HOW DO YOU CONNECT?

Every person's experience of learning through their PLN is different. Here are some of the ways others have described their learning. Do you see yourself here?

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Every PLN is different

"That network is my network. I've curated it, I've built that space for me, and what I do in that space is my thing" Jas

One of the wonderful things about a personal learning network (PLN) is that it is personal.

It is YOUR network, which YOU have designed, to meet YOUR needs.

This means every experience of learning through a PLN is different, depending upon the learner's context, learning style, needs, goals and personal preferences.

Through my research, I've been able to identify some of the ways individuals approach their learning through their PLN. Do you see yourself in any of these personas?

All names have been changed and identifying information removed to protect the privacy of research participants

Meet Alex

A time manager

- Constantly culls and filters PLN to ensure shared information is targeted to current needs and interests
- Views PLN as more fluid and flexible than traditional professional learning, and therefore more time-efficient
- Changes strategies to use PLN depending upon time available
- The PLN is essential to remain up to date however it is challenging to find time efficient ways to manage this learning

Meet Charlie

A self-directed sharer

- Expands knowledge and capacity of social software platforms and applications through PLN
- Is excited by the PLN's potential to overcome lack of personalisation in professional learning offerings, which is a current source of frustration
- Applies what is learnt within the classroom
- Considers the PLN to form an essential part of the contemporary role of teachers

Meet Chris

A pioneering change agent

- Actively seeks connections with like minded others, engaging online and offline seamlessly
- Sees the PLN as constantly changing and offering exposure to new content, which aligns with the way she thinks and works
- Develops strategies including content curation for management of fast flowing information
- The PLN offers a major source of support and inspiration in new areas where few colleagues practice and where expertise is limited

Meet Evan

A global connectivist

- Engages with a range of strategies to construct new knowledge, different social software platforms and applications to meet learning needs depending upon the complexity of the concept.
- Considers her PLN to enable a constructivist approach to learning where content is used by the individual to create their own knowledge and understanding
- Works with an awareness of the influence of time zones and culture in a global network
- Within a PLN, believes sharing and contributing is an ethical decision and contributing high quality content to the PLN is important

Meet Jas

An evolved connector

- Continues to refine how she interacts and manages her PLN, taking time to develop relationships and connections
- Interaction with the PLN is driven by a need to continually learn and improve practice
- Seeks balance between time spent online and time spent with family and friends
- The public nature of the PLN provides accountability and transparency, and evidence of high quality practice, which may positively influence career development

Meet Lou

A linker

- Problem solving and asking and replying to day to day questions and requests forms the bulk of interactivity
- Most needs are met by local colleagues who share similar contexts (i.e. using similar technology, teaching similar curricula)
- Interactions beyond the local context are limited to information gathering
- Information is unmoderated when shared via PLN and extreme caution is necessary when establishing connections

Meet Maryanne

An online extrovert

- Uses extraversion to reach new connections – goes beyond what is published to connect the creator to offer feedback, ask questions
- Engaging with a PLN requires certain cultural knowledge – etiquette and social mores
- Actively contributes to the network and also acknowledges when she draws from the network
- Actively creating connections and building relationships leads to more effective learning and richer opportunities for learning

Meet Morgan

A rural networker

- Uses social media to share, learn, collect, curate and experiment
- Enjoys the flexibility of the PLN, particularly having a choice of social software platforms and devices, as her rural location can affect bandwidth and internet accessibility
- Collaborates with others online through discussions and questions the value of a PLN where one does not contribute
- Believes that the PLN allows her to stay up to date even if she cannot physically attend professional learning opportunities and has limited face to face colleagues with similar expertise and interests

Meet Sean

A genuine influencer

- Contributes regularly to his PLN with his own content, and acknowledges when he uses the work of others
- Is aware his of role and reputation within his PLN and beyond, and recognises the professional advantages he perceives as due to his active interaction with his PLN
- Remixes ideas and content for own context to create innovate teaching and learning opportunities
- Feels frustrated when other teachers do not consider a PLN to look beyond own context for professional learning

Meet Stell

A people person

- Interacts via Twitter, however creates and shares blogs, annotated photographs, podcasts to communicate learning with others
- Thinks of the PLN as a story of his development and professional relationships over his career
- Considers sharing public practice through a PLN as offering a window into another's classroom, valuing the transparency and authenticity as key aspects of relations within a PLN
- Sees technology as an enabler of the PLN rather than key focus

This information is drawn from the doctoral research of Kay Oddone.

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