

Learning 2.0: Personal and Professional Growth through Communities of Practice and Social Learning

Web 2.0 describes Web technology that has *facilitated easy communication, information sharing, user-centered design and collaboration* (Wikipedia). 80 percent of learning is informal and Web 2.0 can help facilitate that learning. Go to Mashable.com for social media news such as how-to topics on popular web.2.0 tools. go2web20.net keeps a running list of Web 2.0 applications, so if you're looking for a specific application, this is a good place to start.

Wikis are sites that use software that *allow the easy creation and editing of any number of interlinked Web pages. Wikis are often used to create collaborative websites, to power community websites, for personal note taking, in corporate intranets, and in knowledge management systems.*

Twitter is a micro-blogging application where updates (tweets) are limited to 140 characters. We'll be using the twitter **hashtag** #OECOP for tweets pertaining to this workshop. A hashtag is a filing system for tweets consisting of the hash symbol (#) plus a "tag" (e.g. one or more words without spaces or an abbreviation). By searching for a hashtag in twitter you can see all related tweets. There are several applications that let you tweet from your phone such as Tweetberry (for Blackberry) and Twitterific (for iPhone).

Twitter is a good tool for finding out what people are talking about (in real time) and getting answers to questions. You can **search for other twitter users** to follow by name using "Find People" within twitter (to look for friends and colleagues) or search using specific information such as key words within their bio using tweepz.com. The tweets of those you follow appear in your home page when you log in. Tweets range from breaking news to interesting articles to the mundane. As you listen, reply to others, and tweet your own updates, you'll build a network that will be there when you have a question and tweet relevant information even when you don't ask.

There are **other micro-blogging sites** available. Tumblr lets you pull information in from multiple sources (such as Facebook, YouTube, or blog feeds) and see all those updates together as a running scroll of updates. Yammer is an enterprise micro-blogging tool that allows you only see the updates of the people in your company (with the same email address, e.g. arend.schuring@ps.net).

A **weblog** (web-logs, or blogs) *is a type of website maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video displayed in reverse chronological order.* With blogs, anyone can write and publish their content for the world to see. Site such as Blogger, Typepad, and Wordpress allow you to create your own blog within minutes. Blogs encourage participation by allowing readers to respond and ask questions by posting comments. Technorati is one site that tracks blogs; you can use it to search the blogosphere.

Really Simple Syndication (RSS) is a Web feed format used to publish frequently updated works - such as blog entries, twitter searches, news headlines, audio, and video - in a standardized format. It's an easy way to keep track of content from multiple sources in one place. There are multiple RSS readers (or feed readers) available; Google Reader is one example. You can use a feed reader to see all your favorite searches, blogs, or tweets in one place.

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When you use your Favorites bookmarks on your computer's browser, only you can see your bookmarks. **Social bookmarking** allows you to share your bookmarks with others, allowing everyone to see how popular certain sites are by voting or ranking them. Delicious, Digg, and StumbleUpon are all variations of social bookmarking, and icons you might see on a blog that allow you to rate or bookmark a web site and share it with others. Digg allows visitors to vote on their favorite sites, pushing them to the top of the Digg homepage. Stumbleupon recommends similar sites to the ones you like. You can search social bookmarking sites by category to see popular sites within a certain topic. With Diigo, you can even highlight and add sticky notes to bookmarked pages that you can view later.

Podcasting is a great way to share content that might not be easily explained with words. It's also a good way to connect with people on a personal level. You can create an account to subscribe to different YouTube channels or have content delivered to your feed reader or download it to your phone or Mp3 player.

Social networking is a *social structure made of individuals or organizations tied by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as friendship, kinship, financial exchange, dislike, sexual relationships, or relationships of beliefs, knowledge or prestige.* Facebook is a popular social networking site whose fastest-growing demographic is baby boomers. LinkedIn is a social networking site that targets professionals. You can even create your own customized social network using sites like Pligg or Ning. Over time, status updates on social networks and twitter can lead to ambient awareness, the feeling of being physically close to someone and picking up on their mood even though they may be miles away.

A personal learning environment or network helps you as a learner manage your learning by setting goals, managing content, and communicating with others in the process. It can be made up of all of the tools above.

CoPs are networks of people that share information and knowledge. Community members share, collaborate, and learn from one another face-to-face and virtually. In a CoP, People connect at various levels and across departments, without the constraints of a formal company structure. As people connect with each other they are able to share their expertise and learn from other members. Benefits of communities include:

- Problem solving
- Developing new capabilities
- Leveraging best practices
- Standardizing practices
- Time savings
- Increase in talent
- Avoiding mistakes
- Creating new knowledge

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In a well-facilitated community, the more avenues for collaboration and conversation, the more informal learning and innovation will occur.

Visit **Pitstopblog.com** for extended information and conversation on the topics from the workshop.