

Social Media: Enhancing your PLN

This issue of Teaching Space looks at how various social media platforms can enhance your PLN (Personal Learning Network), in other words the people or organisations that you collect or share information with online. As an LO educator, your PLN is an essential way of keeping up to date with career development trends and information, knowing about university career fairs and closing dates, getting lesson plan ideas, keeping up to date with curriculum changes... the list goes on.

Get on-board

Social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube to name a select few) will evolve, change and develop with time, but social media is here to stay. You can choose to fight and ignore it, but the world is changing and as an educator it's essential to keep up with those changes. This doesn't mean that you have to be a social media guru, but at the very least it's important to understand the risks and benefits to be able to guide learners accordingly.

Social media platforms to help you to build your PLN

There are so many different platforms; it's difficult to know where to begin! I have tried to keep this short and simple and highlight a select few, but a little bit of time on Google will illustrate the countless options available.

Facebook

It might seem like an odd concept to use Facebook to enhance your PLN. There is the question of whether or not it's appropriate to accept invitations from learners, parents and fellow educators. Facebook has traditionally been seen as a very personal socialising tool. More and more teachers are creating a separate 'professional' profile where they feel more comfortable interacting with people in their professional capacity. It's an easy way of updating homework requirements, online readings or useful articles and TED Talk or YouTube links.

Twitter

Twitter has quickly become one of the most popular social media platforms for educators. With its 140 character limit, it forces people to be brief and to the point. It's easy to view on a smart phone and you only

need to 'follow' organisations and individuals who tweet relevant and interesting information or article links. As an educator, it's important to keep up to date with what is going on in the field – particularly when it comes to something like career development, which is constantly evolving. If you are feeling clueless regarding to how to start, there are lots of free handbooks/guides to using Twitter for teachers available online.

We really like:

- @SACareerFocus
- @Achieve_Careers
- @Edudemic
- @TEACH!Conference
- @TEDTalks

YouTube

I have found during my presentations at schools that the best way to keep learners engaged in what I am saying is to show a relevant and upbeat video clip (I try to time it just as they are starting to look tired or lose focus). Use programmes such as 'keepvid' to save any useful clips.

Pintrest

Pintrest is a fun, creative way of collecting images and videos and can be used to swap and share lesson plans. It's an inspiring tool for visual and creative learners – a task using Pintrest may involve creating a visual representation of a learner's career aspirations.

Dropbox

Dropbox is an incredibly useful (and free) storage tool. Instead of having to lug flash sticks around, create a dropbox account and you can sign in from any computer. ■

TO SUMMARISE

Social media can be a daunting topic, particularly when teenagers are more adept at using the technology than we are ever likely to be! However, the variety of social media platforms offer exciting and dynamic ways of enhancing our PLNs. Get on board – you've got nothing to lose!

Follow Joanne on @Achieve_Careers on Twitter or Achieve Careers on Facebook



Joanne Wood is an employability specialist and certified career coach. She is the founder of Achieve Careers, an organisation which specialises in providing the necessary support and resources required to ensure that educators are able to provide their learners with practical, up-to-date career development information.

Lesson Plan

SOCIAL MEDIA

Grade 11 & 12

According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary (2004), social media can be defined as "forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and micro blogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content."

Using the above definition and the article about social media, complete the following tasks to enhance your PLN (Personal Learning Network):

Task 1:

It's your responsibility as a team to create a social networking platform for your fellow classmates to search for job opportunities. Form groups of 4-6 learners and research one of the following PLN's:

1. Twitter
2. Facebook

You are required to list the pros and cons for your network. Explain how you can use this network to share information, find information and build a hub of knowledge for your class to use. Remember to state what you will find on the platform, why you have placed this information there, what kind of links you will provide, etc.

Task 2:

As an employer, and being aware of social networking, you are required to do a search of potential employees on Facebook. Provide reasons for doing your search on a social networking site.

Task 3:

If you could design a social media platform what would you like to be able to post or view?

For example CVs for a specific type of job: e.g. a social media network for freelance graphic designers.

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