



Can social learning succeed alongside an LMS?

A CERTPOINT Systems white paper
in collaboration with VITAMINDS.

CERTpoint

Introduction

With the emergence of Web 2.0 and social software giants such as Facebook, and Twitter as well as new kids on the block such as, Pinterest, social networks and tools are increasingly part of our lives. This change forces us to ask several questions of the Learning and Development (L&D) profession. How are these tools impacting employees' ways of learning and their expectations? How should we integrate them within our L&D practices for business impact? And – possibly most difficult to answer – how can we use social approaches to learning with our existing learning infrastructure, particularly the Learning Management System (LMS)

These questions in turn lead to others:

- Does the success of social learning mean the demise of the LMS?
- If not, can I use social learning in addition to my LMS?
- How can I use social learning as an integrated part of my learning program?
- Is social learning a fad?
- How can I convince management that social learning delivers commercial benefits?
- How will social learning affect the future role of L&D?

These are questions that demand to be answered. Our world is increasingly socially connected. If L&D does not adapt to, and fully exploit, social technologies, it runs the risk of being sidelined as other parts of the organization put them to good use for learning.

And this is not merely a matter of using the latest technologies for their own sake. There are good business reasons for adopting a social approach at work. A recent [McKinsey study](#) – *The social economy: Unlocking value and productivity through social technologies (July 2012)* – reports that there are over 1.5 billion people using social networks globally. Eighty percent of online users interact with social networks regularly; ninety percent of companies using social technologies report some business benefit; 28 hours per week are spent by knowledge workers writing emails, searching for knowledge and collaborating internally.

According to this analysis of 4,200 companies, social technologies stand to unlock from \$900 billion to \$1.3 trillion in value. Two-thirds of the value unlocked by social media rests in “improved communications and collaboration within and across enterprises,” according to the report. Far from a distraction, social media proves a surprising blessing to productivity.

Against this background, we have a new generation workforce, a digital-age group of aspiring young professionals utilizing the latest, Web 2.0 and 3.0 resources as they move into the working world. The Millennial approach to learning is self-paced and highly collaborative. Millennials want to explore information on their own and then share it with their peers. They want access to information in a just-for-me, just-in-time platform that produces gratifying results. These young people are already part of the workforce, and have brought a naturally collaborative approach to work with them. As their numbers and influence increase, we can expect organizational culture to become increasingly social and collaborative.

As learning and development practitioners, we ignore these trends at our peril. This white paper explores CERTPOINT Systems' and VITAMINDS' perspective on how to best exploit the power of social learning while retaining the existing strengths of organizational L&D and any installed technologies such as Learning Management Systems.

What Social Learning is ... and what it is not

Tony Bingham, President and CEO of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), defines social learning as *“learning that happens outside a formal structure or classroom and is really the way people have always learned from each other. Social learning centers on information sharing, collaboration and co-creation.”*

Social learning is clearly anchored in collaboration: “we learn alone but never without others”. It happens at conferences, cafes or online. It happens with or without social media tools. This collaboration creates knowledge as those engaged capitalize on one another’s resources and skills, asking each other for information, evaluating one another’s ideas, monitoring each another’s work.

And what is social learning not? It is certainly not new! It is a natural part of how we humans learn. Lev Vygotsky (1896 – 1934) stressed the fundamental role of social interaction, in the development of cognition, as he believed strongly that community plays a central role in the process of ‘making meaning’. Nowadays, however, social learning uses social media to expand and amplify the reach of social learning, making social media the venue where social networking and learning take place. Social learning combines the power of social media technology with the appeal of a collaborative environment that encourages ongoing informal learning, knowledge sharing and transfer. This shift in how we find, search for and share information transforms us from knowledge consumers to knowledge publishers who actively participate in, and manage, our own learning experiences.

Social media allow the learner to rate, tag, comment, share, and contribute or modify content, as part of the wider Web 2.0 experience that enables learners to deliver content and participate in a website. But despite being largely technically enabled, social learning at work is not just about technology. It is a powerful business approach that impacts the bottom line as the McKinsey report shows.

Social learning does not replace formal learning. It complements it. The old saying that “you don’t know what you don’t know” remains the case, and when an employee needs to learn a skill or pick up some important knowledge, formal learning may be necessary. This may be to meet compliance requirements, or because a new product has been launched, or for many other reasons. In all these cases, social learning can still form a vital part of the learning blend.

Clearly, therefore, social learning is not exclusively informal. For example, a company running a compliance course on (for example) financial dealing, may find it very useful to ensure its employees have a social forum running alongside the course in which they can exchange their thoughts about the course, their tips for success, and so on. Or it could be that sales people are invited to rate learning materials concerning new products and to contribute to a wiki about them, and so on. Social learning can and should be made part of formal learning initiatives.

Following on from this, the short answer to the question “Can social learning succeed alongside an LMS?” is emphatically “Yes”. Not only can it succeed, it will be a vital part of organizational learning in the future, driven by both learner expectation and the value it can add to the learning experience.

Getting social with your LMS

Of course to succeed in this way, it is not enough to – for example – bolt some forum software onto an LMS. On the contrary, the LMS should be designed to incorporate collaboration from the start.

There is a new generation of learning management systems which has evolved to include – among other things – collaboration and mobile delivery in a bid to grow increasingly learner-centric. These LMSs succeed because they allow learners to engage more than before, putting instant information to hand as well as in-depth learning opportunities, and including with everything the ability to comment and share.

In the new generation of LMS, learners can rate, recommend and share resources, courses and user-generated content. They can create materials with each other, and courses with the central L&D team. Their forum posts and questions are not only a rapid way of providing answers to much-needed performance issues; they are also gold dust for detecting which skills required for the organization.

VLS Social Collaboration Portal

Activity Feed
Start a conversation, and share information in real-time ...

Spaces & Groups
Unlimited sub-communities

Spaces

- Customer Service**
Public community where we provide outward facing customer service and support. Anyone can join, everyone can ask questions and get help.
Total members: 4 Created on: 06/25/2012
- Acme Corp. Water Cooler**
Community for the entire company to interact with each other, share what they their interests, and get to know each other better.
Total members: 15 Created on: 05/11/2012
- Partner & Vendor Support**
A community for working with our partners and vendors, where we can share best practices, discuss new products, and work together to create new solutions.
Total members: 85 Created on: 11/02/2011

User Profiles

Get personal with Walls, Status Updates, Photos, & All the Goods

VLS Social Collaboration Portal

Michael Mayes
 14 Lurker
 Joined on: 6/8/2010
 Posts: 2

I was looking for something related to customizing Cor relevant information is available.
 Thanks a lot in advance.

John Smith
 178 Lurker
 Joined on: 6/3/2010
 Posts: 9

Hi Mike,
 There is a
 Communi
 thanks.

UI Customization

Reply Mark As Answ

Forums
 Keep everyone talking

Sales & Marketing > Blogs
 Public space · edit

Blogs : Sales & Marketing postings

Hunters and Farmers
 6/8/2010 by Nina James · 0 · 2

10,000 years ago, civilization forked. Farming was invented and the way many people spent their time was changed forever. Clearly, farming is a very differer activity from hunting. Farmers spend time sweating the details, worrying about weather, making smart choices about se...

The State of Online Word of Mouth Ma
 6/8/2010 by Nina James · 0 · 8

Influencers are D think about targe of them "like a st advises thinking. 3-course meal" it

Blogs
 Get your community talking by setting everyone up with a blog ...

Social Network Analysis

(0) (182)

Published 6/8/2010 by Aliza Riba - Last updated on 6/8/2010 by Neel Pannu

Avg: 0/5: (0 votes)

Social network analysis has now moved from being a suggestive metaphor to i with its own theoretical statements, methods, Social Network Analysis Softwar from whole to part; from structure to relation to individual; from behavior to a whole networks (also known as complete networks), all of the ties containing s population, or personal networks (also known as egocentric networks), the ties their "personal communities".[2] The distinction between whole/complete netw networks has depended largely on how analysts were able to gather data. Tha schools, or membership societies, the analyst was expected to have complete network, all participants being both potential egos and alters.

Personal/egocentric studies were typically conducted when identities of egos w studies rely on the egos to provide information about the identities of alters ar

Wiki
 Share collective knowledge and best practices

VLS Social Collaboration Portal

Files
 Root >> Contract Templates

new folder rename delete upload

FOLDERS

- Root
 - Email Templates
 - Marketing Standards
 - Phone Support
 - Contract Templates

recycle bin

File Name

- logo.psd
- ArchitectureDiagram.vsd
- Corporate Profile.ppt
- NDA-Template.docx
- Independent-Contractor-Assignment-Form.docx

File Sharing
 Streamline workflow and break free from hard-drive file folders...

Messages Send Message

Jerry Wilson, Jennifer Dupont
 ◀ We looking to start a new space based on the...
 5 minutes ago

Jerry Wilson
 ◀ Jerry, todays presentation was awesome. I re...
 5 minutes ago

Jennifer Dupont
 ◀ Samantha, thanks for sending over the 2nd q...
 6 minutes ago

John Hamilton
 Meeting 10AM Friday to discuss marketing mate...
 12 minutes ago

Marketing
 ing pitch now
 · Like · Delete

John, I need i
 h with a top-
 like · Delete

have an idea
 industry.
 like · Delete

Messaging
 Help users break free from email for good

Course Information

CommuniFire | KTA50

KTA50
Private space

What's on your mind?

Share: POST

Filter

- Activity stream
- Info
- Search
- Discussions
- Blogs
- Photos
- Files
- Wiki
- Videos

Members (4) See All

Jeff Vaughn rated a photo: Needing Assistance 10 days ago

Jeff Vaughn liked a blog post: Aggreko Overview 10 days ago

Martin Wheeler rated a blog post: Aggreko Overview 10 days ago

Martin Wheeler replied to the fo event in JA 10 days ago

Course Information

CommuniFire | KTA50 | KTA50 Discussion Forum | KTA50G3 A-Service training event in JA

KTA50 > Discussions
Private space

KTA50G3 A-Service training event in JA

SUBSCRIBE TO THIS TOPIC

Posted: 10 days ago

Kenneth Fung
127 points Starter
joined on: 5/10/2012
Posts: 1

Hi all, I hope you enjoyed the experience of WBT & YR through VLS as well as the WAW moments especially when you hit that "engine "start" button? Your feedback is welcome.

Reply Report as abuse

Posted: 10 days ago

Jeff Vaughn
11 points Starter
joined on: 13 days ago
Posts: 3

Hi. It was fantastic, honestly I've never experienced a such set of exciting moments, I even didn't know that there was another way of learning other that sitting in a classroom and looking at the board. This is High Tech Training!

Chat (0)

Members (4) See All

admin sample

Course Information

videos

KTA50 > Videos
Private space

ADD A VIDEO

Videos: Most recent videos

Total videos: 3 25 per page

138kv elkford bc switch
12 days ago by: Kenneth Fung

Electrical Explosions and Arcing - Rewtsed
12 days ago by: Stacey Williams

Members (4) See All

admin sample

Video Categories

Default Category

Wall Videos

Course Information

kta50 | CommuniFire wiki

KTA50 > Wiki
Private space

ADD A WIKI PAGE

Wiki Page Index

25 per page Sort by: Oldest A-Z

Page name	Owner	Last updated
ECM: Engine Control Module	Kenneth Fung	13 days ago
COP: Coil On Plug	Kenneth Fung	13 days ago
CCAN: Component Change Advice Note	Kenneth Fung	13 days ago
ATEX: Atmosphere's Explosive	Kenneth Fung	13 days ago
AC: Alternative Current	Kenneth Fung	13 days ago
AAP: Aggreko Authorized Person	Kenneth Fung	13 days ago

Page 1 of 1 (6 items)

Members (4) See All

Pages

- AAP: Aggreko Authorized Perso
- AC: Alternative Current
- ATEX: Atmosphere's Explosive
- CCAN: Component Change Advice Note
- COP: Coil On Plug
- ECM: Engine Control Module

Popular Wiki Pages

- [ECM: Engine Control Module](#)
- [AAP: Aggreko Authorized Person](#)
- [AC: Alternative Current](#)
- [ATEX: Atmosphere's Explosive](#)
- [CCAN: Component Change Advice Note](#)

Chat (0)

A socially-enabled LMS such as this becomes a powerful vehicle to naturally promote and evaluate learning content, and a place where employees can learn from each other. With this new approach, learners decide and share what they like and don't like in detail, providing feedback far more valuable than a "like" or "don't like" button. They organize their own content by tagging it in ways that make sense to them, creating their own folksonomy. Indeed when the interaction with fellow employees and with the organization's resources is so profound, learning takes place without the individual even necessarily being aware of it.

Social learning offers a solution to the age-old L&D challenge – how to accelerate time to competence in a fast-changing environment, without demanding extra budget. But it cannot be imposed from the outside. To be effective it needs to be as much a part of people's natural workflow as possible.

The use of social networking as part of a blended learning offering is not a recent phenomenon either. In 2004, energy giant Total launched a similar initiative which proved to be a powerful starting point for improving training. By tracking the questions asked, the L&D department was able to understand the key areas where support was needed – both geographically and in terms of subject matter. Knowledge gaps were easily identified and it became possible to design ways of dealing with them, including – but not limited to – the provision of formal courses.

One of the greatest benefits to L&D teams is its ability to market the function and to communicate its value – one of the biggest challenges L&D faces today. In short, it improves L&D brand recognition.

Five ways to add social learning to your learning offering

1. Design the right learner experience and be learner-centric.

Use social media tools to provide a means of social learning for distance learners. This form of learning is important for:

- solving small everyday problems before they get too large
- creating an environment that supports creativity
- forming ad hoc workgroups as needed, and
- building a flexible work environment.

Guide learners to create their own collaborative knowledge bases, rather than relying on others to do it for them. Increase the feeling of being a team for distance learners by encouraging participation. Share the rules of usage: The way to use the tools may not be crystal clear: Ensure that your learners have all the necessary information to connect, use the tools and contribute in the right way.

2. Make it safe for your teams and your company

This is a must-have. Almost certainly, someone in your organization will have concerns about the security of any social network. Work with IT teams to secure bandwidth, integration and data confidentiality. Benefit from communication teams' advice regarding community management and PR.

3. Use the tool to deliver your learning objectives

The best way to fail is to incorporate social media tools without considering your learning goals. The power of the tools comes from their ability to be used in different ways to originally planned, but which are focused on learning.

You can use pictures-sharing tools to make a journal during field trips or on-the-job activities; try using micro blogging tools to synthesize key learning's or wikis to co-construct reference documents (such as information for a specific job or what you need to know when joining a company). And of course you can use blogging tools as the thread running through a training program that lasts over several weeks.

4. Evolve to learning community management

Transform the role of your program manager, from guide and motivator to learning community manager that ensures productive learning. This is a big step for traditional L&D departments to take, and it will not be an easy transition for all of them, but it is essential for social learning to succeed. You cannot approach the 'pull' of social learning in the same way as you do the 'push' of formal learning.

For more on this, see "the future role of L&D" below.

5. Keep it simple

Don't try to do too much at once and be careful not to use social media for its own sake. For example, it can be appealing to create a wrap-up for an event around a micro-blogging tool, but what is the real social aspect of this? What is most important? To create a collective list of key points through Twitter? Or to stimulate a live debate within a group in person?

Choose launch programs carefully – they should reflect company goals and culture rather than the technology you'll be using.

Consider change management strategy: What is the purpose of introducing social learning to your enterprise? Which programs do you want to impact and how? How will you engage learners and train your internal teams and train your trainers?

And one final point: Above all, however you implement social learning in your organization, identify and list out the top KPIs that will enable you to evaluate success.

Showing the value of social learning

Whatever L&D does, it has to show that it is working. But how do you demonstrate that with social learning? To do this, there are three possible approachestypes of measures to use.

The first approach is to consider activity or 'Vitality'. While this does not show the impact of social learning, it does show – crucially – whether or not people are engaged:

- **VITALITY** - *Short-term*
 - Are learners using the environment?
 - Is it sustained over time?
 - What are the most heavily used components?

In addition, we can look at the medium term – how is social learning adding to the work of the L&D department? Is it adding to ‘Capability’?

- **CAPABILITY** - *Medium-term*
 - Is usage supporting the identified learning use cases?
 - Do learners perceive value from their involvement?

Finally, the key question: Does this help the organization overall? Does it have business impact? To show value, we have to show that social learning is – like any other activity – having a direct effect on business metrics:

- **VALUE** - *Long-term*
 - Which business-related learning issues have been addressed?
 - Which business KPIs have been directly impacted, and how?

Showing the business impact of learning is a very large topic, of course. For more details on this, please see the CERTPOINT Systems white paper [Showing the Impact of Learning.](#)

The future role of L&D

How will the role of L&D change in the future to incorporate this need to include social learning? It will expand. Just as classroom training did not die when elearning arrived on the scene around the year 2000, so elearning will not die with the arrival of social learning. In other words, the role of the L&D department just expanded.

Key responsibilities for the future will include:

- Managing content (publishing, curating, tagging),
- Leading / moderating communities,
- Welcoming and helping community members,
- Shifting learning from “know-what” to “know-how” and “know-who”,
- Monitoring, measuring and reporting progress, value and benefits, and
- Managing technological issues, tools and learner experience.

To be specific, L&D should be involved in:

- Pre-building blogs, wikis, etc.,
- Entering conversations, or asking for the advice of others,
- Welcoming participants,

- Providing accurate resources, and
- Suggesting experts to follow, events and conferences to attend.

There is no doubt that making the most of social media will require the L&D department to pick up a whole new set of skills. Without these skills, the best learning technologies can only go so far.

Where do we go from here?

L&D departments in organizations have to expand what they are doing or be by-passed by a wave of new ways of interacting at work. Individuals are learning all the time and we must reengineer our L&D strategies to create a continuous learning environment comprised of formal and informal components. This trend forces all L&D professionals to rethink their internal skills, to continue to revamp their tools and technology, and to build a “learning architecture” that makes continuous learning a regular part of all learning solutions. Social learning can certainly succeed alongside an LMS, and within it. The question is really whether we as a profession are equipped to make social learning succeed within our organizations.

About CERTPOINT Systems Inc

CERTPOINT Systems Inc. provides the CERTPOINTVLS™ and CERTPOINTVLS Mobile™ all-in-one global learning platforms, which are used by more than 1,200 organizations in over 80 countries and 40+ languages to manage performance, deliver knowledge, and track business results. Global leaders such as L’Oreal, Toyota, Honda, and Stanley Black & Decker use CERTPOINT’s solutions to arm their employees and partners with the knowledge they need to win and retain customers. The SaaS-based VLS platform is multilingual and integrates Authoring, Reporting, Mobile Delivery, and Social Collaboration tools into a single LMS/ LCMS solution. It quickly drives productivity across the extended enterprise and deep into sales and service channels. CERTPOINTVLS is easy to use, rapid to deploy, and cost effective.

Founded in 1996, CERTPOINT Systems has consistently developed and evolved the VLS platform to ensure that it provides clients with cutting-edge tools that incorporate the most recent developments in the rapidly changing online learning environment. Please visit the company at www.certpointsystems.com.

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CERTPOINT Systems white papers

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About VITAMINDS

VITAMINDSVitamind is staffed by Learning Professionals with an average of 10 years of international experience each, spread across multinationals, SMEs and training organizations. Their focus is on the ability to identify, interpret and understand corporate cultures and deploy embedded solutions that work for and with them.

VITAMINDS serves the L&D Strategy of International Companies, their instructional and digital tactics, their L&D marketing and communication dynamics and the professional and technical development of L&D staff.

VITAMINDS values are:

- Constantly searching for quality and customer satisfaction, we strive to quantify the impact of our actions.
- Flexible, reactive and proactive, our enthusiasm urges us to leave the beaten track to find your solution.
- The debates we have are important for us and our customers and we integrate them into our thoughts.
- Eager to preserve neutrality, we also attach much importance into having fun working together.

VITAMINDS can be contacted at: <http://www.vitaminds.fr/en/#!main>

For more information please visit
www.certpointsystems.com or contact:

CERTPOINT USA at sales@certpointsystems.com
or call **Brian Baloga, Senior Vice President of Sales,**
CERTPOINT USA at Tel: +1 888 883 7646

CERTPOINT Europe at EUInfo@certpointsystems.com
or call **Maria van Vlodrop, General Manager,**
CERTPOINT Europe at Tel: +32 2 550 37 33

US Headquarters in New York:
4 Expressway Plaza, Suite 200. Roslyn Heights, New York 11577
Tel: + 1 516 390 8800

European Headquarters in Brussels:
Bastion Tower. 5 Place du Champs de Mars, 20th Floor
1050 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: + 32 2 550 37 33

London:
Dashwood House Level 17, 69 Old Broad Street
London, United Kingdom EC2M1QS
Tel: + 44 20 72 56 4295

Paris:
Level 5, Immeuble Louis Vuitton,
101 Avenue des Champs Elysées 75008 Paris, France
Tel: + 33 1 5652 9334

Africa:
Arniston, The Willows Estate Kings Ave.
Kelland, Johannesburg
Tel: + 27 11 476 8232

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