused on education delivery models, trainers thinking about instructional design, or even technologists fascinated by tools, we explore the application of social media in all aspects of talent management: recruitment, engagement, retention, capacity, and capability. We look at the power of social learning and share compelling stories from companies that validate the value of collaborative technologies to elevate and accelerate business and employee impact.

The opening chapter addresses the trends reshaping the workplace, the challenges and opportunities these shifts create, and how the new social learning provides the flexibility and perspective required in times of change.

Each subsequent chapter focuses on one social media category and its application. Every chapter also tackles the business challenges these emerging practices can overcome and how to address critics as you wade into the social stream, providing recommendations on how you and your organization can begin to put these approaches to work. While we address technology, we recognize that the specific tools in use today may have changed dramatically by the time you read this book, so we've created a complementary and updateable website—<http://newsociallearning.com>—where you can learn more about the applications you may want to try.

Although each chapter builds on the one before it, beginning with the broadest approaches and then narrowing in on more specific methods, we encourage you to read the first chapter and then skip to any other chapter that intrigues you, weaving your way back.

It is our hope that with a broad view of social media's power to transform your organization, you will garner wide participation and facilitate meaningful conversations, finding yourself ready to move forward with deeper understanding, concrete examples of success, and a renewed energy to learn.

Tony Bingham
@tonybingham
Alexandria, VA

Marcia Conner
@marciamarcia
Staunton, VA

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The New Social Learning Playground Rules

1. No loitering in the playground areas. The value is in participation and engagement.
2. Playground is for people of all ages.
3. No persons uninterested in having influence allowed on the premises.
4. No abusive, spammy, or intolerant behavior. Sarcasm, debate, challenging, and calling out bull are welcome, though.
5. If you feed pigeons, be warned they may poop on you.
6. Keep excessive cussing, name calling, and partisan politics away from the pool.
7. Enjoy life offline to stay interesting online.
8. The right to be heard does not include the right to be taken seriously.
9. Be patient, above all, with yourself.

Failure to obey these rules can result in missing an unprecedented opportunity to learn with smart, interesting people across the globe.

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