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E-learning and social media: tips for using LinkedIn

LinkedIn has invested heavily in e-learning, even creating its own platform. We discover advantages and strategies for using LinkedIn in education.

The technological revolution has invaded the lives of millions of people, changing their daily lives. This is what has happened in the last decades, accompanied by an ever-advancing change that has provided and still gives humans new tools to be able to manage communication, sociality, work and training. From communication, to image and photo sharing, to training activities and work courses, **digital life** has become increasingly important and, in some cases, has undermined in-person activities. In this digital context, one of the tools mainly used by people has turned out to be **social media**, which have become essential if not indispensable in daily life. Therefore, it can be a significant advantage to be able to harness the power of social media in **e-learning** as well, to enhance the dissemination of online courses and create a digital community of belonging.

What is social media?

Social media refers to a digital technology, which allows its users to share impressions and thoughts with each other in the form of text, image or video. Because of the ability of social to connect people even far apart physically, they form a **network of sharing**, which spans the entire world. The arrival of social introduced a drastic change, involving the aspect of socialization and communication, disrupting space and time.

Social, in fact, allows its users to communicate with each other at any time and from any place, because spatial and temporal distances are cancelled completely. But the social revolution also affects other aspects of daily life. With the arrival of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, the way people read, inform themselves and learn has also changed, because these tools have accustomed them to a way of summarizing content and a speed of exchange that was previously impossible.

Social media are now many, but we can recognize five of the most popular and widely used ones in the world:

1. **Facebook**, created in 2004 and become a platform for billions of users. This social, one of the most popular, allows its members to share short texts, pictures, videos, newspaper articles, and also communicate via chat with other people. After registering for free, users can customize their profile, adding their photo or additional personal information. You can, in addition, connect to other people, called "friends," in order to grow your network. Users can also join groups, or create new ones, to share common interests, exchange business information or participate in training courses.
2. **Instagram**, launched in 2010, began as the social of photographs because it is based on sharing images. Over time, various changes allowed users to perform other actions: from taking pictures, to applying filters, to sharing short videos. In addition, the "stories" feature allows users to share a piece of content for a limited period of time.
3. **YouTube**, a platform founded in 2005, allows members to post videos and multimedia content, which anyone can view. Once posted on YouTube, videos can be shared on other social media.
4. **LinkedIn**, the professional social, focuses primarily on disseminating specific job-related content and professional networking. This platform is often used by job seekers, who can publicize their resumes, and by those who intend to advertise and publicize their companies. LinkedIn allows you to develop contacts professional by connecting with others engaged in their own or related fields of work to create a work network.

Social media and e-learning

These media can be an important resource in e-learning. Their ability to bring students closer together with each other and with teachers allows for the sharing of ideas, opinions, and discussion as if the course were taking place in person. In addition, social is the easiest and fastest way for alumni to reach out to course instructors and clarify their doubts.

But what are the actions that online course creators can implement with social media? Here are some examples:

1. Create **online groups** to share course content, provide in-depth materials in the form of text, video or images.
2. Encourage students to participate in **group discussions** by creating virtual spaces for them.
3. Create a page where students can share their **progress** and update on the progress of the course and any new developments.
4. Use social to hold **contests or challenges**, which will stimulate users' attention and desire to get involved, so as to provide an ever-changing learning opportunity.
5. **Share** lecture-related or in-depth videos and images with their students.
6. **Promote online courses**, thanks to the showcase that social media provides, having the great advantage of being able to reach a very large audience.

Social media are a great resource not only for online course creators, but also for users. Indeed, these digital tools give students the opportunity to contact their lecturers directly to seek clarification and ask questions. Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, in fact, have a chat service, which allows users to communicate with each other privately. In addition, alumni can produce course-related content and then share it with their colleagues or teacher. Finally, social media is also useful for commenting on lectures, providing feedback to the course creator, and sharing one's own experience.

Today, the use of social in e-learning is a critical, if not necessary, opportunity, as almost every student today also boasts a digital presence. Adults, and especially young people, are accustomed to using social media to gather information, share opinions, and communicate with others. Therefore, incorporating these tools into e-learning can have a positive impact on both students and online course creators.

The benefits

Social media and e-learning is, therefore, becoming an important union. Their use in digital learning also offers several advantages:

1. It **unites** students through online groups, which give them the opportunity to keep in touch and share impressions and opinions about the course and beyond. This creates a sense of belonging to an online community, which provides support to its members without making them feel alone in their learning journey and encouraging them to continue even in the face of didactic-emotional struggles. The essence of an in-presence contact makes student web groups valuable, a space where users can share opinions and comments, help each other and create a lively and continuous network of interaction. Web groups also help the course organizer and teacher better understand the needs of students.
2. It allows people to **contact** each other quickly and easily. In the absence of face-to-face interaction, being able to reach out to the lecturer or other students becomes essential, but it is not always an easy and immediate step. The use of social media in e-learning, in contrast, represents a quick and easy way to reach out to other users or the teacher and ask them questions, express concerns, and communicate. In fact, socials have private messaging functions and allow sharing of content with all users, so that course participants can be reached quickly. Not only that: thanks to some "live" functions, socials allow you to post videos in real time, instantly responding to any questions.
3. It puts the **student** at the center. The flexibility of social media, in fact, grants greater freedom to the learner, who can choose at what time to access content, regardless of where he or she is. Access to social, in fact, can be from mobile devices, which makes it possible to connect from anywhere, without the need to be tied to a physical location. Creating student groups on social also increases interaction time, which in traditional learning is limited to time spent in the classroom.
4. It **facilitates access to the course**. In fact, almost all students are already subscribed to the most popular social media even before accessing the online course. The same principle applies to teachers. Therefore, educational exchange can take place more easily, without the need to use another dedicated platform, but continuing to make use of already used tools, giving them a new light and educational function.

How to use Linkedin in e-learning

Among the various social media, the one that has invested the most in e-learning is **LinkedIn**, which has created a dedicated

online platform. This is LinkedIn Learning, which allows its users to access training courses in audio and video format, taught by teachers. Users can define **personalized training**, accessing the courses that best suit their needs and requirements. To make the use of LinkedIn effective in learning, course creators can rely on a number of **strategies**:

1. Create a catchy **title** that will attract users and indicate the professionalism of the course. In fact, the title is the first step in hooking people interested in professional training. Therefore, it must be short and punchy, containing the clear words that correctly define the objectives of the classes and the results that can be achieved upon completion of participation.
2. Create different **groups** to discuss various topics. In this way, the discussion can focus on only one aspect, allowing any problems to be evaluated and solved more specifically.
3. Create an **effective profile**. The LinkedIn profile is the first showcase a user looks at, so it is necessary to highlight one's professional skills, contacts, experience, name, and educational and training details. If an appropriate and appealing profile is created, it will be easier to promote one's online courses.
4. Use **guidelines** to guide your students. To feel confident, users need to follow some clear and consistent steps, following the path laid out by the course creator. The presence of guidelines, however, must alternate with flexibility and freedom of online discussion, which will stimulate the student and keep his or her attention at all times.
5. Make an engaging **course summary**, using questions and answers to make reading easier and more dynamic. To attract potential students, the course summary must be precise and specific so that it gives a fair idea of the lessons, and it must contain interesting information.
6. Participate in online discussions and show yourself **active on social media**, so you can gain more visibility among users and promote your online courses.