USING PSYCHOLOGY TO CREATE EFFECTIVE SOCIAL LEARNING IN CORPORATE TRAINING
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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SOCIAL LEARNING

The importance and effectiveness of learning from others has been studied long before elearning. Albert Bandura, famous psychologist from the sixties, conducted a number of experiments and concluded that behavior is largely learned from watching others.

Bandura theorized that “most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action.”

Bandura felt that simply watching was not enough to learn. The learners then had to actively participate in trying to understand and replicate the behavior. These things cannot properly occur without a social context in which to perform them.

Bandura’s theory has continued to apply as the digital age evolved, and was one of the influences on the development of “connectivism”, a theory developed in 2005 that believes “the starting point for learning occurs when knowledge is actuated by learners connecting to and participating in a learning community.”

Essentially, this means that even in a digital age, communities motivate and enable learning through participation in conversations and observing others.

In an era of learning that often leaves users isolated behind a screen in a cubicle or even remotely from coworking spaces or home, remembering the importance of interacting with others in the learning process can be a basis for developing effective online training.

Bandura’s Social Learning Theory

Theory of Connectivism
Theorists have determined that successful learning communities have the four qualities of autonomy, diversity, connectivity, and openness. These qualities allow learners to access a vast variety of resources, see many different viewpoints before reaching conclusions, gain agency and confidence in seeking knowledge, and feel a part of a larger network of curious partners in learning.
IMPLEMENTING QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE DIGITAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

**Diversity**

Ensure you group digital learners in online environments with a variety of knowledge levels. Also be sure that people with different areas of expertise are able to interact. Cross-departmental and disciplinary knowledge will make employees more creative and able to understand the larger goals and operations of an organization.

**Autonomy**

Participants should be motivated to contribute via their desire to learn, rather than obligation. Use online learning engagement techniques like content relevancy and gamification will go a long way there.

**Openness**

Make it as simple as possible for learners to contribute their ideas via a variety of mechanisms. For example, allow resource uploads that everyone in the community can access and make the online learning community accessible via mobile. The user-friendliness of the discussion forums and community resource areas is important.

**Connectivity**

The connections between different pieces of knowledge are important. This can be achieved with effective content meta-data – for example, properly tagging content and using digital environments with quality search mechanisms. You can also use AI to find and deliver related content so learners can amplify what they’re learning with further related materials.
THE PRINCIPLES OF CONNECTIVISM

These are the principles of connectivism that were originally laid out by theorists. These principles can help guide you in building a digital learning environment that is effective and responsive to the way people interact with digital worlds in the contemporary world.

- Learning and knowledge rests in diversity of opinions
- Nurturing and maintaining connections is needed to facilitate continual learning
- Learning is a process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources
- Ability to see connections between fields, ideas, and concepts is a core skill
- Learning may reside in non-human appliances
- Currency (accurate, up-to-date knowledge) is the intent of all connectivist learning activities
- Capacity to know more is more critical than what is currently known
- Decision-making is itself a learning process
ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIAL LEARNING ANALYSIS TOOL

To some extent, every organization contains social learning. There was never a person who didn’t teach their coworker at least a keyboard shortcut. But for every organization, social learning looks different. Do your workers see each other every day, or do they work out of their homes? Are your workers in cubicles or bustling together in a kitchen?

These factors will all affect what social learning strategies make sense for your organization. But there are some areas you can look at to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the way that information gets passed around in your organization.

The checklist on the next page will have a list of environmental and digital factors to look for to have a better understanding of what social learning looks like at your organization. You can print out page 9 as a checklist to use when deciding what areas need some work.
## SOCIAL LEARNING CHECKLIST

### What does the digital environment look like for learners?

- Are there ways for learners to interact?
- How active are the discussion boards and resource upload areas, if applicable?
- Who are the most active participants in the online environment?
- What are the online areas people engage with the most?
- Is the content well-tagged and organized?
- Are online resources easy to find and searchable?
- Are users well-organized by role, geographical location, level of knowledge, and other factors?
- Do learners understand how to use the online environment?
- Is the online environment easily accessible from devices that the learners commonly use in their day-to-day lives?
- Do learners have opportunities to register their interest for certain career paths?

### How does the real-world environment enable learning?

- Are learners encouraged to ask questions? Do they feel comfortable reaching out to anyone in the company?
- Do learners know the experts in various knowledge areas?
- Do learners interact with other departments and people in different roles?
- Are learners able to talk to supervisors about career paths?
- Do learners meet regularly with high-ups to discuss their career?
- Do managers permit learners to make time for training?
- Do managers talk about training in meetings?
- Are learners so over-worked they can’t even think about training?
- Does the organization organize times for learners to talk about things they’ve learned and mistakes they’ve learned from?
- Is there a place in the workplace from which learners can access the online environment?
- Are learners rewarded and praised for performing well?
- Are learners assigned mentors they can turn to?
Drive Success with Social Learning

Technology plays a key role in building a successful social learning culture. Hopefully the insight in this guide can help you see where there may be gaps in your organization’s social learning so they can be bridged.

eLogic Learning’s eSSential LMS has been helping organizations build more cohesive learning cultures for almost 20 years. If you would like assistance in helping yours to grow and flourish then please don’t hesitate to contact us below.

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