

Embracing online engagement in education

KATHRYN TAYLOR, DIRECTOR AND OWNER OF TURNING POINT CONSULTING, SHARES HER EXPERIENCES, STRATEGIES AND POSITIVE TECHNIQUES TO HELP TEACHERS SUPPORT YOUNG JOB SEEKERS IN A TECHNOLOGICALLY-DRIVEN EMPLOYMENT CLIMATE.



Kathryn Taylor is the Director of Turning Point Consulting, a Centre of Excellence: Leadership, Change & Wellbeing Services. With over 18 years' experience in education and corporate human resources, leadership and organisational change, Kathryn provides insight to support individuals in positioning themselves for personal success. Recognised as a centre of excellence in Leadership, Change & Wellbeing Services, her business works across education program K-12 in independent and department schools delivering staff, student and parent initiatives.

The changes in the workplace over the past 20 years have been dramatic. Reflecting on commencing a career without mobile phones, emails and websites as the norm seems to be impossible for youth today. Managing a workforce without online communication, professional training and an understanding of local, interstate and global transition seems to be a foreign concept. This is however, where the volume of senior leaders and executives began their career.

Recognising the online divide between generations has created angst and opportunity as students gain confidence behind the screen and the modern workplace demands greater collaboration, introspection and emotional intelligence than ever before. PwCs report, Millennials at work, Reshaping the workplace, confirms that millennials first choice for career is around continual learning and development. Additionally, they are seeking companies they admire, ensuring branding is key to their decision making. The report found 41 per cent of millennials say that they prefer to communicate electronically, avoiding face-to-face discussion, while 78 per cent stated that technology makes them more effective in their workplace.

Combined with the continuing impacts of the Global Financial Crisis and the new commercial environment, we find education along with all industries, faced with the challenge of how to achieve more with less. Collaborating with the education sector as a whole, we hear common themes of workplace fatigue, communication gaps, expectations of professional improvement

and accountability and inter-staff frictions alongside a need for more hours in the day.

Education has embraced and enveloped technology within the classroom by taking standard blackboards to Smartboards and student quizzes to online surveys. The results have enabled student discussion without vulnerability, bring your own device for students and access to online courses for staff and students to further knowledge and learning. As a broader society and school community, there is often much focus on the negative impacts of online activities. As such, it is important to recognise the value in the increase in technological reach.

There are a multitude of opportunities to achieve strategic plans, coaching goals and whole school engagement by way of positive online application. Within our work, we identify several core functions benefiting from these techniques which encompass the school's commercial accountability, staff management and development and connecting with parents and community. Here are some suggestions and techniques for teachers hoping to achieve outcomes with technological efficiency.

COMMERCIAL OUTCOMES

Now more than ever schools have outlined commercial accountability to their schools' board, department and/or community. As such, the responsibility on educational leaders has increased in their requirement to communicate a crisp vision, clarify strategic alignment and deliver through the whole staff group.



Talent management

Reaching and selecting talented educators in a candidate-rich market demands a holistic talent management process. With such a process in place, the school benefits from positive marketing, branding and promotion of vision and achievements alongside identification of potential staff in a timely manner. The LinkedIn global recruiting trends report 2017 states that hiring choices are increasingly moving to referrals from staff, accounting for 48 per cent of hires, closely followed by website or online job boards at 46 per cent. Social professional networks, such as LinkedIn, result in 40 per cent of staff sourced.

Marketing and branding

The business of educating students requires a view of reaching students and their families with alignment to their beliefs, expectations and culture. Online marketing is now the standard medium of reach for all sectors and accessing platforms attractive to your demographic is an expectation of growing businesses today. Visibility is key to the appeal of top talent and discerning parents seeking

value for their investment in their child's future through difficult economic times. As a result, we have seen an increase in parents selecting public and Catholic schools particularly due to the results and shared knowledge.

International reach for trends and resources

It has been said that knowledge is power. Certainly this is true for our student population who will seek online results for personal, social, educational and future pathways.

Being a global society, educational activities around the world are impacting the standards of institutions at the forefront of their sector. Looking beyond academic outcomes relating to staff and student's engagement, overseas communities have advanced beyond many others. We are able to gain evidence from overseas as to potential avenues to address student learning or engagement needs, wellbeing initiatives, maximising active working and learning spaces and staff development, all with a connection to student learning results.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING

The career of an educator offers diversity and opportunity across key learning areas, including student demographics, research and corporation. Key to success as a professional in any field today is ownership of self, recognition of competence, establishment of aspirational goals and long-term vision of personal purpose. As such, online communities support and extend professionals with ease, offering a variety of mediums for achievement.

Professional online presence

Career pathways and opportunities, as much as development, are extensive in an online community. Business social networking platform LinkedIn offers access to a global industry forum in your living or staff room.

With positive self-promotion, staff will have access to development tools and forums that can resolve immediate needs and benefit longer-term planning within the classroom and their careers.

Teaching tools and techniques

Creating active groups or connections via LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and other social media channels, educators are positioned to access content, lesson ideas, programs, support and varied ideas to use within professional development meetings, coaching conversations, student and classroom interactions. Supporting teachers in achieving individualised learning, online communities deliver a breadth of information in an accessible manner.

Connections for local, regional and rural schools

Isolation is a common concern for staff in various areas, be it in isolation within the school. This is due to the interaction of faculties, limited student numbers in course streams or physical remoteness for regional educators. Online communities offer a positive social network to support their professional demands and need for social interaction aligned to school or student outcomes. Creating constructive relationships builds a sense of belonging for situations where this would otherwise not be possible.

PARENT AND COMMUNITY (P&C) ENGAGEMENT

Now more than ever, schools are seeking ways to develop cohesion within their community. The value of effective communication in minimising issues and creating consistency is well documented as is an essential aspect of every school's strategic plan. The traditional P&C engagement group has grown to encompass past and present community members by means of Facebook groups, Twitter and LinkedIn followers along with other online forums.

Linking online presence to educational benefit

Positive sharing of success within school, student and community achievement has become critical to differentiation within a competitive educational market. Sharing these milestones and successes provides opportunity for marketing, recognition and outcomes within the community and beyond.

Social media for parent engagement

Bringing parents into the community and sharing



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student learning experiences has become essential to the modern school. Parents are acutely aware of their expectations of their child's learning and growth, they seek to provide a better life for their child and will seek to understand the actions of the school. Many schools are sharing student activities, achievements, awards and staff interactions, which creates an open environment, bridging the traditional divide and separation between the teacher and community.

Connecting schools to the broader community

It is understood that education maintains a leading role in preparing students for their future careers. As the modern workplace continues to grow, change and adapt to world and technological changes, the need to remain current and connected to what that workplace looks like has become important

to all educators. Continuing the relationship with past students and families supports industry currency, fundraising pathways and access to a volunteer community to assist in wide-ranging school initiatives.

While many of us have embraced technology as part of our personal world, staying in contact with friends and family, seeking out information supporting our personal needs and remaining current in our hobbies and interests, we are now offered the opportunity to build a commercial and/or professional presence to assist in supporting our careers, wellbeing, achievements and opportunities. Education has provided the opportunity to maximise their capacity through efficiency rather than exhaustion.

Kathryn will present her ideas at the National Education Summit in September.

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