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## What social battle is worth fighting for?

### From the Corporate Social Business to the Social University (Part1)

*In this first part of two Neil Lasher takes a look at 'friends' in the workplace, how we use social tools to talk to them and what tool is worth fighting for. In the second part he will investigate how the corporate pages have infiltrated the personal scene and how we separate business from pleasure.*

Friends at work? Do we have them? What are the thoughts in your company about Facebook/Twitter at work? The vast majority of companies, who responded to recent research, ban it. Of course the cynical response is that only those upset that it had been banned responded to the research. I don't believe that, I think there are very many who do not have access to social tools in the workplace. This sets out to question if that is the right move for the 'Social Business'.

I spent some time understanding the statistics on the C4LPT site today looking at the results of the Top 100 Tools for 2011. It makes very interesting reading and a big thank you to Jane Hart for hosting the compilation of this list. 531 respondents, Twitter at the top and the first authoring tool not until you get to number 46! Some making big noises that their authoring tool is the 'bestest, fastest, greatest, most used by top FTSE100 and the Fortune500' are not in the list at all. Surprised?

The top 20 contains services such as DropBox a file sync tool, Moodle an LMS and Gmail an email service, not specifically what I would call learning tools, but not Jane's fault, a superlative job from someone who I must admit convinced me 'social' works when I was an early disbeliever right back at the beginning. It's what the 531 people have voted for. It's what they believe are the tools for learning. Who are any of us to disagree? If it works for them then it's a learning tool.

I found it strange that Gmail made number 20 and Outlook was in at 69, 49 places behind. I also found it interesting to see that iPhone/iPad and Kindle made it to the tools list even though they are hardware. I see no sign of other hardware such as the desktop computer, laptop or any other device like Blackberry or Android.

Facebook, even though many state it as 'not allowed', has made it to number 14. I wonder if all allowed it, would be at the top with Twitter? Next year I would dearly love to see you only being able to vote for your top three instead of top ten.

I tried to make a new top ten list being tough about what I really used and struggled. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Skype, YouTube, Google, Wikipedia, Lectora, Articulate, Snagit. How many are tools and how many services? Is there a difference?

If we are to make a case for learning tools in the workplace, we need to differentiate between tools we use to create learning for others and those we use as a service to learn from. My list is muddled.

So with all that said, I want to take a closer look at Facebook. Is Facebook worth fighting for, if not allowed now? It is the 2nd most used social tool in my box, beaten by Twitter and followed by LinkedIn.

What should be at the top? My browser, Safari to be honest, I use it more than anything else. I feel like I am still muddled between tools and services. Maybe muddled is the wrong word to use, is the overlap between tools and services closer than we realise. Has the computer become the tool? Whatever software is running?

In the top 100, I counted 67 'tools' that you need to have a browser to get to, but not one browser made it to the top100. Here is one of the most powerful tools and we don't regard it as such. However we do when it comes to Outlook, PowerPoint and Excel. What about Word? It slips in at a measly 42. When I consider how much I use it, it really should be right at the top too, but it's not in my list at all!

So the questions I pose are: Should we fight for Facebook in the workplace? Is Facebook being used as it should commercially? Are there some corporate entities trying to force Facebook to be something we do want it to be? Or is the corporate side of Facebook just another way of large companies

advertising to us using a backdoor method to sidestep spam? Is there a clear difference between what we do with Facebook and other social sites?

After a very long hard look at how I use these sites, I have realised there is a clear difference between my top three tools.

Twitter is my 'soapbox' a way I make a noise in very short bursts to a group of people I don't actually know. Nearly 3000 of them, some who reply, many who retweet. I can probably only honestly say I know a couple of hundred of them at best. What a strange thought!

LinkedIn, until very recently I saw as a waste of time. X connected to Y, A connected to B... who cares? But more recently I have found that the groups on LinkedIn for business are far better than those on Facebook, which seem to be more about selling me something. More of that in part2.

Facebook, is my hands down favourite. Not because it has worse groups or lots of silly chatter, but its where my friends are actually my friends. I know them all, I talk to them all and have something in common with them, even if they are business friends. It's a place we can talk anything but business. There are some however who have not quite 'got it' and continually use Facebook to post continual technical stuff that I don't want to see when talking socially to friends. Hey guys, move it to LinkedIn, I expect it there and a lot of it is very interesting. Right stuff, right place!

As you can clearly see from my point of view LinkedIn wins hands down for content from which I can learn, Facebook on the other hand provides the light relief I need to get me through the day. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy!

My conclusions on the subject of whether we should fight to get Facebook in the workplace are by no means final, as you will see by Part 3. Jane Hart will tell you I can be convinced to change my mind. But if there were a fight to be had, I would be fighting for social media in the form of LinkedIn, or Bloomfire, or Yammer or even Path before Facebook. Facebook is not for me a real learning tool but is definitely available as the distraction I need to stay sane while staring at the computer screen for too many hours in the day.

**What social battle is worth fighting for?**

## From the Corporate Social Business to the Social University (Part2)

I set out on a long road to answer many of these questions and more I found along the way. I looked at a number of commercial pages on Facebook and questioned why were they there? What benefit were they to me? Do I actually want them?

This is what I have found for me, I wonder is it the same for everyone?

I compared my connections/friends on LinkedIn (800+) to Facebook (203). I am a member of 20+ groups on LinkedIn and regularly read 10, I am a member of 3 groups on Facebook. One is the Motorcycle Mayhem Group, a group of 12 people involved in learning who all rode out to Death Valley last year after DevLearn. One is from a supplier who has tried to use Facebook as the delivery system and one is a group of eLearning people in developing countries.

I look at the group from Motorcycle Mayhem every day, sometimes twice or three times, the guys are posting pictures and planning this year's trip, and commenting on our memories from a great weekend together.

I looked today at the supplier group as I was writing this. It is a 'secret group'. There is only one person posting (from the company) and actually it's of no interest. The context is wrong. Facebook is my site for friends. There were daily posts when they first started, but more recently it is a post every few weeks, the last about what they were going to present at a conference.

I looked at the developing countries in eLearning page. It was full of companies advertising their wares and writing papers on how good their product was. I clicked around and found out how to leave the group.

OK not done on the theme of corporate pages. I had my own for Phone2Know, I started to post a daily cartoon. Daily became weekly and to be honest I lost interest, as it became hard work for the few followers. None of who will ever become a customer. Don't go looking for it I unpublished it this morning. Next stop I thought I would look at a big player, Starbucks.

Whoa, look at the stats...

**26,144,904** like this, **351,350** talking about this, **3,598,147** were here.

Now look at the posts...

IM GOING TO Starbucks WIDK MY SISTER :\*\*\*\*

makan toge goreng,..oncomnya manteb,...

👉hi friends «heart» 📍06📍

Great, I got one of those managers that likes to hide in the backroom.

i have a card :)

i am lovin those pumpkin soic lattes to die for lol yeah

And you wonder why they wont let you use Facebook in your organisation?

351,350 people talking about what? If you are one of my 11 friends who have clicked to say you like this, or you're one of the 26 million people who clicked to say you like this, please tell me what you like about it?

However back on my home page I am reading that a number of the people I know from work are posting things that are really interesting. Not about work. Brent's daughter got her Varsity letter in Swimming, How nice. Elliot Massie is heading to a show on Broadway. Brandon is involved in a number of really great conversations about food, drink, Uggs for men and transparent use of social media in the workplace. Bob Mosher is having a poll whether to eat Sushi or Blue Crab, the Blue Crab won and Steve Nguyen is sharing a recipe with me to cook a bowl of homemade Pho.

On the other site open on my browser, LinkedIn has 14 posts on view. 10 of them are telling me of new connections between people. I must look to see if you can switch those off. Mike Morrison posted an interesting comment on a group I follow and David Wilson just posted a great link to an article on Learning Technology Deployments from the Learning and Skills magazine that I had missed. It's a Sunday but these guys keep going!

The art of communication has changed over the years and is going to continually change as technology creates the positive disruption we need to facilitate a change in behaviour. The positive disruption leads us to alternative methods of thinking and in turn to create new ideas from the ones we already have. This takes you to the top of the tree in Bloom's Cognitive Domain. The best disruption we could hope for.

I was taken there today while following a link posted on LinkedIn. I found a great response to a post by Brian Kuhn a teacher in BC Canada. The reply to his post was from an anonymous person calling herself (female avatar) 'Roadside Philosopher', claiming to be in Afghanistan, who proposed the scrapping of the

degree to be replaced by a three tier rating system. The idea is sound maybe something I will add to my recently proposed Street University. It said: 1. Propensity to learn rating- How fast do you learn, unlearn & relearn? 2. Your ability to communicate & interact. Team building, writing, public speaking, blogging etc. evaluated by? Probably those that respond. 3. What you spend your time doing.. If the job you are doing is putting together widgets.. well that can be broken down into several components.. hand/eye coordination, attention to detail, research to figure out how to put a widget together, the math that is required to figure it out.

If you are the IT person who is hiding behind 'we don't allow it because it is dangerous to our network', come up with something new please as we all know this does not cut it.

If you are the executive or senior executive who thinks by banning it you will keep 'the staff' concentrating on their work, think again, they have all these tools available on their mobile phone. Embrace it and watch the people flourish as they in turn can use these tools to learn and gain valuable information to help them in their daily tasks, at the same time as gaining a recipe for dinner tonight!

Finally let me draw your attention to one more argument I am hearing, this time about Twitter. Grazia magazine, 28/Nov/2011, an article by Rebecca Nicholson entitled 'Is Twitter the new playground bully?'. It points out some of the sad facts about Twitter and the abuse some are using it for. #XFactor, #imacelebrity and others. While Twitter's users like an indignant scrap, they will also leap to the defense of anyone being treated unpleasantly. Social media tends to self-police very well. It should not be an argument against Twitter or any other social site in the workplace.

If you are in the training department and do not believe that social or positive disruption are 'real' training tools, thank you for reading this article, LinkedIn has lots of new jobs out there suggest you go join! Social is here to stay, it's the new classroom.