

DESIGNING SOCIAL LEARNING

Four steps can help you design social learning more consciously: describe, assess, learn, and improve.

DESCRIBE

Describe your products in terms of social learning. How are you using social learning? Inventory your use of social learning in each product in terms of four dimensions: immediacy, structure, scale, and transparency.

The chart on the following page provides a format for your inventory. List your products that use social learning in the leftmost column. Then place an X to indicate where along the spectrum each product falls for the four dimensions.

Do you see patterns? If all your social learning is very loosely structured or done on a large scale, that may suggest an opportunity to experiment at other points on those dimensions. Do you see no pattern? That may suggest the need for your organization to be more holistically aware of social learning. Are there products you can't adequately inventory for social learning because you don't know enough about them (maybe face-to-face concurrent conference sessions)?

ASSESS

Assess the effectiveness of your products in terms of social learning. For each product, what is the learning you're trying to achieve? An awareness of the context can help you assess whether the current mix of immediacy, structure, scale, and transparency is appropriate.

In the context of set curricula or exam prep, the social learning may be more highly structured to allow it to speak to the curricula or exam content. In the context of learning focused at the higher end of Bloom's taxonomy (synthesis and evaluation), the social learning may be smaller in scale and more immediate to better engage learners.

There are no inherently right or wrong approaches. Think through what each product is trying to accomplish, and then rate the effectiveness of that educational product's use of social learning, using the last column in the chart on the following page.

Go with your intuitive sense of the effectiveness, but also look for evidence that supports your assessment, even if anecdotal.

LEARN

Learn more about social learning. What social learning are you experiencing beyond what your organization offers? Sample other social learning, both social learning that is similar to what your organization is doing (or trying to do) and social learning that is different from what you're after.

If you're a thoughtful social learner, you'll pick up ideas and tools that may apply to what your organization offers—or will offer in the future.

IMPROVE

Improve how you're using social learning. Based on what you know from the other three steps, where can you improve what you're currently doing with social learning? Where can you play with the mix of the four social learning dimensions to get a better match with the goals for the education product? Where can you more consciously design social learning?

Don't be afraid to experiment—as long as you're prepared to learn from what works (and what doesn't) and adjust accordingly.

DESCRIBE & ASSESS SOCIAL LEARNING

THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL LEARNING					
PRODUCTS	IMMEDIACY indirect/delayed (on L), direct/instant (on R)	STRUCTURE less/loose (on L), more/tighter (on R)	SCALE small (on L), massive (on R)	TRANSPARENCY opaque (on L), explicit (on R)	EFFECTIVENESS overall
					<input type="checkbox"/> very effective <input type="checkbox"/> somewhat effective <input type="checkbox"/> somewhat ineffective <input type="checkbox"/> not at all effective
					<input type="checkbox"/> very effective <input type="checkbox"/> somewhat effective <input type="checkbox"/> somewhat ineffective <input type="checkbox"/> not at all effective
					<input type="checkbox"/> very effective <input type="checkbox"/> somewhat effective <input type="checkbox"/> somewhat ineffective <input type="checkbox"/> not at all effective

LEARN & IMPROVE

SOCIAL LEARNING

Observations

What observations result from describing and assessing your use of social learning?

Learn

What can you and your team do to learn more about social learning and how other organizations are using it?

Improve

Where and how can you improve what you're doing with social learning?