Chapter 6.22
Informal Self–Regulated Learning in Corporate Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Sharing knowledge is one of the most challenging tasks modern companies have to deal with. A vast amount of knowledge exists within organizations; however it is often difficult to find and to judge its value. As a consequence, learning and knowledge building seem to be a lonely activity, separated from everyday work. Transfer of knowledge acquired in formal courses has little impact and effect on day-to-day work. That is why training often has a low return on investment. Knowledge management systems have also proven to be ineffective as they fail to present the knowledge employees are looking for. So how can we improve learning in organizations using ICT? To find an answer to this question we might learn from the generation that has grown up with modern communication technologies. This Homo Zappiens has shaped new ways of communication and information sharing including attitudes and views leading to collective knowledge building strategies. Prominent characteristics of Homo Zappiens include their preference for images and symbols as an enrichment of plain text, their seemingly effortless adoption of technology and their cooperation and sharing in networks. This generation seems to take exploration and learning, discovering the world, into their own hands. Homo Zappiens shows us we can increasingly rely on technology to connect us and allow us to organize as a group. In a networked society, the individual has more room for contributing

its unique value, and innovation and knowledge reside in a network, rather than in each separate individual. Realizing that we need a flexible structure for organizing ourselves and the world around us, we can look at Homo Zappiens for a clue. This chapter describes self-regulated learning within a network (Networked Learning) and presents a model for it. It also presents experiences with the model at the multi-national corporation IBM, where a Technology-Enhanced Learning Environment (TELE) was built and introduced.

INTRODUCTION

The sharing of knowledge between employees is one of the most challenging tasks modern companies nowadays face (Siemens, 2005; Siemens 2006). Organizations have access to vast amounts of tacit and tangible knowledge; but for an employee this knowledge is often difficult to find and its actual value cannot always be judged. As a consequence, active learning and knowledge acquisition seem to be lonely activities, both distinctly separated from regular, everyday work. Knowledge transfer that occurs in formal courses has little impact on the day-to-day work of employees (Weistra, 2005), as shown in Figure 1. That is why training often has a low return on investment.

Advances in ICT, through the years, have provided us with new possibilities and opportunities for improving learning. But technology enhanced learning in companies currently often supports a rather traditional single actor learning, such as first generation e-learning where printed matter has been digitalized into hypertexts, or available data-bases that are poorly used, or blended learning scenarios using learning platforms (Siemens, 2006). The learning in these situations remains an individual act with no interpersonal communication or connection to the daily working practice. New concepts of learning are needed to improve training and learning of the employees, through the use of technology.

For inspiration on how to organize learning alternatively, we can look to the new generation of students that have had their views on the world around them shaped by modern communication technologies (Tapscott, 1998; Collis & Moonen, 2001; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Veen & Vrakking 2006). Due to their preference for television and Internet technology, this generation has been called Homo Zappiens (Veen & Vrakking 2006), or the Net Generation (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). Prominent characteristics of Homo Zappiens include their preference for images and symbols, their seemingly effortless adoption of technology, and their cooperation and sharing in

Figure 1. Learning activities and their relevance
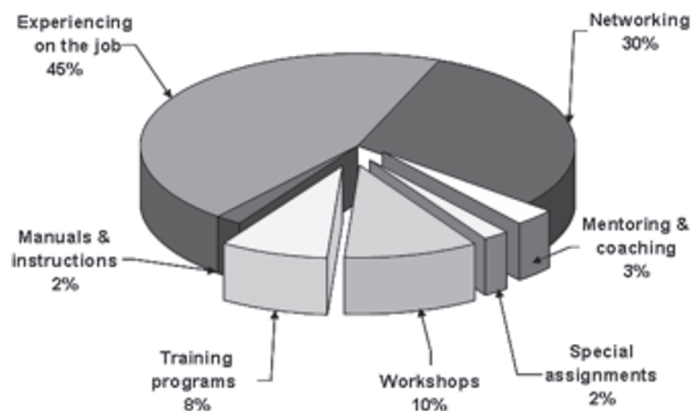
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