



## THE BIG SHIFT

Anyone sick of talking about the growth of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and hundreds of other social media technologies that permeate our lives today? If so, I have bad news: We’ve only just begun to see the impact these tools will have on the corporate training function.

And this impact—what I’m calling “The Big Shift”—is changing the very core of what we mean by corporate training.

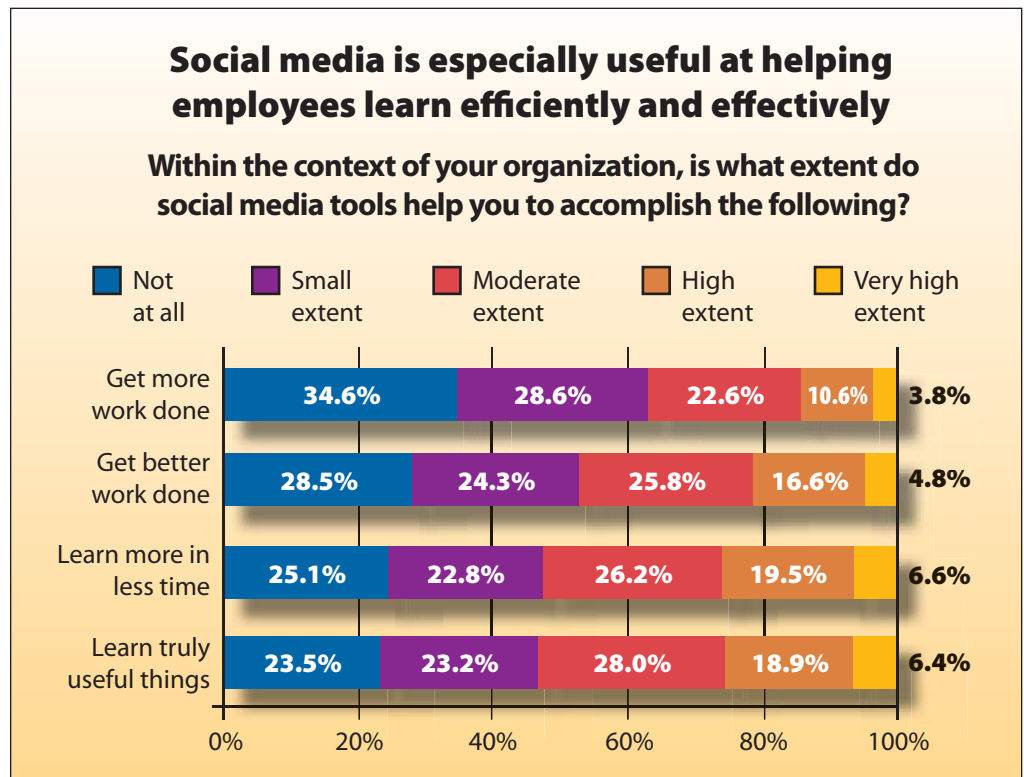
Step back in time with me to a quaint, innocent and orderly era where most company information was created by the training department. Instructional designers dutifully gathered content from SMEs and put together courses, which were then delivered by active instructors in a variety of formats to a passive student audience.

The notion of centralized content creation and orderly consumption has been tossed upside-down by social media because of one important reason: The ability to create and post content now resides in the fingers of the average employee. And that scares some companies to death.

In *The Rise of Social Media*, a recent research report that

the American Society for Training & Development conducted in partnership with i4cp, more than two-thirds of study participants said they believe social media tools have the potential to create security or privacy issues at work. There are also concerns that user-generated content will not be accurate. They go as far as believing that these tools may actually impair the learning process.

Like with almost all new mediums in the past, these fears are largely unfounded. “Companies still have some fear around social media, but employees know



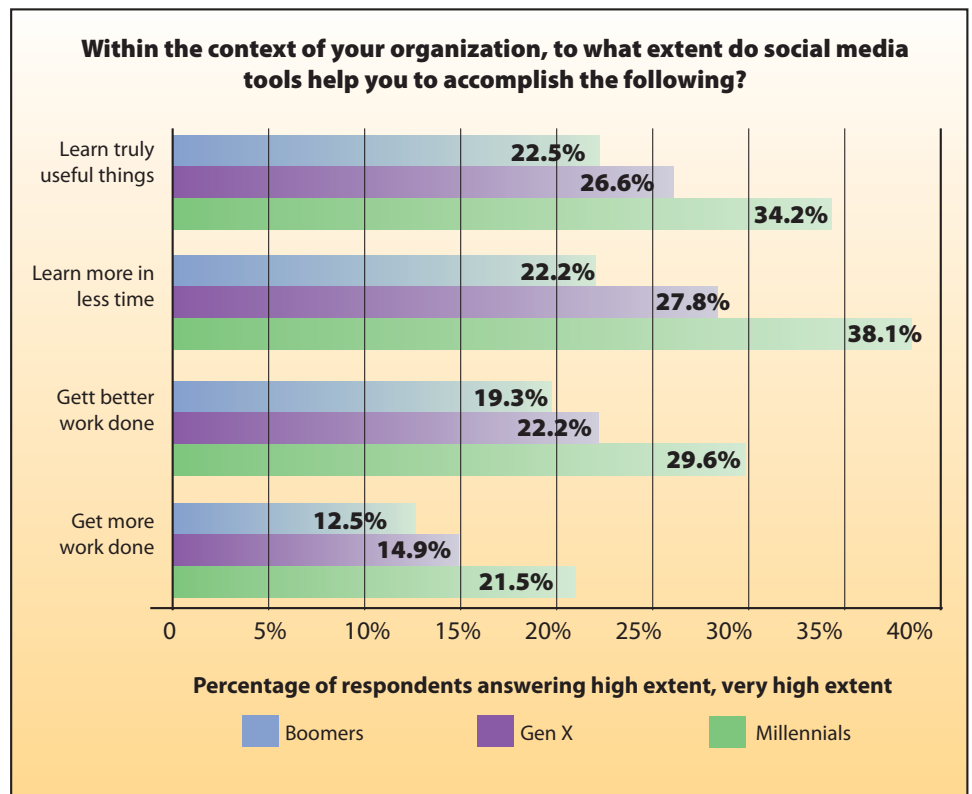
# THE TRAINER OF TOMORROW RECOGNIZES THAT YOU CAN'T TRY TO AVOID OR EVEN CONTROL THE SOCIAL MEDIA TSUNAMI. INSTEAD, YOU PLAN FOR IT AND LEVERAGE ITS STRENGTH.

better,” said Elliot Masie, CEO of the Masie Center. “They know the ‘wisdom of the crowd’ will quickly correct any misinformation. The company-employee disconnect on adoption happens with every new technology, and social media is following this same predictable pattern.”

Despite the concerns, it turns out that not very many companies have completely embraced social media yet for learning purposes. The study found that less than 20 percent of employees are using social networks, wikis, blogs, podcasts or shared media for work-related learning on a regular basis. However, this is expected to change very rapidly; 83 percent of respondents say social media use for learning will increase over the next three years.

A big reason is the influx of the Millennial generation (those born after 1981) into the workforce. This is a generation that doesn’t understand why we say “dial” the number. It’s a group that would rather send a text to someone down the hall than actually talk with them; one that expects much of their lives to be recorded and shared via YouTube and Facebook.

The technology-aided social interactions these workers have grown up with represent a type of informal learning—one they are going to expect to find at their place of work. In fact, today many of them are already



doing this. About 45 percent of Millennials said they interact with social media for learning at work for anywhere from 30 minutes to more than an hour per day. Baby boomers? Uh, not so much.

And this is where the Big Shift comes into play. The training function of old is quickly moving from one of structured content, creators of courses and a top-down, one-way approach to that of enabler, connector and facilitator of user-generated content. The trainer of tomorrow recognizes that you can’t try to avoid or even control the social media tsunami. Instead, you plan for it and leverage its strength.

While employers may be frightened by this shift, or may not yet see

the value in these tools for learning, employees sure do. More than two-thirds of employees said they found social media valuable for work-related learning.

Smart trainers are already preparing for the Big Shift as the social media onslaught shifts into a higher gear. As a training professional you have to ask yourself: Will you be in the driver’s seat, just along for the ride or standing on the side of the road watching the traffic zoom by?

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