Chapter 23
Social Media as Positive Disruption in Education, E-Learning and B-Learning

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ABSTRACT

Today, the preparation that learners receive in higher education often fails to meet the needs and demands of the world of work, research, and success. This chapter proposes that the changes social media is causing in the business world can be further leveraged in higher education to cultivate 21st century learners, primed for innovative thinking. A model is provided which scaffolds critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity and innovation through low cost/no-cost social media tools in educational and professional settings. At this time, social media's capabilities and near ubiquitous access provide an essential infrastructure which has not been seen before. The chapter also presents specific strategies, valuable recommendations, and further direction for social media's use.

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2010, I had a startling experience as an invited participant in an "expert" panel at Columbia University Business School in New York City. Our topic was Addressing with Social Media Demands in Business and Communication Schools for Media Industries, and the panel was the culminating event in a day-long conference dedicated to the discussion of innovations, applications and issues related to social media and marketing. The day had been filled with new revelations, insights, networking and discussions.

Our panel addressed the topic at hand from a wide range of experience and differing philosophies of education, technology and business. Despite being so deeply involved in the work of digital and social media, distance learning, ecommerce, and global collaborations, the varied perspectives on whether the work of media managers had changed or not surprised me. The startling moment for me was when a student attendee asked the panel which of us used social media person-

ally, professionally, and in our classes. I was not prepared to be the lone social media maven.

There were many reasons my colleagues were not using social media, and many were shared among them, but I felt that this was a paradoxical moment. As we were speaking to the need and the potential uses of social media, I had assumed, incorrectly, that we were all working with it, stretching practice, and discovering new opportunities.

In this chapter, I will discuss several issues related to social media adoption as innovation across the related contexts of business and education. Fully integrated into this discussion is the perspective that leaders, managers, professionals, educators, and students all need to be using the social media tools in order to be current with our world. From my vantage point, the critical connection is that this is an age of rapid knowledge construction. Therefore, in order to be effective in our daily lives, work and continuing learning, we must be engaged in the communities and forums where that knowledge is being generated. What is more, we need to use the tools that are embedded in these activities and conversations.

BACKGROUND: FINALLY, REACHING BEYOND THE INDUSTRIAL AGE

Spectator learning is an industrial age model. (King, 2009). It is a passive model of assimilation and indoctrination (Freire, 1973; Spring, 2009). In sharp contrast, 21st century survival, work, and learning demands active engagement, problem solving, critical thinking, and knowledge construction (The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2004; King & Sanquist, 2009; Wankel, 2010). This chapter outlines ways in which 21st century learning and social media can be incorporated in higher education and professional learning. The major sections define and illustrate the characteristics of 21st century learning which are essential for the constantly changing and demanding work-

place as well as lifelong continuing learning. The next section illustrates the needs for and means of using social media to accomplish each of the competencies identified.

It is not a matter of *whether* we use social media or not; it is a matter of *when* we will. Our organizations and we will be left behind if we remain outside the circle of dialogue, collaboration and knowledge creation which is being generated through this medium.

21st Century Learning

The world of life and work in the 21st Century is starkly different from the world which shaped the culture and practices of our educational systems. Historical records clearly delineate how the agricultural and industrial ages each, in turn, shaped the calendar, goals and formats of mandatory and postsecondary education. The needs of agrarian societies to have students available at harvest time dictated the school calendar (Spring, 2009). Moreover, in the USA, the rise of mass manufacturing and immigration led to the role of schools to assimilate people from different nations to one cultural identity, preparing them to follow authority and work independently (Spring, 2009). However as our society now changes rapidly our work as adults includes constant learning. Therefore, corporate training and business related learning are critical expectations and commitments in our work lives.

The dominant practice of didactic lecturing was carried from the Middle Ages, in schools like Oxford and Cambridge Universities on to Germany and the USA, creating a common university pedagogical practice and culture (Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Rudolph, & Thelin, 1991). While mandatory education in the USA, at least, has been responsive, riding waves of changing pedagogical theories and models, the world of higher education has mostly kept the same tradition, and the focus of learning has been content rather than the scholarship of teaching and learning.

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