2009 SOS Submission: Metro DC Chapter
Implementing Social Networking Tools for the Metro DC Chapter of ASTD

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Chapter Name: Metro DC Chapter
Chapter ID: CH2034
Chapter Location: Falls Church, VA
Chapter Membership Size: Large (301+)

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Description of Effort: Participation in social networking tools is growing rapidly, and in response to this trend, the chapter embarked on a program to implement a series of social networking tools. After reviewing the social networking landscape, four key tools were prioritized: Twitter (daily, weekly updates), LinkedIn (members-only group), Facebook (public group) and podcasting (monthly podcasts).

Need Addressed: Social networking tools give members an opportunity to network online, share, information and comment on content posted by the chapter. The tools open up marketing and communications channels for the chapter and allow us to reach out to members and potential members in real time with chapter news, events and content that can be accessed through the web, including mobile devices. We continuously look for new ways to provide products and services that enhance the value proposition the Chapter offers to our constituents, and social networking tools give us a platform to host online discussions, share photos, videos and create audio content (podcasts). Finally, having a presence on major social networking sites also enhances the DC ASTD brand in the metro DC area and beyond.

Does this effort align with your chapter mission? Yes

Does this effort align with ASTD's mission? Yes

Target Audience: Chapter members and prospective chapter members

Costs/Resource Use: The costs to implement this program were minimal. We pay a $15 annual fee for a WordPress account where we post monthly podcasts. All other tools are free. Our social networking program is managed by the Director of Technology from the Board and three volunteers: a social networking coordinator and two podcast producers.

How did you implement: We created a Twitter account for the chapter (@metrodcastd). The Director of Technology joined LinkedIn and created a members-only group “Metro DC Chapter of ASTD Members.” The Director of Technology also joined Facebook and created a group open to anyone “Metro DC Chapter of ASTD.” Finally, we opened an account on WordPress.com where we created http://dcastdpodcast.org/ to host podcast files. After the tools were in place, we loaded our chapter logo in each and began “seeding” with content such as announcements for chapter events. We developed a process for cross-checking LinkedIn membership with our member database. As we receive requests to join the LinkedIn group, they are cross-checked with our member database. On the first day of the month the membership database is compared to the LinkedIn member list and LinkedIn members who are no longer active members are removed. We also developed a process for creating podcasts which involved recording the interview, using Audacity to edit, exporting as an MP3, and importing into iTunes. By working with the tools for a few months, we were able to develop processes for maintaining the tools and developed instructions for volunteers to run the social networking tools. We held knowledge sharing sessions with Board Members to
encourage them to post messages, upload files, etc. on the tools. We also marketed our social networking tools to the chapter to let members know that we embrace web 2.0 technologies and encourage them to do the same.

**What were the Outcomes:** In the last seven months, the growth of our social networking tools has expanded significantly (see attached graphs). We’ve used the tools to build awareness about our chapter and reach out to members. The chapter has benefited from the implementation of social networking tools in many tangible and intangible ways. A few tangible benefits include: (1) We actively tweeted from ICE 2009 and connected with a local speaker who responded to a tweet about LinkedIn and later presented a session about LinkedIn at a chapter event. (2) We posted Board of Director openings on our LinkedIn group and connected with a potential board member. (3) Podcasts allow us to highlight expertise within the chapter and also develop original content for free; and (4) We provide unique volunteer opportunities for members to develop expertise in web 2.0 technologies which benefits their professional development. Intangible benefits include (1) the creation of a “community” with chapter members; (2) demonstrating to the chapter and the profession that we are up-to-date with cutting edge technology which helps to promote the Chapter’s brand.

**Lessons Learned:** - Maintaining your social networking sites takes some effort, so recruit volunteers to help. - Share your Twitter account login and password with your entire Board and encourage all board members to tweet. - Add social networking icons to your website home page and your e-newsletter to advertise the tools. - Promote chapter events on LinkedIn by asking the chapter member who is organizing the event to create an Event under his/her profile. Once an event is added, it can be broadcast to the person’s LinkedIn network. Others who plan to go to the event can respond to the Event posting and indicate that they will attend, which creates a viral marketing effect. - Consider making your LinkedIn group a “members-only” group so that it is a member benefit. Limiting your group to members-only also reduces the spam postings. - Use podcasts to help promote events by featuring upcoming speakers.

**Specific ASTD chapter resources that helped guide you in the process of completing this best practice:** none

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