Teaching by Twitter: *Extending the classroom via Social Media?*

Conference or Workshop Item

How to cite:


For guidance on citations see FAQs.

© [not recorded]

Version: Version of Record

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online’s data policy on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.
Teaching by Twitter

*Extending the classroom via Social Media?*

Andrew Smith
@OUCisco or @teraknor

Life-changing Learning
Brief - who am I

Senior Lecturer in Networking

Work recognised by JISC in UK as one of UK Higher Education’s top #50 Social Media Influencers

- I specialise in teaching Cisco CCNA and CCNP networking to undergraduate as well as postgraduate students as well as Security (CyberSecurity / Network Security / Digital Forensics / Security+) and Linux (LPI and Linux+)
- I have been active in the Cisco and CompTIA academic communities for too long to be polite
- Find me as @teraknor on twitter or follow @OUCisco / @OUCyberSec
- I work at the Open University - a Blended Distance University in the United Kingdom
Teaching by Twitter

Setting the Context
We had 2400+ students on our Linux+ short course

This course is absorbed into our mainstream provision and has already reached another 3000 with Linux+ related content

The Open University has c600-800 students every year studying CCNA or CCNP based modules, having reached 6500+ Cisco Academy students since 2005

Around 450+ have also been reached with Security+ content
Engaged in social media activity since September 2013

We teach **nerds** network engineering - so far the focus has been Cisco moving to @OULinux from June in tandem with CompTIA and LPI

We have 1840+ students following our CyberSecurity MOOC twitter feed (pre Security+)
Context (2)

- The Open University has been teaching since 1969 - Royal Charter making us ‘an old university’
- On average around 150,000+ students
- Reached five million students since inception
Blended Distance Learning requires a large machine to meet demands of scale.

We vary model according to discipline, content and context.

- Some modules entirely online
- Some modules require face-to-face tutorials
- Some modules have day schools
- Some modules have residential schools
Context (4)

- We create content - sourced content is used, use is low volume in comparison
- A student must be able to read the material and complete the assessment in their own context - we set way points, they manage their own study
- Our model is based on an asynchronous paradigm
Back to Teaching by Twitter

Please do tweet!
@teraknor or @OUCisco &
coming soon @OULinux
Free is a price I am willing to pay

- we cannot predict what platform our students/customers prefer to use
  - it could be a smart phone
  - or a web browser
  - or a specific application

- nor should we care

- developers everywhere have created the software for us

- so, let's use them all
And then comes the inspiration ...

Let's use **social media** to enhance the teaching of one of our Network Engineering modules. Ensuring that it **leaks** out onto the Internet as well as **supports** the learning of our **current students**.

Using social media to deliver a form of knowledge nugget or intellectual reinforcement technique.

While the focus has been on ‘Cisco’ we know that this translates to all vendors - and plan to do this.
Teaching by Twitter

What platforms do we use?
So what platforms do we use (1)

- Creation of an ‘Open University Cisco’ group
- Currently over 490+ members
- Tends to attract a variety of professionals (which is obvious)
  - Cisco CCNA/CCNP engineers beyond the confines of the module being taught
  - Open University Cisco Alumni
So what platforms do we use (2)

- Created a fan page (540+) more from within Open University Course
- Also specialist Packet Tracer >> Mac group (1580+)
  - Linked to my pedagogical simulation work
- Very eclectic mix of members
- Occasional questions come in via this route
So what platforms do we use (3)

- 730 followers
- 30% seem to be from within the course itself
- some we pick up from retweets, faves and exchanges with @CiscoNetAcad
- we do get frequent twitter exchanges with a small section (25-30 est) members of this community
- also embedded within moodle - reaching 500 students on current module presentation
- we will discuss ‘impressions’ later
So what platforms do we use (4)

- 120 followers
- the quietest of all ...
- however it does help in search engine rank
- but ... I use the Google to RSS site ...
  - we see some using RSS readers
So what platforms do we use (5)

- Allows depth to some of the content
- Has been useful in sharing some internal ideas, externally
- Looking to evolve as a source of additional content
So what platforms do we use (6)

- we have some deliberate short ‘named’ URLs
- used when we link to internal university content
- also used for occasional course promotion
So what platforms do we use (7a)

- **Periscope** - Mini Monday Networking
- Practical **Streaming Video** Show Tell sessions around one specific network engineering topic/concept/skill
- **Persistent for 24 hours**
- Session length ten mins
- Typical audience varies from 40 to 120 per session
- **EXPERIMENTAL**
So what platforms do we use (7b)

- **Facebook Live** – NetNerd – a series of short webinars, over five evenings for one week
- Practical **Streaming Video** Show Tell sessions around one specific network engineering topic/concept/skill
  - *Persistent forever*
- Session length ten mins
- Typical audience 250+
- **EXPERIMENTAL**
So what platforms do we use (8)

- **Micro PodCasting**
- No more than ten minutes of audio
- Idea stolen from Curtin Cisco Academy for Vision Impaired and supported by Royal National College for the Blind (in the UK)
- Demo/Explanation entirely audio yet kept deliberately short in keeping with affordance of Social Media
- Is 1/2 an hour too long for a podcast in the social media space
So what platforms do we use (9)

- IFTTT - IF This Then That
- Creation of Rule (recipes) for social media integration - also works with IoE technology
- You do one thing on social media - it will automatically syndicate to other platforms
- One input becomes multiple outputs
So what platforms do we use (10)

- **Hoot suite**
- Multi Social Media Platform Scheduling and Automation
- Allows you to schedule one message at a time on multiple accounts (for free)
- Allows you to schedule multiple (350) messages on multiple accounts via CSV for USD$ 9.99 per month
- I use this for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+
Then stringing it together
Teaching by Twitter

Engagement Methods!

Life-changing Learning
Engagement Methods (1a)

- Sequential CSV’s* of Course related content
  - We know our study calendar (you may know this as a scheme of work)
  - We know more-or-less when students will be covering content
- Use a separate CSV with weekly reminders
  - what should you be studying
  - what assignments are due
  - day schools (classes) or other module events
- As we are externally facing, occasional information on the course opportunities we offer
  - Covert rather than overt

*Comma Separated Values
Engagement Methods (1b)

- The sequence must follow the study plan - however, the student can be:
  - Ahead as this is a reminder
  - On time as this is reinforcement
  - or behind as this is foresight
Engagement Methods (2)

- Why CSV ...
  - they work with the Hootsuite publisher tools
  - but no repetition
  - there has to be less than 140 characters, as Twitter is the lowest denominator

- I generated around 1100 automated updates, which can be reused, amended, added to etc

- I am actually lazy by default and wonder why we automate so little 🐼
Engagement Methods (2a)

I am automating at this precise moment - there are updates going out every 5 - 10 minutes on @OUCisco
Engagement Methods (2b)

- Do not underestimate your reach
- You will easily go beyond your own ‘campus’
- Do not simply stick to local times as community is potentially global
- You will eventually discover the best times per presentation

Wireless for fun how many wireless enabled devices are at home you will be surprised

20/02/2016 08:31

0 RETWEETS 0 LIKES

6 cell phones, 2 laptops, 1 tablet, 1 Chromecast, 1 Nexus Player, 1 playstation.
Engagement Methods (3)

- Do not fear memes
- Use plenty of images
  - Humour is needed to break up the technical/academic content
  - You have to decide on what the right mix is
  - This is a module, where written word is priority, yet images help
Engagement Methods (4)

- YouTube and other video sources
  - These consume time ... therefore for this run I focussed on humour
  - I used ... the day the routers died, Mr Bean taking an exam, the medieval help desk, elders of the internet
- I am looking to expand these with some teccie vid’s, I have already produced two with our Knowledge Media Institute which we have already shared in the next course
- Also one of our associate lecturers has been producing short teccie YouTube clips – which we are sharing
Engagement Methods (5)

- If it comes to mind or is current ... **DO IT**!
- News stories or popular themes, add them in.
- Articles published or other activities consider them

_I write for ‘The Conversation’, it is their logo to the left ... adding in these articles helped readership and developing the wider community following the different social media platforms_
Engagement Methods (6)

- Talk to them via social media ... **they do not bite!!!**
- Questions do come in via the different social media outlets
  - Engage, but also allow others to engage as well
  - Encourage those who are also engaging, they are your greatest allies
Engagement Methods (7)

- Open questions work ... followers like to answer these
- Enquiring about the opinion of the audience also gets a response.
- Take note of which posts get a reaction, it will surprise you ... some of the tougher subjects are more likely to get a response
- Be prepared to ditch posts or reuse posts
Finding your allies

- There is nothing wrong with getting a few 'friends' or 'colleagues' involved.

- Very useful for ...
  - RT’s in Twitter
  - Shares in Facebook
  - Likes on LinkedIn
Teaching by Twitter

Evidence of Impact?
Analysis: Twitter

Impressions

Tweets

September | December | March | June | September | December

September | November | January | March | May | July | September | November | January
What next at the OU?

- Replication with:
  - Extending @OUCyberSec (2100+) which follows each FutureLearn MOOC presentation
  - Development of @OULinux ready for a specialist short course
Any Questions & discussion