THECR
NETWORK

Social Learning 101

SNAPSHOT

SPEAKER
Marcia Conner ([Altimeter)](Altimeter)

COMPETENCIES
Community Management

MATURITY PHASES
CMM1, CMM2, CMM3, CMM4

TOP THREE TAKEAWAYS

1. In order to describe the subtle differences, we explore the definitions of social media, social learning and learning. These terms should not be used interchangeably:

    1. **Social Media:** Technology used to engage three or more people.
    2. **Social Learning:** Participating with others to make sense of new ideas.
    3. **Learning:** The process of taking information to transform an individual in a way that allows them to do things differently.

2. A first step to removing roadblocks is to help others understand the obstacles, self-imposed and organizational, that are impeding them to try these new tools.

3. Demonstrate the "What's in it for Me" element of social participation. Help individuals (particularly subject matter experts) to see that participation will actually reduce their workload, not increase it. This can be done by directing people to a URL that has all the subject matter expert's (SMEs) resources. Having an online resource may actually reduce the amount of time that the SME is called into meetings and/or asked to sit on projects because his/her expertise is easily accessible.

OVERVIEW

Marcia began the discussion by sharing her background with participants:

Marcia's career began with Microsoft and PeopleSoft. In these roles, she was involved in training. However, working in technology companies without the customary science background, it enabled her to see how these technological tools could be used socially to assist with the learning process. Consequently, at PeopleSoft Marcia was responsible for the interface that actually allowed people to work in a business context by connecting people with the information that would help them to make better decisions.

Marcia believes that in the last 10 years, organizations have forgotten that the work that they do, no matter what industry, is relationship-based. As a result, Marcia's work focuses on getting back to the way that people have always worked naturally. It is a move away from heavy, binding processes within organizations that have essentially removed that human element from how people actually connect and get work done.

For those who are facing the challenge of proving the value of social media and social learning to their organizations, Marcia explained that it helps to demonstrate that together we are better. It becomes valuable for people in organizations to have their own network. That network becomes a lifeline to enable better, faster decisions.

BEST PRACTICES

Identify and Remove Roadblocks to Social Learning/Social Media

Marcia recommends that a first step to removing roadblocks is to help others understand the roadblocks impeding them to try. Ask people outright what they think about social media. Marcia stated that in her experience, when people are asked that question there are a couple of consistent answers: "I have nothing important to say" and/or "Those people are going to say something dumb." Both of these statements reflect organizational dilemmas vs. individual dilemmas. In the first statement, people do not feel that they are being heard within their organizations. The second statement reflects trust issues.

Purposefully Direct People to Social Media Tools

Purposefully direct people to the social media tools and get them to use these tools to solve a problem. Doing so will help them to realize the benefits on their own vs. trying to sell the benefits to them. As well, do not give away all the important information in an email. Instead, direct the email recipient to the social network and let them know that they can find the answer there, as well as much, much more information.

Shift the Mindset: When describing social media/social learning, make sure that it is not described as being something extra that the person has to do. Instead, let them know that by removing whatever obstacles were blocking its use before, it now allows them to do what comes naturally (to be social).

Demonstrate the "What's in it for Me" Element of Social Participation: Help individuals (particularly subject matter experts) to see that participation will actually reduce their workload, not increase it. Encourage these SMEs to view themselves as "mini hubs of information." They are pushing that information out into the world for people to be able to self-serve, thereby freeing up the amount of time they need to be in meetings or sit on projects.

LESSONS LEARNED

Marcia was asked how social learning works as a community weaver when working with sales people. Marcia explained that salespeople or marketing folks are innately people-oriented.

If they can step back and view the work that they do as a means to help somebody get from where they are to where they want to be, it changes the conversation from selling to building. So, instead of viewing it as pushing out information, it should be able to help them see how their world can change as a result of it.

Marcia recommends four metrics for measuring social learning. These can be used for any social business engagement:

- Measure how many people log in, i.e. they have enough interest to actually try it out.
- Measure those who actually return (they return because they found value the first time). Most organizations do not measure the repeat number.
- Track every time you do something faster or more efficiently as a result of a relationship.
- Measure the reduction of money spent in the organization as a result of relationships and/or social tools, i.e. these tools have made something faster and have helped people to connect.

Another participant asked if fun and competition have to be included in the social learning process in order to increase participation. Marcia explained that the only reason people are not enjoying learning is if there are roadblocks in their past (too hard, too time consuming, etc.) So, it is not that motivation needs to be added. The trick is to remove the roadblocks that keep people from wanting to learn.

She recommends reading: *"Drive"* by Dan Pink for further insights.

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

- Using social learning as a way to connect internally, as well as externally with other organizations to gain strategy insights for using one company's product.

- One member hosted a conversation with another professional in the industry and shared the conversation with her member companies.

- TheCR Network is a perfect example of social learning for one member.

- For course development, as a way to incorporate more "on demand" learning, as a resource for other communities in the non-profit industry and as an innovation platform.

- Using Socialtext to: identify SMEs to create a Q&A database; leverage blogs and Wikis by SMEs within this participant's organization in order to reduce the amount of time these SMEs need to attend meetings and sit on projects; help the field teams share sales success tactics in a discussion form.

RESOURCES

- As mentioned in the discussion: *"Learn More Now"* by Marcia Conner:
http://www.amazon.com/o/asin/0471273902/ref=nosim/agelesslearne-20/

- As mentioned in the discussion – *"Drive"* by Dan Pink: http://www.danpink.com/drive

- As mentioned in the discussion: http://www.thenewsociallearning.com/

- As mentioned in the discussion: http://www.slideshare.net/marcia

- As mentioned in the discussion: http://www.ted.com/talks/benjamin_zander_on_music_and_passion.html