The eLearning Coach Podcast #2:
Using Social Media for eLearning
with Jane Bozarth

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Connie Malamed: This is Episode 2: Using Social Media for Learning

I am pretty excited about this session because it is a conversation with Jane, PhD, who is one of the most knowledgeable people I know when it comes to social media and learning. Jane is the eLearning coordinator for the North Carolina Office of State Personnel and she is a frequent presenter on social media topics. She is also the author of many books including Social Media for Trainers, and she is a regular columnist for the Learning Solutions Magazine. I think you are going to get a lot of ideas from this interview, so let us get started.

Connie: Hi Jane, thanks for being on the podcast. I have so many questions about how we can use social media learning.

Jane Bozarth: Good morning Connie, Thanks for having me on the show.

Connie: So, Let me just ask you something. How did you become the social media queen, what got you interested in it?

Jane: I was a classroom trainer for a number of years, and I have always been with state government, and I had moved to training director for the Justice Department just about the same time I started my master's work. At that time, a good deal of that was online, but it was online in the sense of lots of scrolling pages through a homemade sort of delivery system.

But even then, even though it was not great, I saw a lot of potential for it to solve problems I was having. We were literally making people drive, and people do not realize how big North Carolina is, we are 550 miles from the mountains to the Outer Banks. People were having to drive all that way to come to Raleigh to sit in a session and listen to the EEO officer read a harassment policy to them.

I mean, it was that kind of crazy stuff, so I saw eLearning as a real possibility for me to fix some of the problems I was having with geographical reach to address some of the concerns with so much of the compliance training that government requires to get to people who are on different shifts or had difficulty to be in class for some reason, and so we started doing some blended learning and then a few self-paced tutorials.

But along the way, the issue was that because I am with government, I am never

going to have very much money. I had to figure out how to do things that were not expensive, that did not involve a lot of big software purchases or multi-person committees because you know how government can snowball, so I have always tried lots of ways to do things inexpensively, to look for free tools, and when social media came along, it was just a really natural fit for me. The other thing that was happening with the eLearning world is that I moved into a job where I was more officially recognized as the eLearning "coordinator" which in many cases meant actually outsourcing either development work or buying products, and what was happening was that I was having a smaller and smaller peer group in my own world.

It reached the point there was really no one for me to talk to in my environment, so social media comes along, it solves my problem with needing free stuff, but it also solves my problem with helping me develop a bigger network and helping me reach people who were working in the field outside of my work world, so that I could have a better personal learning network, and so the social media just naturally grew out of that. Plus, I liked it, I found it fun. I found especially with Twitter that I can go on anytime, day or night, and somebody interesting would be there talking about something I did not even know I wanted to talk about.

Connie: I just love when I have a friend on Twitter and then I meet that person at a conference, it is like we are old friends, such a weird feeling.

Jane: Mark Oehlert is an anthropologist and he has done a lot of work over the years thinking about that very thing. He describes that as the phenomenon where if you have known somebody from a Listserv, you know somebody online from a forum, a discussions thread, or a blog, you meet them at a conference and you shake their hand, but when it is somebody from Twitter you hug!

Connie: One thing I am wondering is do you use the term social media learning, I am never sure because I know people can confuse it with social learning, so what term do you use and can you differentiate those terms for everyone?

Jane: Yeah, that is a great question. What I say is that social learning has always happened, it is how cavemen learned how to make a sharper arrowhead; it is how as children we learned to speak our native language. Your parents do not sit you down and teach you how to structure a sentence or teach you how to conjugate a verb, you pick that up as we do many things in our life from living in the world.

You hear it, you are immersed in it, you use it in context, you hear it in context, and you pick it up. It is how you learn as a child to go to school every day and not get beat up. These are the informal rules of how to get along with other kids, how to get along with the teacher, and if you are smart and lucky, you figure out how to transfer that to the workplace. Learning has always been social. I do not deny that conditioning exists, that the hot stove is in fact a reality, and the way we learn falling off the bike. Learning by mistakes is a way we learn, but for the most part, we learn

socially.

Social media are new tools that help us do that on a much bigger scale. It helps span geographic boundaries, it helps span cultures, it helps span languages. For those of us in the workforce, it can span organizational boundaries, it can cross across silos, it can help us find who in the organization know something we need to know, it can help surface who has already worked on something we are working on. I think, probably my classic example is to have finished a project and find out someone in another building had already done the same thing. Social media gives us tools that help us make that bridge if we use them effectively. You can use Twitter all day long and now learn anything, but you can also be in a group talking about how you fixed a problem with a copy machine, that is learning and not always recognize it, so they are just the tools.

Connie: How do you speak about it?

Jane: I would like to specify social media for learning.

Connie: That does make it a little bit more clear. I think I am going to use social media for learning from now on. I think that might stop people from confusing the two.

Jane: Well, I think it will stop people, I do not know and I do not want to get in trouble here, I do not know that it will stop vendors. I call it show-game, I even have a slide about it, a show-game where vendors throw out sentences like "Well, if you want to implement social learning in your organization, you are going to need the social learning tools to help you use social media to be a social learner" and it is just very confusing. Having a Facebook group does not mean everybody is going to start talking to each other, really!

Connie: So just as a general level set, what do you see some of the benefits of using social media for workplace learning.

Jane: Well, I mentioned them earlier. I see lots of potential for capturing tacit knowledge, which is such a challenge for organization, people do not. If you sit someone down and say write down what you do, people do not do very well with that task or you end up with a weekly TPS report with a list of activities that may tell us what was done but not really have people get work done, but when you have a mechanism through which people can just talk to each other, particularly informally, particularly throughout the day, it is a better, more effective way of capturing who knows what and what they do and who is working on what.

I had a conversation the other day with Allison Michaels from Yammer, and of course they use Yammer, which is very much like Twitter if you are not familiar with that, and she said once in a while somebody will just say, "Quick, what is everyone working on right this minute," and everybody will say I am doing this, I am talking to this client, I am trying to untangle this problem, this note over here; snapshot of

what it is people actually do, which is different for many of us in organizations, particularly if we do not work in a building together somewhere.

Connie: That is so cool. "Quick, what is everyone doing right now?"

Jane: Not at some status meeting, where it is "What did you do last week," and people either give you highlights or they are trying to impress the boss, right?, and then clearly list off accomplishments that may or may not be quite real. I think that is a lot of fun, but you connect the silos a little bit, connecting the dots between people, understanding better what people do.

My own organization years ago had this great guy on staff. This is government where purchasing is just a nightmare, and he knew he could get a check cut on an odd day of the week, he could get vendor samples when nobody else could, he could get a product installed before anyone else could, and he left us, and before he left, of course, somebody had him write down, do hr wrote down when this thing expired or where that credit card was stored, that kind of thing, but he did not write down, "You really need to have a pretty good relationship with Julie because she can cut a check early, but it is got to be Tuesday before noon or you can't get it done." More formal, frequent conversation with him throughout the work flow probably would have surfaced more of that kind of stuff, but it is the stuff we do that is kind of unconscious.

One of my other challenges about helping people understand the idea of social learning as opposed to other kinds of learning is that in the field, we have this idea in the industry that people sit around cogitating on the content of learning as much as we do. You know, they step out in the hallway, they say, "Can you help me with this spreadsheet," somebody does, and that is the end of the interaction.

The person does not sit back and say "Gee, I learned how to do that." They say "Thank you for helping me solve my problem," and I think that we would be well advised in this business to start thinking about that rather than what they need to "learn" and think about what people need to get a solution to, what problems are they having, what problem needs solving, what is the pain they are experiencing, and I think we are uniquely positioned to help with that, but we may need to re-frame it because they are not going to. Most social learning, I would say, is probably both informal and unconscious.

Connie: That is interesting, it seems like social media could also be used for that if someone is listening and paying attention, and you are doing some internal social media, it is a great way to find out what people's challenges are just by listening to them.

Jane: Yeah, I think if I had a single thing we could do better in this business, it is to listen. Those of us still in the classroom business, people have wonderful conversations during the breaks and after the class that we miss or that we are busy moving on to something else and we do not attend to. One of our organizations, a group of blue-

collar front-line workers, set up their own Facebook group, private, separate from the organization, separate from anybody's oversight. I am a member of it, and when you go in there, they are mostly talking about how to get promoted, what kind of training is available, it is stuff the HR department needs to know that they do not have answers to but these people do not feel like they are getting it from the organization. I am sure the HR department would say something like "we have that all on our website." Well, that is not working, but nobody is in there listening to what these people are saying.

Connie: And you are.

Jane: Well, I am because in this job, I have a really hard time communicating with our front line. It is very frustrating, as you know, to have somebody ask for class you offered yesterday. Example, "We didn't know," "We didn't get the e-mail," "We didn't get the messages," so if I can be where they are and say, "Oh well, I am doing a class on that next week," "Oh, we have got a webinar on that on Tuesday," I can be there as the needs arise.

Connie: Okay, so that is another use for social media. You are using it to connect with people who in some ways cannot be reached any other way or it is an additional way to connect with people and to reach some.

Jane: Yeah, I find it a way to help me get where they are and be around at the point of need. Now, I am not doing that with 100,000 people, but I am able to do that with some of our groups that are historically undeserved.

Connie: When I hear the evangelist, the people who really love and are good at using social media for learning, I only tend to hear the benefits, and so, I am wondering if you could talk to us a little bit about the downside of using social media for learning, what is the negative of it?

Jane: I think that organizations worry the problem is with the learner and really, I have seen very few. I think you will always have the person in an organization who abuses whatever tool is in front of them. We act as if people, for instance, did not abuse the telephone. The organization that responds to the individual who is abusing the phone, they do not take all the phones out of the building, you deal with that person, so I think take it as a case by case thing.

Most people are not abusing anything, most people actually are working. You have to trust that is happening, but the problems I see are first of all that organizations do not have a strategy. You will see an instructor get on fire about "We need a YouTube channel," and they have 2 videos to put on it or "We need a Facebook group," but they do not really have an idea of what they want to do with it and "if we build it, they will come" mentality. Well, I started a Facebook group for my leadership class, but nobody comments on anything.

You know, they do not want to participate, they just want it to be one more thing they deliver onto the masses, or they just say, "We need a blog, we need a wiki, we need to be on Twitter," but they do not have a business reason for that. They do not have a good need for that. For instance, saying "We have a lot of remote learners that are going to be taking this online class with me on Tuesdays for an hour and a half," I need a way for them to stay connected in between those sessions, what tool would work for that, so that would be an example of some kind of a strategy, but I do see people kind of scattershot, get attracted to this, try this, try that, and then of course the answer comes out, "Well, we tried social media and it did not work."

Well, they did not try it very well, they did not try it in an intentional way, and they did not really think through who was going to participate and how. I had a woman I do a certificate program and this for ASTD, and I had a woman recently in a class that she wanted to start a blog. I said, "Okay, well, tell me what your first post will be about." She went on and on. I said, "Okay, tell me what your second post will be about," and she was silent.

All this stuff is easy to start, that is one of the challenges. It is easy to set up a blog, it is easy to set up a wiki, it is easy to start a Facebook page, but you have to think about what happens next week and the week after and the week after. We are not in the days where you just set up a website and left it there for 2 years. You have to have fresh content and thinking about where that is going to come from. I see organizations failing to include learners as partners. In the learning, they still want to, for instance, use a blog to just replicate a web-page on which they generate all the content.

 The learners are not actually helping generate any of the content, they are not creating any of the experience, everything is, again, just information being pushed out to them and delivered on to them. I did a study for the eLearning guild in 2011 on this. Among the things that were success factors for organizations using social media for learning effectively were that the organizations had identified what they were calling ambassadors, that is, people in the organization, not just champions running around yelling "Rah! Rah! Lets do it," but people who are on Twitter, people who are active bloggers, people who are taking academic course work that involves some kind of online interaction, so they were finding those people and bringing them in as partners and planning the training and helping generate the posts, helping generate questions, identifying people who could take turns, may be every week, coming up with new ideas or posting a new question or going in to comment when things kind of got quiet.

 What did not work were organizations who spent a lot of time and effort doing extensive training on how to use the tool. If the tool requires that much training, it is not the right tool anyway. Most of the tools are not that hard to use, and if it is really that complex, which is often the case with internal home-built stuff, then it is not really reasonable to think the employees are going to use it very much, but they also spend time on big splashy launches when most would better choosing a few small pilots, let us try it with this class, let us try it with this course, let us try it with people

in the customer service center, not trying to do these enterprise wide big huge flashy events.

Connie: In everything you have just explained about the downside, you have really given us a lot of guidelines. You said that people should make sure they have a strategy, make sure that the tools are simple enough that people can learn them quickly, start with a pilot, and have a few ambassadors.

Jane: The other thing that I see and problematic with social media, in general and for learning too, again people tend to assume the problems are going to be from employees or maybe from customers, when in fact, pretty much every example of a social media disaster, something that is really embarrassed the company, something that has necessitated apologies, or has had repercussions in almost every instance, I can not think of an exception, but almost every instance, it has been caused by the company's own designated social media people, either internal people who just were the wrong choice and they were too sarcastic or smirky, unresponsive, or people who had taken the work as consultants where it have been outsourced to who did not understand the business.

There were incidents after the Aurora, Colorado, shooting, there were incidents with KitchenAid, with Ragu, with Nestle, with Entenmann's Baked Goods. I mean, there is a long list of problems from people who should have known better and the organization frankly, it was not the employee, it was not a customer.

Connie: One thing I am thinking of as you are speaking is that a lot of instruction designers and developers are not trainers or people who create interactions, and so if we were to try to incorporate social media for learning to enhance any kind of online learning experience, would you recommend that we actually somehow learn more about what it takes to be a good standup trainer?

Jane: I think we need to learn about being a facilitator. I do not know that we ever have to worry about being standup classroom trainers. I think that we do need to think about facilitators, people who facilitate either in the virtual classroom who are going to facilitate these things, my friend and your friend probably too, Gina Schreck, who does a lot work with technology education and helping people understand how to use, demystifies technology a lot.

She talks about the fact that social media are the tools that help us to invite interaction from our participants, and we need to stop thinking about having them interact with content and think about how can we invite interaction from them, where is their chance to have a conversation, a sensible reason for them to discuss their own experience or share their practices or document an FAQ sheet about something that is going on, so figuring out where we can invite that interaction, I think it is a different question than just how can we make this interaction.

I would say the earliest examples we saw, by the way, were things like Expedia and

Amazon when they started asking readers and users to comment and offer reviews of hotels and offer reviews of books, and I think it is not unusual at all now to go look at Amazon, there will be a thousand reviews for a book or game or something, and people love that. They are usually fair, I do not see people going out of their way to trash a product. There are lot of times plenty of books get 5-star reviews, games get 5 stars, so we need to learn how to write instructions for those facilitators. If you want to say, they need to have a Twitter-based book club, that needs to be written out and that needs to be explained, and both the instructional designer and the facilitator need to have some experience with Twitter. You cannot go into that cult. If you are not familiar with Twitter, you are going to be really lost trying to run some sort of activity using Twitter.

Same thing if you are asking people to set up a Facebook group or a page or you want a blog to go along with your course, we need to be able to write instructions for how that is going to happen and what kind of things to facilitate and what kind of questions to ask, and it may be as detailed as set up a blog, we are going to use Blogger, you set it up your own name, you give all of your students authoring rights or give them all commenting rights or whatever you want to do with the comments, and we might need to write week 1, here is the post; week 2, here is the post; week 3, invite one of your learners to submit something for the post. So we may have to just learn to be more specific if we are trying to build that end.

Again, we need to learn it ourselves, you cannot learn about social media from reading a book, much as I want you to, you can not learn about Twitter from just reading Twitter for Dummies, so we have to do it as designers, but the facilitators also have to be willing. There is something I did not say when we talked about the downside. We are already, all of us, busy, and if you are a trainer very familiar in that role and your day is already foul, I do not know that you are going to devote the time that it takes to go be really effected to build a large network on something like Twitter that does not happen with 10-minute-a-day commitment.

So there is the expectation that somebody is going to have to spend time somewhere else now. In my case, I have learned how to almost completely get rid of email and phone calls and interact pretty much on Twitter. I know a couple of people who have actually given up their email accounts and if you intend to talk to them, you better find them online because they are not ever answering email. So I have replaced the time I used to spend on that with what I am doing elsewhere.

Connie: That is a great productivity tip … and back to facilitator versus trainer, classroom trainer. I am glad you made that distinction because I think getting involved in social media for learning from a facilitation perspective is a lot more helpful. One thing I was wondering is that if you can provide us with some examples of how people are using social media for learning to enhance eLearning or to enhance any kind of online learning experience, do you have any examples?

Jane: My favorite example came from Charlotte, North Carolina, through the Mecklenburg

County Public Library which is our biggest system. This is online, it is a program called 23 Things. It is no longer being updated, but it still exists on the web, and you can look at what they did with it. It came to the management's attention that the librarians were great at doing traditional librarian stuff. They could say, "Yes Connie, we have that book, come with me, and I will show you where it is on a shelf." They were not very good with "I need a digital image for a report for my high school class," "I need to search an online database of journals for something."

They were not very good at things that were not traditional tasks, and so in some miraculous partnership, the training director and the IT director got together, imagine that, and sat down and made a list of *23 Things* along with management, *23 Things* the librarian needed to be fluent in or know about or execute in order to serve the customers better. So we had the case of a very specific defined target audience, we had very specific defined performance outcomes, and the training director and the IT director sat down and said how are we going to help people become more knowledgeable about and then use these *23 Things*.

Now, the IT director could have built a website. I mean, she had the IT staff under her direction, she could have had whatever she wanted, but the idea was if we are going to teach them about these technologies, we need to use these technologies, and so they used a free Blogger blog, which is a Google product, they set up the entire course using a blog, and it is basically a scrolling list of the *23 Things*. And you click on a thing, and you can go to, for instance**,** *Thing 20*, I believe, is YouTube.

There is a quick little podcast clip about what YouTube is; then there is a longer description of YouTube, how it works, how you load stuff, it is not days of data, and then there is a discovery exercise where you need to go to YouTube, find something relevant to libraries you would like to include on your own blog, I got it out of order, but in order to participate in the course, the *23 Things* were intended to be done in 9 weeks, but you could flex that if you wanted to, you could do it sooner by yourself, in groups, whatever you wanted, and each participant had to set up their own blog and document their progresses as they went along.

So for the YouTube exercise, the final thing in the discovery was find a thing relevant to libraries that is useful and put it on your own blog. So they are using the tools as they are experimenting with the tools in a meaningful way relevant to their work in tiny little discrete bits, "This is Flickr, this is YouTube, this is a blog, this is a wiki, these are the online databases." The social part came in that they were recording and commenting on each other's work using the blogs. So I think that is a great example of using a tool to solve the technological problems. It is a really good marriage of technology and instructional intent.

Connie: That is a great project, and it is innovative and inspiring, and I am already getting ideas of how I would like to do something like that. Have you seen any companies who are using social media just to share profiles and expertise within a very large distributed organization?

Jane: Yeah. Actually, I have a great example of that, Ace Hardware. If you could think about Ace Hardware, those of you in the Continental United States, there are, I think, 4000 independently owned stores, which means that the guy in San Antonio is not in any kind of competition with the guy in that route where they own their stores, they are local guys who probably sponsor the local little league team and that kind of stuff.

So there is no reason to hoard that information, but think about the inventory in a hardware store, I mean think about what you would need to know about to be effective in that role in ordering and stocking and managing and hiring people. So Ace Hardware recognized that they had a lot of expertise very locally situated, so they set up their own and they did an internal tool that apparently was not too difficult to use.

They set up an internal tool, so that people could capture, as you say a profile, their areas of expertise, what they knew, what they were good at, what they still needed to know about, and that could be shared across the organization. They also had a discussion area, so they could talk about that. So the benefits were several there. The benefits were we could find somebody else who knew what we needed to know, but also the organization was capturing where the talent was, what the expertise was, they were also capturing common problems what seemed to come up and up, over and over again.

Connie: So what are the criteria, when would someone who is creating any kind of online experience, even if it is not a full course, what kind of criteria would you recommend for deciding, "Yes, social media would actually really help and enhance this" or "No, it would not?"

Jane: If there is nothing to talk about, and my favorite example, I can say this because I work in HR and I know what hurts HR's feelings, when I say this. Nobody on this earth wants to talk about your unlawful harassment policy except the other people in the HR, it is what you all get up in the morning to do, the rest of us do not care. If you are doing a class on things like personal policies, the odds are not great that very many people want to talk about it, so we need to find out what people want to talk about, and I think that comes from listening.

Most of the time, again, they want to talk about where they have run into problems, either executing a task, dealing with a particular kind of client, communicating with another work area, so we need to find that out, but – be aware that the content that is interesting to us or a small sector of an organization is probably not a big discussion bringer for everybody else, so let us think about that.

Otherwise, where do people need to talk to each other, where to people have difficulty talking to each other, what are tasks, and I do not like the word soft skills, because that is too broad for one I am discussing, but where do people run into

problems that the shared collective knowledge would be useful dealing with a challenging vendor or people and a customer service situation where they come up against challenging callers or company policies that do not necessarily fit. They are trying to help a customer, but they are running up against walls in trying to deliver that help; where do people naturally want to talk.

One of my favorite users for social media for learning, and it is not really a threat to anybody, this is an easy win. One of my favorite users is an alumni group. Many of us who have done traditional training, when you have an extended course like a leadership academy or customer service certification program or administrative assistant certificate, that kind of thing, people meet each other, they form bonds, either online or face to face, and they want to stay in touch, but they look at the instructor and say "Will you keep an email list for me."

One of the big wins with that situation is to set up something like a Facebook group or it could be LinkedIn, I mean you can do it any way, and see your new course graduates into that as they finish, and that way, they go into the group knowing each other, knowing a few people, but then they go into a group of folks who have the same interest who are struggling with the same problems, and it is a great way for them to stay in touch as they are implementing what they have learned, as they are trying stuff out, as they are running into things that maybe were not covered in class. Because I think, we are not very good at following up on training, the event ends and we get the smile sheets and we are busy and we go on to the next course.

Connie: Right.

Jane: So there is really no harm here. You are not stepping on anybody else's content and it will be natural in that situation for people to outgrow and move on, as they are implementing their new learning, and some folks may stay and some folks may go. Now, when I have done these, I have found it takes me about 6 months of work to keep the energy going to get enough people there, that folks are talking to each other. After that, the group gradually starts to take over, some sort of louder voices emerge, some of those ambassadors start stepping up, and I find it requires less and less of my energy as the group matures, but it does take a little time up front.

You cannot just set up a group and say "Okay, everybody ever took this, here is a group for you, go." Just say what have you learned since the class ended; what is the most valuable thing you took away; what is one thing; we are redesigning the course, what is something we need to expand or what is something we could cut. They love to talk about that kind of stuff, so an alumni group is a really good win.

Connie: An alumni group really seems like it would help learning transfer because people are speaking about what they have learned in the real world, great idea.

Jane: A smart designer and a smart trainer would go in there and read what they are saying. We did this in class, but it did not work like this when I got back to shop floor.

We talked about this in class but then I ran into that, it was a great place to get cases and examples and ideas for things like skill practices and case studies. It is a great source for that kind of stuff because it is real and it is coming from your people and your organization. Whereas if you ask them in class, write me some case studies, you know what happen.

Connie: Right, so not only do the learners increase their knowledge but the facilitator does also. Let me just ask you this, are there some tools that you think are easier for people to learn that you would recommend?

Jane: Facebook, very easy to use, partly as evidenced by the vast user base that it has. I also read the other day 25% of Facebook users do not make any use of the privacy settings, so I really cannot blame Facebook if that is the case. I find Facebook very easy to use, it makes what used to be complex web design where you wanted text and commentary and photos and videos and interactions, it makes all of that just much, much simpler. I would say so that is an easy one.

A lot of people like LinkedIn, It does not really suite my needs. I know enough about LinkedIn that I can talk about it in training, but it is not my own goto because it does not really fit my needs, but LinkedIn is not too difficult. Twitter is not everyone's cup of tea, it is my cup of tea. It is the first thing I ever found that moved at the speed of Jane. Patience to learn, I think it is frustrating for people who want long, deep reflective conversations, they are not going to get it there, and I think people that do not scan well, they can not just sort of take things in and not respond to everything or are not quick on their feet. I do not know that is where I would start.

Connie: Okay. If someone has concerns about privacy and they want to do something behind their firewall, are there some commercial tools that you recommend?

Jane: I do not recommend anything because it gets me in trouble because somebody may buy that company tomorrow. I will say what is happening in the field. A lot of companies have installed SharePoint, a lot of people who have bought SharePoint and installed it did not tell the workforce that it includes things like blogs and wikis, so they never turn them on. SharePoint is a suite, like office products, that is coming this week, and so if you do not know about that or they did not turn them on, go see about getting that done. So if it is what you have, then by all means, let us figure out how to use it.

Microsoft recently bought Yammer, which I mentioned earlier, the Yammer folks I know are now Microsoft employees. I am guessing that they plan to bolt that into SharePoint. The thing missing from SharePoint was an instant messaging tool and might see it become part of that suite. They haven't said that and I can't put money on it, but I would bet that is what is going to happen. But that is a very good product.

Yammer and Socialtext are good internal messaging tools that lots of organizations

use. You can do a number of things with blogs and wikis and have them moved inside the firewall, have them branded, it just starts costing money, but I don't know that I would say one is better than the other. Most blogging tools are good, WordPress seems to be edging ahead in terms of capability and what it will do, and WordPress will work with you on doing an internal private thing, but I think folks sometimes do not think about the fact we can already make those largely private. You can get a simple Blogger blog and password protect it. You can see it, you can password protect who can comment on things, you can protect that you moderate those comments, I do not know that the public realizes that. Lot of the tools have privacy controls like I said, like Facebook, the folks just do not bother to set up or they do not realize they are there.

Connie: That is a really good point. Why do not we close with this, what do you see as trends for the future in social media for learning?

Jane: I think we are going to see greatly expanded use of images and photographs. We are looking at workforces in which 0 percent of the workers are without any kind of cellphone, I don't mean one we gave them and I did not say smart-phone, I think that we have virtually completely in this country, in a way we have complete saturation of wireless phone, most of those phones now have a camera. Pew Internet Research recently, I think it was October 2012, said that almost 50% of adults using the internet using devices are using social media, are sharing or uploading photographs. So I think we are going to see a change in all of the text-heavy stuff.

You can look at Facebook and see that very little now does not have an image attached, does not have a video attached, does not have a photo associated with it. I think that is going to change, and in my world, that is important because I have a large section of our workforce with low literacy skill set. That does not mean they are low skilled, it means they are not readers and writers, so I think something like Pinterest sounds like expanded use of using images and creating narratives in creating examples, in having workers send in images and upload images for use in our course or in a learning event, I think there is a great deal of potential. Otherwise, I think people are going to keep buying and selling each other.

A minute ago, we were talking about organizations that want to make things private, and I get that. I get that if you are in sales and you have got competitors whose ears are to the ground, if you are in some kind of, like pharma research where you are going for a patent and you need for that to stay secret, but I also see companies trying to lock it down just for the sake of keeping people from talking to each other. There is no reason we can not talk about customer service and hiring, that kind of stuff in public, and I said this as we were starting, so I will say this as we close.

If I had been in a situation where I was in lock-down where I could only communicate with other people inside the organization, I would not have had anybody to talk to. There is nobody in my immediate world, my physical work-world that is doing what I do. If I was not able to get out on Twitter, and me, you, Jay Cross, Clark Quinn, Patti

Shank, Allison Rossett, Jane Hart, Charles Jennings, Harold Jarche, and all of the people I interact with all the time, I am going to get in trouble for not naming names there, it would be pointless for me to use social media.

I will be sitting there, grumbling, "This is stupid, there is nobody here I need to talk to, they do not have information I need," so I think organizations need to also realize the value of not making everything private and letting employees interact with people who are doing similar work in the bigger world. John Seely Brown talks about need to expand your surface areas. Interacting with people who are in other fields, in our case people who are visual designers, people who are doing experience design, people who work with what they are not calling adult learners but doing things like museum curation is important to us, and if we could not get to those folks, we lose a lot of how we can also let the employee, if they need to stay internally, we really clear on what is internal and what is external, but give them some open doors, so they can get to other people who are doing interesting things that could benefit them.

Connie: I agree, If I didn't have the personal learning network that I currently have which spans all kinds of fields, I would probably know a lot less, just in terms of what is going on in the world, what people are thinking about, and the problems that they are trying to solve.

Jane: And you would not be as interested in using the tools. That is the other thing, like I said, if you just want to have this locked up, so only people can talk about HR, you are not going to get very much conversation.

Connie: Right.

Jane: You need to let people talk to each other, and that is part of the thing, and there is a study by Wasco and Faraj in the early 2000s, did some really interesting research and one of the articles they did was about why people share online, and this is what I think freaks organizations out, what Wasco and Faraj found was that most of the time employees feel that information should be shared for the public good, "Why should I keep this to myself, I have learned it, I worked on this, I studies this, I researched this, why shouldn't I share it."

Now, this was in 2000, not yesterday, this was 13 years ago. Organizations still believe they actually own pieces of information. Organizations still talk about things like intellectual capital, the rest of us are kind of over that. You know, I think having the organization get clear on what they feel they do own and what an employee really is okay to just talk about is really critical, and I think it fits back with that piece about having a strategy. Understand the odds are very good this is already in the organization's communication policies anyway. So figuring out what is okay to share, but then letting the employees get outside a little bit, I think, has enormous value and will help them want to participate.

Connie: So thank you so much Jane. You provided us with a wealth of information, a lot of

things to think about. Anything you want to say in closing?

Jane: I am out of words. I have used all the words in the English language and I have none left, but thanks for having me.

Connie: It was awesome. Take care and have a great day.

I think Jane has such a practical and down to earth perspective on things. I just love to hear what she has to say. I hope you have enjoyed this podcast, and I hope to see you around theelearningcoach.com. Take care.