Social Networking Tools for Professional Development: A Class

This was the most popular class in the professional development workshop series. We showed faculty and staff how they can utilize free, and easy to use, tools in the classroom and for their professional lives. The tools that we highlighted are: Facebook, Flickr, Delicious, P#Wiki, Wordpress, Blogger, Linkedin, Meebo, Twitter, and RSS feeds.

We taught an introductory class four times in the past three semesters, and one hands-on session focusing on wikis and blogs with a total attendance of 55. We have also had several faculty and staff members contact us for one-on-one consultations to assist them in setting up social networking tools for professional purposes (building an online portfolio, creating a departmental Facebook page, developing a course blog).

In a survey sent to 50 people who had attended at least one of our social networking classes, we asked attendees which tools they had used and which ones they were planning on using (see graphs below). Sixteen people responded. Respondents were allowed to choose more than one tool.

Quick Tips

Provide food - even if it is just snacks, attendees like to be fed!
Get a variety of people from different departments to teach the sessions - mix it up and showcase people’s strengths.
Promote library resources and services whenever you get a chance.
Co-teach or team-teach. It makes it more fun and allows for more personalized attention for attendees who may need it.
Invite a wide range of faculty and staff from across campus to your sessions.
Publicize your sessions and offer them on different days and at different times to accommodate more schedules.
Offer sessions that promote and utilize free and open access / open source tools and new technologies.
Give examples of how tools are being used in real situations.
Allow plenty of time for questions.
Address the various needs of your audience (faculty and staff may use tools differently).

Comments from the Survey:

“It keeps us all more current in a rapidly changing online world.”
(faculty member, Continuing Education)

“Not all faculty can find time or have the skill set and/or interest in going digital. I think the library should slowly reach out to the degree that the staff can handle the workload.”
(faculty member, Art & Design)

“Great way to keep in touch with students. Thanks for offering the classes. I hope to use these tools more in the future.”
(staff member)

“Thanks for bringing these vital components of current communication practices onto my radar (old technology) screen. I think you are all doing outstanding work.”
(faculty member, Humanities)

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