Chapter 4
Social Media:
A Discussion of Considerations for Modern Organizations and Professionals

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the impact of social networking on participation in organizations across market sectors to include government, business and non-profit entities. The author relates the experiences of young adults working in various occupations on how smartphone use can influence social networking and interactions and whether that influence improves or hampers their learning and professional development. A review of literature and recent social media development trends are used to gather information in support of a conceptual model of media usage and social networked learning within organizations. Leaders and organizational members may want to refer to this 4 stage model when thinking about ways to improve their use of social media and informal learning opportunities found on the Internet and on smart devices.

INTRODUCTION

What a world we live in today! Our ability to engage in social media and to entertain ourselves at any time of day or night is remarkable. Social media, which is sometimes referred to as Web 2.0 or the read-write web, is growing as part of our professional lives each day. Social media includes blogs, business networks, collaborative projects, enterprise social networks, forums, microblogs, photo sharing platforms, product/service reviews, social bookmarking, social gaming, video sharing and virtual worlds. As the power of personal computers and smartphone devices increases, so does the public's appetite for maintaining an online presence. Our online presence allows us to stay current on world events and allows our minds to wander through volumes of information and images as we surf the web. Is this a good thing? Can we get smarter or more professional by viewing our journey across the playing field of the internet as a remedy rather than just a form of amusement?

The internet will evolve and change over time to provide richer forms of content (media, news, information, services) available at our fingertips. It will become the fountain of learning for all of mankind in the 21st century. Amazingly, the unique authoring, storage, and sharing capabilities of the web and the cloud will make it possible for us to learn just about anything both formally, informally, and at our own pace. We see this already starting to happen across major educational institutions and university systems that now offer courses through the internet. Social media is also driving informal learning wherein online tutorials and mini courses are more frequently appearing on the web in different venues as free learning options. In fact, social media is becoming a source of learning that we all regularly interface with in order to get smart about things quickly. Daily, people using personal devices such as smartphones gather information on how to live their lives better by consulting social media applications (Apps). The internet, now with its multiple venues for connecting socially, drives our collective memory and is a bubbling cauldron of activity. Moreover, to be effective actors in this world, we are now increasingly compelled to participate in social media much in the manner that the German Philosopher Martin Heidegger (McConnell-Henry, Chapman et al. 2009) described when he coined the term *Dasein* to contextualize the need to "be there" amongst other things.

But the downside to all this frenetic activity is that we tend to discount the importance of face-to-face (f2f) communication and interpersonal connections with people. Writers in the field of social psychology have painted internet communications as an impoverished and sterile form of social exchange compared to traditional face-to-face interactions. Members of the digital generation are prepared to spend longer hours using virtual reality and social media to connect superficially than to

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