

Scaffolded Social Learning

Section 1

Resources:

Gutierrez, K. (2017). The Why's and How's of Social Learning in the Workplace.
<http://bit.ly/TheWhysAndHows> An article introducing Social Learning theory, its concept and application in the workplace



Scaffolded Social Learning

Scaffolded Social Learning is made up of a series of opportunities that take the learner by the hand and lead them through both formal content and social spaces. Learners can take the formal courses that they are given, and also work together to create their own learning content. This new learning content can then be part of the course the next time it is run, so that each set of learners builds on the work of the last. New content is based on stories, as they are the best way to engage with a subject and transfer information to each other. In Scaffolded Social Learning, people learn by telling their own stories, and by listening to others' and relating them to their own contexts.

The Cheesecake Factory: Social Learning and the Video Cafe

Description:

What was the challenge? / What happened?

One organisation, The Cheesecake Factory, has successfully created a social learning environment on an online platform that allows its 31,500 staff and managers to create and share videos. Called VideoCafe, the social learning initiative has allowed the company's staff to glean and share best practices and cultural nuggets through storytelling across its network of restaurants.

Solution:

How did we approach it? ? What did we do?

Here are three best practices from The Cheesecake Factory for structuring a video-based social learning environment:

Empowerment. The company wanted to harness the ideas, creativity, and skills of its employees throughout its entire system – in order to benefit from employees tacit knowledge. They created a fun, visual, engaging structure that appealed to employees, rather than a system that told employees what to do, from the corporate office.

Have Clear Rules. The company realised that corporate social media would need rules to function. It convened regular meetings of stakeholders from different divisions to try to head off problems before they happened.

Adapt or choose the technology to fit the community. The Cheesecake Factory uses a lot of different systems, platforms, and software. With the employee-user in mind, and with the help of outside experts, the company prioritised the user's experience in their design of VideoCafe.

Conclusion:

How did it work?/ What are lessons learned? How does it relate to broader context?

The company knows its structured social learning environment is working as it has begun to see the effect on how workers are retaining knowledge. What's more, the new VideoCafe system is an important part of building a more vibrant and collaborative corporate culture as the company expands.

When asked what a social learning environment looks like, the typical response is that it doesn't look like any one thing. It's a bit of a mosaic. Social learning enhances the learning experience by producing a collaborative learning environment; a community of learners who work together to solve a problem and gain knowledge in the course of a structured solution. This paves the way for an ongoing and interactive community of practice, which is one of the best supports for deep specialisation.