

# CHIEF LEARNING OFFICER

Solutions for Enterprise Productivity

## **Do You Know What Your Learners are Doing Online?**

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Can you answer these questions about your learners?

1. Do they create content, or are they passive spectators?
2. Are they joining social networking sites?
3. Do they collect content?

According to Forrester Research, if your learners are 22 to 26, almost one-third are actively engaged as creators and joiners of networks. This will have a huge impact on how we design, develop and deliver corporate learning — the old way of organizing data (top-down hierarchies) is dead. In its place, Web 2.0 allows experts to collaborate and co-create in a much more efficient manner.

As learning professionals, perhaps our most difficult job will be to let go and provide the tools and editorial expertise for our learners to collaborate and learn from one another.

“Social media will be an essential delivery tool for the next generation of workers as they expect to learn on the job in the same fashion they shop, network and play music,” said Claire Schooley, Forrester Research senior analyst.

So, the experience of learning online will move closer to other Web experiences that put the customer at the heart of the creation process. As chief learning officers, it will become increasingly important to follow and understand learners’ online experience to migrate them from passively reading to actively creating and commenting on content and courses.

Enabling your learners to co-create along with you is critical to becoming a Web 2.0 learning organization. The experience of Wikipedia should be a compelling lesson for our industry.

Wikipedia is now the largest encyclopedia in the world, offered for free and created by volunteers on an open platform that allows anyone to be an editor. Today, Wikipedia includes more than 4 million articles in more than 200 languages, and it has become one of the most-visited sites on the Web.

Wikipedia is not alone in proving the power of consumers to engage and create. When BMW decided to rethink features for future models such as GPS navigation, the company released a digital design kit on its Web site and encouraged interested consumers to design these features instead exclusively engaging the BMW research and development team.

The response: Thousands shared their ideas with company engineers, and many were turned into valued initiatives. Now, BMW hosts a “virtual innovation agency” on its Web site, where small and mid-sized businesses can submit ideas in the hopes of establishing an ongoing relationship with BMW.

How can we encourage this same level of involvement with learning? One suggestion is to empower employees with a Web 2.0 tool kit that allows them to share their expertise easily through blogs, podcasts and wikis. Our challenge is to create more “open space” so employees can contribute and play a role in co-creating learning solutions.

Where are your learners networking online, and how can you, as their employer, simulate these experiences behind your firewall? Just about everyone I know has joined [linkedin.com](http://linkedin.com), a social networking site for professionals. How can companies leverage this experience and create a similar experience within a corporate environment?

One way is to consider having a social networking component in an employee onboarding program. For example, when new hires join a company, they can create a profile and include not only their professional experience but also the fun stuff about them: their interests, the languages they speak, the countries that have visited and their favorite blogs.