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Implementation - The Use of Facebook as a Social Network Site to Deliver Organisational E-Learning – Could it Work?

Student Dissertation

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MON: Implementation - The Use of Facebook as a Social Network Site to Deliver Organisational E-Learning – Could it Work? (Richard Heffer)

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[Richard Heffer](#)

18 January 2015

Implementation - The Use of Facebook as a Social Network Site to Deliver Organisational E-Learning – Could it Work?

In my conference presentation, I want to explore the validity and the issues around implementing using Facebook to host our organisational e-learning material. Provisionally, these issues will be identified as:

The Organisational Drivers to improve our Delivery of E-learning. Can Facebook be used to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of our e-learning delivery during an ongoing climate of public sector funding reduction of 20%?

The use of Facebook as a cost efficient way to use a public SNS to bring e-learning material to our staff. The age group of our NFRS staff is 25 - 55 who have a 55-70% usage of social networking sites (ONS 2104 Report). There seems to be a likely synergy.

Facebook has affordances within its design that encourage knowledge sharing and encourage social collaborative learning (Wenger 2006) as de -facto learning platform hosting e-learning material. The design of the Facebook Social Network Site (SNS) has ensured that it is accessible through wide variety of devices and it is optimised for mobile devices again encouraging the employment of concepts around mobile learning.

An exploration of the limitations of Facebook as an e-learning platform. Thus, learning material on Facebook cannot be made to be SCORM compliant and will lack designed-in interaction. This has the risk of it encouraging a passive learning experience. I consider that there are design implications for Facebook e-Learning Material and would like to explore if there a nascent, evolving or a mature design approach for SNS learning within e-learning communities of practice? There are also implications for the accessibility of learning material on Facebook. Material posited on Facebook is inherently visually based and thus I want to explore if it can be made compatible with best-practice accessibility requirements or does inherent design of Facebook mitigate against accessibility?

Another exploration will be Reputation Management; what are the problems for a public sector using a globally and commercially orientated social network site? Will our organisational

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OU H818 'The Networked Practitioner' Online Conference

reputation sit well when there are unmanaged advertising pop-ups and the hidden aspects of Facebook data mining to be considered?

In terms of the research and data sources to be used; a main source of information for the project will be the online questionnaire put out to all our organisational staff. This is to be supported by trialling existing e-learning material on our organisational Facebook page. By viewing the staff responses to this material, I hope that I can gain and assess a better, if subjective, picture of the level of customer reception for future learning material on our Facebook page.

This will be supported by a review of current the current academic discourse around the use of Facebook and learning to identify trends and ideas. Initial searches have indicated that such academic studies are confined to formal education, rather than organisational learning, but I hope that there will be common themes and ideas that I can explore. Equally valid will be a review of ideas and concepts in online communities of practice centring around e-learning, SNS and organisational learning.

Extra content

I have added below the link to the Nottinghamshire FRS Facebook page that has the trial video that I have posted up. I would be most interested in your comments.

<https://www.facebook.com/NottsFRS?fref=ts>



[Richard Heffer](#)

19:47 on 29 January 2015 (Edited 16:34 on 4 February 2015)

Online Questionnaire

I have added a link below to my online questionnaire which I would ask if H818 colleagues and those attending the conference would consider completing. It is a very simple questionnaire that should not take long to do.

The questionnaire is a 'control' in that it mirrors closely the online questionnaire that I am also sending out to staff in my organisation. Its intention is to measure usage of social media, appetite for e-learning and willingness to engage with e-learning material on social media sites.

I though it would be useful for my overall project artefact to be able to compare the responses from organisational staff with those of the TEL practitioners within the H818 community, hence why I see your questionnaire results as a 'control' and useful comparator.

If you wonder why the first question is a bit odd, it is, but I needed something to replace the original question in the organisational questionnaire which asked about roles type in the organisation of respondees and thus maintain the similarity of question flow in both. I could not really ask the H818 cadre if you were firefighters (unless you are!)

<https://response.questback.com/nottinghamshirefirerescue/xvtmdytaej/>

Please note that you may have to close the window after completing the questionnaire for it to register.

2015

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[Richard Heffer](#)

16:12 on 4 February 2015 (Edited 14:31 on 5 February 2015)

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[Slides with Speaker Notes](#)

added by [Richard Heffer](#)

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Contribute

Discussion (9)

[Links \(2\)](#)

[Academic References \(0\)](#)



[M.M](#)

9:03pm 20 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

This is very progressive and forward thinking. Whilst I have heard of educational sharing of links and pages I have no understanding of sharing much more than that. Could you give me an example of what other sort of learning material could be shared and accessed on Facebook?

I agree with some of the limitations and restrictions that Facebook usage brings. I will look forward to seeing your suggestions for effective implementation as this module had definitely made me more open (no pun intended!) to new ideas, no matter how far away from *my* normality they initially seem. I wonder how it might work for a school situation.



[Rachel O'Connor](#)

9:51am 26 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

Am really interested in what you find out and whether Facebook can work for delivering learning. I am always a bit wary of it because of the publicly open access to a lot of areas so would be put off using it in this way. However, I would like to learn more about this and with the amount of people who use Facebook it does seem a great idea to see if it can be harnessed for this kind of use. Looking forward to finding out more.



[Samantha Marks](#)

10:40am 27 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

Richard, you have carefully thought about the affordances, both good and bad, with using Facebook and I look forward to hearing more about the response from within the organisation. For me this is the important point. As Catherine (Dartnall) has mentioned in her presentation abstract, people are more engaged if they feel they have the choice, and so your survey to the organisation to ask their thoughts will prove interesting. Facebook represents different things to different people, but it could easily be a way to learn and share with each other. I am glad to see that you have raised reputation management, as in particular Facebook afford disclosure, and for some people understanding the implications of disclosure, and inappropriate disclosure can be challenging, especially given the organisation you are. I have talked about this a bit in developing my project. Some of the questions that I hope your presentation will answer are: how will you prepare people for use of social media? would you moderate the pages? How would people find the material, given that Facebook works as a newsfeed? Would you create a closed page or a group?



[matthew street](#)

6:54pm 28 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Richard,

I thought your abstract was very well thought through I could see your thinking developing through it. You raise lots of interesting questions in relation to using Facebook for elearning, I have come across people using it as a discussion space to support learning but as a space to deliver before so find this really interesting. Two things spring to mind with this the first is who owns the content, once it is placed on Facebook does it become theirs or do you maintain some rights over it. The second which I guess exists in any online space is identity, have you come across anything that discusses whether people would be ok with using a Facebook identity as a learner or whether people prefer to keep them separate

best

Matt



[Dave Martin](#)

11:39am 2 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Thanks for giving us the link to the Facebook page Richard. The mix of news and fire safety information and training resource is very interesting and it has obviously generated a lot of interest with all those Likes.

In a recent training session focussing upon voluntary organisation e.g. Credit Unions using social media the marketing expert suggested that Facebook was good for building a sense of belonging amongst members. Perhaps Wenger's community, whilst Twitter was good for broadcast. With that in mind I've added the link to the Dorset Fire and Rescue's Service Twitter stream. There are some similarities with what you are doing and perhaps some significant differences.



[Dr Simon Ball](#)

2:34pm 10 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Your comments and questions from your live presentation:

- ▶ Really think I have to join
Students are using it in preference to anything
- ▶ Are there difficulties of separating professional and personal identities on Facebook?
- ▶ why do you need a professional identity on facebook?
- ▶ How would you catch non users for training purposes?
- ▶ Good to have considered both the positive and negative aspects of using Facebook.
- ▶ this is where exploring identity comes in
- ▶ I think that 60:40 user:excluded is a vital point to consider
- ▶ 2800 is real proof of valuable reach
- ▶ facebook does jump between peoples different digital identities.
- ▶ If only 900 staff, I wonder how you have achieved so many views? Interesting to find out more on this
- ▶ your comment difficulties, do you think this is an inherent characteristic of FB?
- ▶ How do make sure we get the right 'professional' representation
- ▶ I think people don't comment if there are already lots of comments on there because they think theirs will be lost
- ▶ Engagement and learning have to be compared with conventional training - which is rarely good at engagement
- ▶ Evidence of other organisations using Facebook for open training?
- ▶ how have management reacted to this idea?
- ▶ The concept of using fb as a learning tool has been around for a while, but I have seen only a few examples of it being done well and not all consider the issues as effectively as you have done here Richard
- ▶ Can Facebook be a VLE for small, cash strapped organisation?
- ▶ Do you know how many people use Facebook notifications? Do you need to train people about social media functionality
- ▶ low cost is probably a draw to trying this approach from a management perspective
- ▶ Organisational Cultural barriers are still the biggest problem



[P Seaward](#)

6:01pm 17 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

I was interested in your talk Richard. It is certainly novel for an institution to be using this platform without marketing in mind! It would make a useful long term study for workplace learning. Progressive stuff!



[Richard Heffer](#)

4:49pm 19 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Thank you for your interest and support.



[Richard Heffer](#)

4:51pm 19 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

My Responses to the Posted Questions from the Presentation

Really think I have to join

My Answer: I had not used Facebook before this 'study' or any other SMS (social media site), it has been valuable to see what roles and usages such sites have in terms of opening up learning.

Students are using it in preference to anything

My Answer: In social media terms, the statistics seem to show that the market penetration by Facebook which was the monolith SMS for some time has now started to lose out as people have started to use other SMS. Thus, I would see that any learning material needs to be suited to and work across a variety of main sites.

Are there difficulties of separating professional and personal identities on Facebook?

My Answer: Potentially you could have differing approaches to differing Facebook posts depending on whether they were social or work based as they appear in your Facebook timeline, thus your responses and posts would be differentiated according to your audience. By posting in work based or professional closed Facebook groups, a de facto separation could be made between professional and personal identities.

Why do you need a professional identity on Facebook?

My Answer: An interesting point which probably relates back to some of the debate in the early part of H818 about the issues about identity portrayal online and how it is (or is it?) important for digital scholarship. The separation of identities is realistically difficult in Facebook, but the disciplinary actions for staff across many organisations due to the inappropriate nature of material posted by them on Facebook strongly suggests that your Facebook identity (built by the nature of your posts) carries across from personal to professional.

How would you catch non users for training purposes?

My Answer: There is no means to measure who has viewed or not viewed the material and this weakens the value of Facebook to deliver organisational e-learning. I did not find an easy way to measure the impact of the material other than the simplistic like function. If measurement of learning acquisition is required, as for compliance training, then it cannot work well in Facebook. I would point out that the measurement of learning acquisition in most organisational e-learning platforms is not particularly strong or has much validity being normally based on a percentage pass on simple knowledge tests. Thus, the Facebook weakness in this regard may not be especially significant.

Good to have considered both the positive and negative aspects of using Facebook.

My Answer: Not being conversant with Facebook did at least allow me to look it without any preconceived ideas and thus I could view both the advantages and disadvantages.

However, a better understanding of the Facebook would have allowed me to be more nuanced and be able to explore the existing academic discourse from a better position of knowledge.

This is where exploring identity comes in

My Answer: Absolutely, although I am not sure about the content of this statement unfortunately! I presume it is part of the ongoing dialogue about professional and personal identities as above.

I think that 60:40 user: excluded is a vital point to consider

My Answer: The results of my staff survey as to who used Facebook (and other SMS) and the staff attitudinal view towards the delivery of e-learning supports the high level of digital exclusion for staff who would not engage with material posted on Facebook. Broadly speaking about 50% plus did not support the idea and /or did not use Facebook anyway. Clearly if we were to use Facebook to deliver organisational training, it would have to be one delivery tool alongside other media, be it other SMS, an organisational e-learning platform, organisational intranet and internet pages etc. The advantage is that SMS sites spread the possibilities and make it easier for staff to see and view such training material.

2800 is real proof of valuable reach

My Answer: It was a surprise to me that the training video was viewed by a wide audience spread. It demonstrated that posting material will have unforeseen impacts and reach on differing audiences. The video may well still be being shared, although the initial measureable impact (as far as it could be measured) was short-lived. It has strong benefits for a Fire Service that Facebook can be a valuable means to pass out messages and themes on fire safety to our local communities and the public in general.

Facebook does jump between peoples different digital identities.

My Answer: Or does it? Again part of the professional/ personal online identity debate and can these be kept separate or should they be kept separate.

If only 900 staff, I wonder how you have achieved so many views? Interesting to find out more on this

My Answer: Yes the number of view beyond our raw staff headcount was interesting. However, I do not think that Facebook metrics would allow the measurement of who viewed it unfortunately.

Your comment difficulties, do you think this is an inherent characteristic of FB?

My Answer: Broadly yes, what I saw as the original difficulties:

Passive learning experience

No interactive functionality within Facebook posted material

No meaningful way to assess and measure learning

Curation of material: 'falling off the bottom of page' –timebound

Accessibility issues

Reputation management

Digital exclusion of possible 40% of NFRS staff not using Facebook?

These were all evidenced in my trail Facebook posting and the initial results from my online staff questionnaire.

How do make sure we get the right 'professional' representation

My Answer: If I look at organisational representation, I would say that the posted material needs to have the right organisational look and feel and have the 'symbology' of the organisation. This allows effective and immediate impact which is important to get the material viewed. Posted material obviously needs to be professional produced and be considered in terms of its impact from the organisation's reputation aspect.

I think people don't comment if there are already lots of comments on there because they think theirs will be lost

My Answer: Yes I can fully support that as a possibility. As an example, I undertook a simple MOOC which relied upon the generation of asynchronous discussion to allow people to talk with the other learners and feedback their thoughts and ideas on the topic questions posed as part of the learning design. With the list of the discussion replies reaching into the 100s, I was discouraged to get involved as I felt my points would be effectively lost in the 'morass'. However, the fact that 100s of others were happy to post in a broad spread of replies suggests that individual responses and the triggers to respond may well range across many personal variables

Engagement and learning have to be compared with conventional training - which is rarely good at engagement

My Answer: I disagree that conventional learning does not engage, but I agree with the value of perhaps trialling the material via Facebook and a more traditional delivery means. This might provide further ideas.

Evidence of other organisations using Facebook for open training?

My Answer: I don't know it would be an interesting research point.

How have management reacted to this idea?

My Answer: The trial was just that a potentially quick one off trial for me to assess the possibilities. It will generate a management report to the senior management team on my suggestions and recommendations. There are two main selling points, one the ability to reach large numbers of people and the ability to do it at no cost using Facebook as a platform. This meets the two main drivers at present to become more efficient and more effective. However, the reputational management aspects of using Facebook for a public sector organisation will be a drag point to the concept.

The concept of using fb as a learning tool has been around for a while, but I have seen only a few examples of it being done well and not all consider the issues as effectively as you have done here Richard

My Answer: Thank you.

Can Facebook be a VLE for small, cash strapped organisation?

My Answer: Yes I think it can. The use of the group functionality in Facebook would allow learning and training material to be more closely focussed to the target audience. By using a closed group, this effectively allows an organisation to reduce access to its material and ensure that it is reaching it staff (by the simple expedient of telling them to sign up to the group). The operant is 'cash-strapped' – I think that Facebook used in the correct way would allow small organisations to push out considered and designed material to their staff for no cost. AS such it would be much better than do nothing

Do you know how many people use Facebook notifications? Do you need to train people about social media functionality?

My Answer: Yes the use of SMS as I envisaged would require staff to be trained to be able to view the material on Facebook. More importantly it would need a strong attitudinal shift within the hidden culture of the organisation to make it work. I don't know how to measure Facebook notifications.

Low cost is probably a draw to trying this approach from a management perspective.

My Answer: Yes the no-cost of Facebook for the user is significant and explains its explosive success and why other SMS follow the same 'free' to use route. Of course, the hidden data mining behind social media sites is a concern and how it could affect an organisation.

Organisational Cultural barriers are still the biggest problem

My Answer: Yes. I deliberately did not preconceive how my organisational cultural web might impact on my idea to explore the value of Facebook. However, the first returns of the online questionnaire to staff strongly suggest that my 'pre-held' ideas on the culture of workforce were broadly right. In essence the questionnaire returns, so far, demonstrate a high level of non-usage of SMS (over 50%) and that staff were not supportive of using Facebook for work purposes. There was a definite cultural barrier, consisting of hostility to the idea and hostility to social media in general. I did expect this, but not so vehemently expressed.

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