



## TRAINING OUTLINE: Personal Learning Network (PLN)

**Session Description** A Personal Learning Network (PLN) is the collection of people with whom you engage and exchange information. They are the group of people who contribute to your knowledge and understanding of topics in your field and beyond. As web applications have become more robust, your PLN can easily grow using tools like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Ning thus expanding your network to include people from across the globe. The tools make it easy to find, connect with, and engage social contacts, peers, authors, experts and anyone with similar interests. Personal Learning Networks extend your learning through increased reflection, while enabling you to learn as part of a global community.

### Session Objectives

Goals:

- Communication & Collaboration
  - Use online technologies to create collaborative spaces fostering team work and creation of materials
- Research & Information Fluency
  - Promote media literacy by demonstrating an understanding of the relative advantages of using different learning technologies/strategies

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Define the importance for creating a PLN for your work
- Describe the benefits associated with participating in a PLN
- Identify and analyze the different types and uses of Web 2.0 tools
- Evaluate and implement a PLN solution that best fits your needs
- Self-assess your participation level in a PLN for the next six months

## 1. Content

### Building Your Learning Network

#### Participants will know..... (Knowledge)

- The importance and benefits of building a PLN in your discipline and how networking with other educational professionals can provide expertise, ideas, resources, and collaboration opportunities for new course content and projects
- How to research and evaluate web 2.0 tools that support your discipline and incorporate best practices for maintaining a PLN

#### Participants will be able to..... (Skills)

- Design a PLN solution that best meets their needs
- Implement 3 tools to begin building a Personal Learning Network
- Develop and implement a PLN plan that will help them quickly get started in building a professional network



## What is a PLN?

Definitions: A Personal Learning Network (PLN) is the collection of people with whom you engage and exchange information. They are the group of people who contribute to your knowledge and understanding of topics in your field and beyond. As web applications have become more robust, your PLN can easily grow using tools like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Ning thus expanding your network to include people from across the globe. The tools make it easy to find, connect with, and engage social contacts, peers, authors, experts and anyone with similar interests. Personal Learning Networks extend your learning through increased reflection, while enabling you to learn as part of a global community.

## Informal Learning - Life Long Learning

Formal learning opportunities (courses, conferences) are important although as training budgets are cut, we are not able to attend as many. A PLN is generally considered to be an informal learning opportunity which can play a major role in supplementing professional development in times like these. One benefit of a well-developed PLN is that it provides structure for life-long learning.

## Why are PLNs Important?

Will Richardson Web 2.0 expert discusses the importance of a PLN for both faculty and students: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QynwIVQs0K0>

- Here are some ways that educators are using their PLNs:
- Professional development – learn from content-area specialists
- Locate resources for their course, such as free websites and software
- Get lesson plan ideas from master teachers
- Learn about new technology and how to integrate it into their teaching
- Find collaborative solutions
- Find interesting links to education news

## What are PLN Tools?

Tools to develop your PLN:

- Twitter (<http://wefollow.com/>)
- Ning (<http://edupln.ning.com/> and <http://college2.ning.com/>)
- Blogs (<http://www.blogcatalog.com/>)
- Wiki
- LinkedIn (groups like NERCOMP and EDUCAUSE)

## Build a PLN

Discuss Ways to Begin Building Your Personal Learning Network

1. Set-up a Twitter account and list yourself in the Twitter directory, <http://wefollow.com/>
2. Identify and follow professionals in your profession by reading their “tweets”.



- a. First, harvest links and resources and reflect on the conversations.
  - b. As you become more comfortable, join the conversation and start contributing links and resources.
3. Find blogs you find interesting (using <http://www.blogcatalog.com/>) and start reading them

### PLN Process

What does my Personal Learning Network (PLN) look like? Here's how we use our PLN for learning every day:

- Check in with Twitter and Classroom 2.0 to see what people are saying, what websites are being referenced, or what webinars may be available later in the day.
- Visit interesting bookmarks shared by your PLN contacts.
- Review and comment on new blog posts you follow.
- Whatever new comes into your feed, check it out.

### Stages of PLN Adoption:

You can't do it all at once, building a PLN can feel overwhelming when links and resources are constantly coming in. Balance is key. Learn more about the stages of PLN adoption here: <http://www.thethinkingstick.com/stages-of-pln-adoption>

### 2. Examples People to Follow:

Karl Fisch: <http://twitter.com/karlfisch>

Henry Jenkins: <http://twitter.com/henryjenkins>

Sir Ken Robinson: <http://twitter.com/SirKenRobinson>

Clay Shirky: <http://twitter.com/cshirky>

Michael Wesch: <http://twitter.com/mwesch>

Social Media Revolution: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhPgUcjGQAw>

### 3. Activity

Have participants pick 2 tools that resonate with them, create accounts, and connect with 2 colleagues.

Provide participants a chance to "work the room" with their contact info and IDs for the 2 tools they will employ as part of a PLN.

### 4. Share

Give participants a chance to share their PLN design and how they intent to use it as a resource moving forward.



**Reading:**

“Your Personal Learning Network Made Easy” is a blog post that explains a PLN and identifies many good Web 2.0 tools to get it going. She also explores the stages of adoption. <http://tinyurl.com/olousp>

“7 Things You Should Know About Personal Learning Environments” is an Educause document which presents another perspective on Personal Learning Networks. <http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7049.pdf>

Will Richardson Web 2.0 expert discusses the importance of a PLN for both faculty and students:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QynwIVQs0K0>

“Twittering Not Frittering: Professional Development in 140 Characters” from Edutopia magazine.  
<http://www.edutopia.org/twitter-professional-development-technology-microblogging>