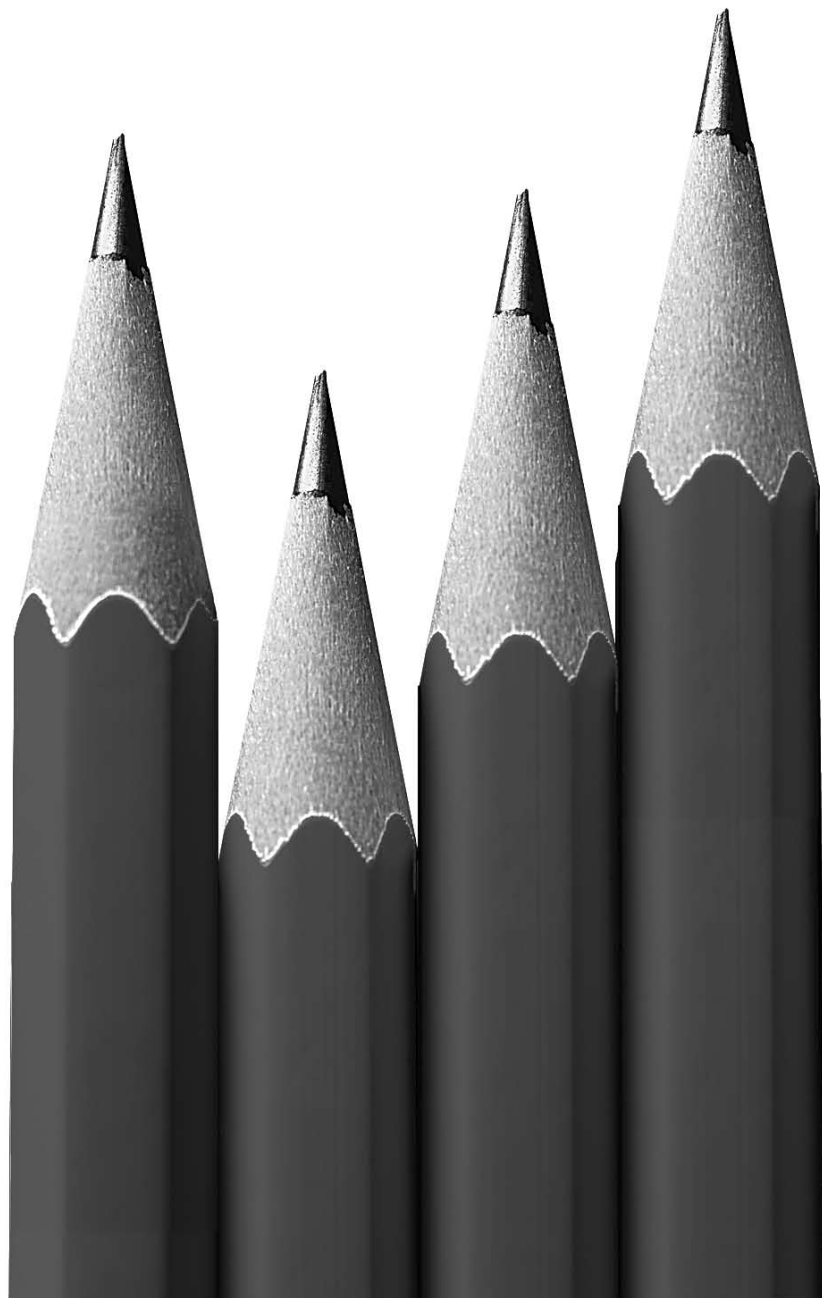


white paper

Learning 2.0: Using Web 2.0 to Create Effective Informal Learning
How Organizations Are Harnessing The Collective Intelligence of Their Employees to
Improve Effectiveness



Today's organizations see strategic people management programs as key to developing, empowering, and managing their people to increase performance, reduce costs, be more adaptable, and ensure business success. But organizations eager to leverage people management solutions to enhance performance may be surprised to discover that informal learning has the potential to have an even greater impact on an organization's success than the classes and classic training offerings that have historically defined formal learning. In fact, a recent article in *CLO Magazine* reports that the U.S. Department of Labor estimates that informal learning accounts for 70% of learning in an organization.

How people learn is now as important a consideration as what people learn. Organizations that appreciate these new learning styles and provide their employees with Web 2.0 tools, such as wikis, blogs, video capturing and editing applications, virtual worlds, etc have a greater advantage to creating a successful learning process.

"Informal learning" is the idea that users naturally participate in the learning process by providing and sharing information with each other and through their collective efforts make that information increasingly useful and relevant to each other. As a result of this reality, the learning organization is no longer the sole provider of learning as the structured "publishing" model is usurped on a daily basis by individuals, peers or teams collaborating horizontally across the enterprise in an increasingly unstructured, impromptu and as needed manner. This seismic shift, made possible by the emergence of so called Web 2.0 technologies has resulted in a concept frequently referred to as Learning 2.0.

The demand for a balance of formal and informal learning has come about in response to and because of several key economic, technical, and demographic shifts. The globalization of the economy, shortening of supply chains and product lifecycles, regulation and deregulation of industries, and hyper-competition have led to the need for more rapid and more widely distributed knowledge creation and exchange. In a fast moving retailer of electrical goods, the shelf-life of a product can be measured in weeks, if not

days; the need to deliver knowledge quickly and for people to share knowledge constantly becomes a key success trigger.

Bolstering these global economic shifts has been the advent of robust technologies, such as workflow software and outsourcing and supply chain solutions that streamline distribution and sales. Of course, adding to the technology mix is the proliferation of laptops, PDAs, instant messaging, and mobile phones that have facilitated the decentralization of an organization's people across the globe.

The combination of a changing global economic landscape and evolution of new communication technologies clearly demonstrates the organizational demand for new learning paradigms to support this new economic world in which we live. These technology changes support informal learning programs that provide better just-in-time information, faster time-to-market efforts, accelerated time to competency, extended global reach, and increased resource productivity. In short, organizations must embrace and leverage new learning methodologies that blend formal and informal learning to succeed.

The Technology Shift

In the past decade, the Internet has changed the way people around the world work, play, conduct business, and communicate with each other. Over this time, the Internet itself has continuously evolved to spawn technologies that continue to change the expectations of online users. Just 10 years ago the experiences offered by sites such as MySpace, Facebook, Flickr, Wikipedia, Second Life, and so on were unimagined. The specific evolutionary path in which the Internet has allowed users to search for and publish information provides an interesting parallel to the changes driving the modern learning paradigm.

In the Web's infancy, AOL enjoyed success by embracing the characteristics of a traditional publishing company, in which read-only content was developed by AOL's editorial team. The content, which changed frequently, was highly structured and controlled, with no user participation in terms of creation, assessment, or indeed, contribution. This is analogous to the central department that controlled learning at most enterprises.

Within a few years, Yahoo! emerged to challenge the hegemony of AOL by allowing users to submit content that could appear in both a hierarchical, closely managed taxonomy and in free-form search. Yahoo! was among the first to democratize the Web; however, user involvement was still limited to a basic contribution of listings, falling short of the interactions that we expect today on the Internet. It was not until Google skyrocketed to popularity that Web 2.0 tools and methods began to emerge in the form that we have today.

In the same way that Yahoo! challenged the centralized content model of AOL, Wikipedia trumped Yahoo! by allowing individuals to directly contribute, edit, and manage content. Users determine the accuracy, usefulness, and relevance of content, and their collective wisdom ensures that it is updated constantly.

From a demographic perspective the world has reached a “technical tipping point” where better than 50% of the workforce has “grown up” with technology and can be assumed to be very technically savvy. The Learning Consortium pointed out in 2007 that NextGeneration workers, defined as being between 18 and 26 years old, overwhelmingly wanted to learn and work differently than the fast retiring Silver Workers.

Next Generation workers are contributing content to community sharing sites such as YouTube and Flickr, publishing their own content via blogs and wikis, obtaining the information they need at the moment they need it with Google, and sharing and contributing their knowledge and learning on Wikipedia. These Next Generation workers are changing the nature of learning in all organizations and creating and exchanging learning outside of the Learning Organization’s line of sight. They are learning from multiple sources within and outside the organization. They are self-organizing in communities.

These new experiences and expectations are fuelling the need for organizations to embrace the power of informal learning.

The Rise of Informal Learning, or Learning 2.0

An IDC study published in 2004 states that organizations are “investing in long-term strategies to unify their informational systems and offer better-targeted access to formal and informal learning.” A 2005 issue of Training and Development Magazine wrote “finally the range of technology-based learning opportunities is expanding beyond the traditional “course/lesson” format to include online communities of practice, instant access to experts, searchable knowledge bases, and performance support materials embedded in the workflow.”

In two years, this conversation has moved from whether or not organizations could benefit from informal learning initiatives to a discussion on how to best implement formal and informal learning models to support immediate access to the shared knowledge of an organization.

Individuals want to provide information and share it with others by writing for Wikipedia, posting a video recording or creating a blog—these are all examples of people who want to create their own content and share that with their colleagues. With the proliferation of content; how users search and discover learning is more important today than ever before. Learning search engines will need to take a page from the e-commerce pioneers and leverage user ratings; recommendations; and collaborative filters to direct their employees to the right piece of learning whether that’s formal or informal.

In addition, mixing different types of learning modalities makes learning more interesting — and thus more effective. The immediate application of knowledge and skills, interaction with subject-matter experts, team-oriented problem-solving exercises, collaborative work, and self-study are all part of the informal learning experience. Informal learning helps meet business needs, goals, and objectives, such as cutting travel and expenses, reducing time out of the office, extending geographic reach, and increasing resource productivity. But one of the most important, yet overlooked, benefits of informal learning is the ability to capture and own critical knowledge from an employee before that information walks out the door when the knowledge expert leaves the organization.

Organizations are quickly embracing how mixed learning programs can support every organizational education and training need, including deploying new applications, launching new products, skill training, management and leadership training, sales training, process- and standards-based training, and other types of knowledge-sharing programs. “Learning 2.0” is not just about the technology itself, it’s a philosophy of empowering users to create content, capture knowledge, and publish that knowledge to be shared and exchanged across the organization.

Saba Seamlessly Blends Learning 1.0 and 2.0

To support the benefits of harmoniously integrating formal and informal learning, Saba has created a complete people management solution that unifies [Learning](#), [Performance](#) and [Talent](#) with [Saba Centra's collaboration suite](#) and Web 2.0 tools on a single platform. By unifying this entire suite of solutions on a single platform, customers are able to seamlessly embrace the power of formal and informal learning from a single access point.

The Saba Catalog is the location for an organizations’ formal learning. This content is typically managed by an established governance process that defines how content is created; approved; published; and ultimately tracked.

The Saba Knowledge Base is conversely the store of an organizations’ informal learning and typically is subject to minimal governance. Users can contribute a wide variety of content types to the Knowledge Base where content can be edited; tagged; ranked; commented on. For instance, employees participating in an informal meeting or knowledge transfer session using Saba Centra can record the event and publish it directly into Saba’s knowledge base.

The next evolutionary phase for [Saba Centra](#) is the addition of Centra Recording Studio, which gives users the ability to edit recordings and break those recordings into more easily consumed learning chunks. Centra Recordings are an easy way to capture hi-fidelity information ranging from formal to ad hoc meetings and to catalog those recordings to make them searchable and consumable by other users.

The Saba platform provides integrated wikis, blogs, chat, discussion boards, user ratings, dynamic learning recommendations, expert searches, and a single unified search to access all this informal (and formal) learning content.

Summary

How we view learning has changed since a teacher stood in front of a blackboard holding a piece of chalk. Organizations now recognize that they must provide a broad range of learning approaches — active, blended, hands-on, self-paced, collaborative — to support the equally broad range of learning styles and needs. Organizations also know that a good deal of learning occurs beyond the “classroom walls” — and that learning is a lifetime endeavor. The enterprise is more focused on outcomes and the ongoing success of its “graduates.” To that end, today’s organizations are engaged as never before with a world that’s increasingly made up of “off campus” communities, businesses and global offices.

Formal learning will always have a role in measuring performance, especially in heavily regulated industries, such as the pharmaceutical, aerospace and utility industries. These industries must be able to record training measures to ensure the candidate meets strict certification guidelines. In the financial sector, for example, organizations rely on formal learning to complete training to keep their professional designations and comply with certification guidelines; however, even for highly regulated businesses, formal learning constitutes only a very small of the total learning that takes place within an organization.

Organizations today understand that the democratization of learning and providing the ability for everyone in the organization to share knowledge allows organizations to explore a range of learning possibilities. Saba’s unified platform represents a major step in the realization of this vision and provides an easily accessible mechanism to capture, store, and retain informal knowledge.