

Chapter 3.19

Collaboration Intricacies of Web 2.0 for Training Human Resource Managers

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INTRODUCTION

The **World Wide Web** (WWW) was initially written as a “point and click hypertext editor” (Berners-Lee, 1998, para. 2). Used as a search device by academia and industry, it has over the years experienced both rapid and explosive growth. Earlier incarnations of the **World Wide Web** were known as “Web 1.0.” Since its inception however the internet has undergone a rapid transformation into what is now considered a sense of community, a reciprocal sharing among users, and a sense of “cognitive presence” (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000), which has been facilitated by a plethora of software tools that allowed users to widely share their work, in thought (e.g., blogs), in creative endeavors, and in collaborative projects. Siemens’ (2005) theory of “connectivism” encompasses the feeling that sharing promotes and encourages a sense of community that is continually being recreated by its audience. The newest forms of interaction are in the form of **virtual worlds**, in which **avatars**

can attend class, build their own edifices, sell objects, and meet with other individuals in a global virtual exchange. What was once considered static computing has been transformed into a rich, dynamic environment that is defined by the people who peruse it, as evidenced in the following quotation: “The breaking down of barriers has led to many of the movements and issues we see on today’s internet. File-sharing, for example, evolves not of a sudden criminality among today’s youth, but rather in their pervasive belief that information is something meant to be shared” (Downes, 2006, para. 15). As of 2006, the Web had a billion users worldwide (Williams, 2007). Today’s Web users for the most part are not simply information seekers, but co-creators who wish to collaborate and share information in an electronic environment.

The purpose of this article is to connect collaborative theory with the current innovations occurring on the WWW, and to describe specific technological products that are enabling users to experience a sense of ownership and community

in a medium which they have claimed as their own. In addition, implications for training and human resources managers are discussed.

BACKGROUND

In describing the World Wide Web, Berners-Lee (1998, para. 3) refers to "...a common information space in which we communicate by sharing information." It has actually taken several years, a multitude of software incarnations, and an exponential growth in users to achieve the original vision intended for the internet. For this reason, Downes (2006) refers to Web 2.0 as not a technological, but rather a social revolution, which has created a community of proactive participants who are constantly recreating their electronic domain. Some tools that have facilitated true connective practice are blogs (chronological diaries of information on a certain topic); wikis (editable Web pages); slideshow and video sharing; list sharing of event plans (with programs like Backpack®); sites devoted to communal picture uploads (e.g., Flickr™); social bookmarking; **virtual worlds**, and **social networking** sites (e.g., MySpace® and Facebook®, in which individuals can both post information and search for other people). RSS, also known as "really simple syndication," "rich site summary" or "RDF site summary" software permits dynamic feeds of either new material from a site (such as Web pages, blogs, or news organizations) or downloads of new contributions (such as tagged social bookmarking topics) in an aggregated end product to the destination of one's choice. Technologies that lend themselves to team work (like Wikipedia®, an online encyclopedia), involve the contribution and **collaboration** of many geographically dispersed individuals. In their research, Beck and Wade (2004) found for example that when presented with the statement "The best way to get things done is to connect with the right people" the highest percentage in both younger and older categories were frequent

gamers. This study was conducted with 2,500 individuals in corporate America (Van Eck, 2007).

Consequently, far from solitary, isolated, hermit type individuals who keep to themselves, avid net users are concerned with a larger collective presence. The following statement is in fact from a presentation in Slideshare (slide #8, "Web 2.0 tools"): "Hutchings (2002) credits Shulman with the notion of publicly sharing one's work for critical review that became accepted as an integral element of the scholarship of teaching and learning" ("Web 2.0 Tools"). When everything can be accessed by everyone, a certain democratization and ownership of knowledge takes place that empowers the individuals who are both recipients and co-creators in this new participative forum. Everyone in this medium is thus transformed at once into both teacher and student.

For human resource managers, the implication is that the very nature of training must change in order to accommodate the Web 2.0 generation, and those who are immersed in this technology on a daily basis. Davis (2006) suggests the following traits of teachers in a Web 2.0 classroom. They are (1) connected; (2) open-minded; (3) vigilant; (4) have the ability to hold students accountable for themselves (5) have character; and (6) are passionate about their topic. She also argues that the best Web 2.0 teachers practice what they preach, in that they themselves make an effort to connect electronically and to "share their best practices with others." She shared the following comments (Davis, 2006, p. 4):

"We will educate by any means necessary!"

We will leave behind our preconceived notions!

We will go into territory where we do not feel comfortable!

We will go where our students congregate and interact!

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