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**Personal Learning
Networks in Digital
Environments**

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Introduction

A Personal Learning Network (PLN) can be thought of as a mix of people, platforms, and digital spaces that someone intentionally uses to keep learning over time. It is not just about following accounts or scrolling through content. What seems to matter more is how you interact, who you engage with, and what kinds of conversations you end up being part of. In many cases, learning in a PLN feels less structured than a classroom. It happens through small moments, like reading a thread, commenting on a post, or noticing how others approach problems in real-world situations.



Figure 1. A Personal Learning Network (PLN) consists of interconnected people, platforms, and information sources that support ongoing learning.

Online Personal Learning Networks by [EdTech 4 Beginners](#)

This idea connects pretty closely to the work of George Siemens (2005), who suggests that learning is spread across networks rather than stored in one place. In other words, knowing where to find information, and who to learn from, may be just as important as what you already know. That said, this way of thinking also raises questions. If knowledge is constantly changing and distributed, it becomes harder to tell what is reliable, especially in fast-moving online spaces.

At the same time, PLNs seem to support more independent learning habits. Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012) point out that social media platforms can help learners set goals, find resources, and reflect on their progress. I've noticed this myself. Sometimes I will save posts or videos to come back to later, or follow people whose content consistently helps me understand things better. Still, having all this access does not automatically lead to better learning. It probably depends on how intentional you are. Trust (2012) also suggests that PLNs expand learning beyond formal settings, which sounds useful, but it may also mean that the quality of what you learn varies quite a bit depending on who you follow and how critically you engage.

Key PLN Platforms & Their Characteristics

Before looking at specific platforms, it is worth noting that not all spaces in a PLN function the same way. Some are more formal and focused on professional identity, while others are more conversational or content-driven. Because of this, people often end up using a mix of platforms rather than relying on just one. It might seem unnecessary at first, but each platform tends to support a slightly different kind of learning. In a way, the value of a PLN comes from how these platforms work together, even if that balance takes some time to figure out.

LinkedIn tends to feel like the most formal space within a PLN. People use it to present themselves professionally, listing their education, experience, and skills. At first, it can feel a bit intimidating, since everything looks polished and put together. But over time, it starts to make more sense as a learning tool. You begin to notice patterns in what professionals are sharing, what topics are trending in your field, and how people communicate their ideas. From what Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012) describe, LinkedIn supports self-regulated learning because it gives users some control over what they engage with. You can choose who to follow, what content to interact with, and even what you want to contribute. Siemens' (2005) idea of learning through connections also shows up clearly here, since much of the value comes from interacting with others rather than just reading posts.

That said, there are some downsides. A lot of the content can feel curated, almost like people are presenting the best version of their careers rather than the full picture. This can make it harder to relate or learn from mistakes, which are usually where the most useful insights come from. For example, a healthcare student might follow hospital pages or public health professionals and mostly see posts about successful initiatives or achievements, but less often about challenges or failures. So while LinkedIn can be useful for building a professional identity and staying informed, it may not always give a complete view.

X feels almost like the opposite. It is faster, less structured, and sometimes a bit chaotic. People share thoughts in real time, often reacting to current events or ongoing discussions. Hashtags help organize content, but even then, conversations can shift quickly. This kind of environment seems to reflect Siemens' (2005) idea that knowledge is constantly changing. On X, what is relevant today might be outdated tomorrow. Trust (2012) also highlights how PLNs allow for informal learning across different communities, and that definitely shows up here. You can follow professionals, researchers, or even students from around the world and see how they think about certain issues.

Even so, it is not always easy to keep up or to know what to trust. Information spreads quickly, but not all of it is accurate. I have seen threads where people confidently share information that later turns out to be incomplete or misleading. For example, during public health discussions, some posts may simplify complex issues into short statements that miss important context. So while X can be useful for staying informed and engaging in conversations, it probably requires more critical thinking than some other platforms.

YouTube plays a different role in a PLN, mainly because it focuses on longer, visual content. It is often where people go when they want a clearer explanation or a step-by-step demonstration. Compared to scrolling through posts, watching a video can feel more focused, especially when trying to understand something complex. Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012) suggest that platforms like YouTube support self-directed learning, and that seems accurate. You can search for exactly what you need, pause, rewind, and learn at your own pace. I have used it to review concepts before exams or to understand things that were not fully clear in lectures.

Still, Siemens' (2005) perspective suggests that learning is stronger when it is connected to interaction. Watching videos alone might not be enough if you are not discussing or applying what you learn. There are also some limitations worth considering. Not all content is reliable, and it can be hard to tell which creators are credible. The recommendation algorithm can also keep suggesting similar videos, which might limit exposure to new perspectives. So while YouTube is useful for building understanding, it probably works best when combined with other parts of a PLN.

Reddit feels more like a space for open discussion. It is organized into communities where people ask questions, share experiences, and respond to each other in a more informal way. Sometimes the answers are surprisingly detailed, especially when people are talking about real experiences. This connects to what Trust (2012) describes about learning beyond formal environments. On Reddit, much of the value comes from hearing different perspectives, especially from people who are actually working in the field. It also reflects Siemens' (2005) idea that knowledge is distributed, since useful insights can come from many different contributors, not just experts.

At the same time, the lack of structure can be a drawback. Since users are often anonymous, it is not always clear how credible their information is. I have come across threads where advice sounds convincing but may not be accurate. For example, someone might describe a workplace situation in a way that reflects their personal experience, but that does not necessarily apply to everyone. So while Reddit can provide useful, real-world insights, it requires careful judgment when deciding what to take seriously.

What Makes Media Platforms Effective for Learning

Building on the discussion of different platforms within a PLN, it is also important to consider what specific features make these platforms effective for learning. While each platform offers different affordances, their value often depends on how they support interaction, accessibility, personalization, and multiple forms of content.

One of the most important features is interactivity. Platforms that allow users to comment, share, and engage in discussions tend to support deeper learning. Instead of passively consuming information, learners can ask questions, respond to others, and refine their understanding through conversation. This reflects Siemens' (2005) theory of connectivism,

which emphasizes that learning occurs through networks and interactions rather than in isolation. For example, engaging in comment sections or discussion threads can expose learners to new perspectives and help them build a more nuanced understanding of a topic.

Another key factor is accessibility. Social media platforms are widely available across devices and allow users to connect with information and communities globally. This makes learning more flexible and continuous, as it is no longer restricted to a specific time or place. Learners can revisit content, search for explanations, or engage with resources whenever needed. I have personally found this helpful when reviewing difficult concepts, as I can quickly revisit content at my own pace. Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012) suggest that digital environments like social media support self-regulated learning by giving individuals greater control over their learning processes.

Personalization also plays a significant role in making platforms effective. Many platforms use algorithms to recommend content based on users' interests and behaviors. This can make learning more efficient by directing users toward relevant materials (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016). However, this feature also has limitations. Personalized feeds may reduce exposure to diverse viewpoints, which can limit critical thinking and create echo chambers if users are only exposed to similar perspectives.

Finally, the support for multimedia learning enhances the effectiveness of many platforms. Content is presented in various formats, such as videos, images, and short-form text, allowing learners to engage with information in different ways. Mayer (2009) argues that multimedia learning can improve understanding when information is presented through both visual and verbal channels. For example, watching a step-by-step video explanation may be more effective for understanding complex concepts than reading text alone.

Overall, media platforms are most effective for learning when they encourage active participation, provide flexible access, offer relevant content, and support multiple ways of understanding information. Ultimately, the value of these platforms depends not only on their features, but on how critically and intentionally learners engage with them within their PLN.

Building a Digital Identity & Reputation

As media platforms play a central role in learning, they also shape how individuals present themselves within a Personal Learning Network (PLN). A digital identity is not just a profile, but a reflection of how someone participates, shares ideas, and engages with others over time. Within a PLN, this identity becomes closely connected to one's professional presence, as others begin to associate certain interests, knowledge areas, and behaviors with that individual.

One of the main ways PLNs shape professional presence is through consistent activity. Posting regularly, whether sharing resources, reflections, or examples of work, helps signal ongoing engagement and growth. Rather than a single polished post, it is the accumulation of

smaller contributions over time that builds credibility within a network. This reflects Siemens' (2005) idea that learning is distributed across connections, where participation itself becomes part of the learning process.

Another important strategy is engaging with others' content. Responding to posts, asking questions, or contributing to discussions allows individuals to be visible within their network while also deepening their understanding of topics. This type of interaction supports both learning and relationship-building, which are key aspects of a PLN. As Greenhow and Lewin (2016) suggest, social media enables participation in broader learning communities, where knowledge is shaped collaboratively rather than individually.

Sharing insights and reflections is also central to building a meaningful digital identity. Instead of only reposting information, adding personal interpretation or connecting ideas to one's own experiences can make contributions more valuable. Across our group's blog posts, this is reflected in how each member connects course concepts to personal experiences with media platforms, whether discussing learning habits, platform use, or challenges such as misinformation. These reflections not only demonstrate understanding but also contribute to a more authentic and thoughtful presence within a PLN.

A clear example of this can be seen on platforms like LinkedIn, where users often share academic work, projects, or learning experiences. By posting about assignments, reflecting on what was learned, or engaging with others' posts, students can begin to build a professional identity even before entering the workforce. At the same time, this process often involves a level of curation, where individuals present a more polished version of their experiences. While this can strengthen a professional image, it also raises questions about authenticity and what is left unshared.

Overall, building a digital identity and reputation within a PLN requires more than simply being present online. It involves consistent participation, meaningful engagement, and thoughtful reflection. When used intentionally, these strategies allow individuals to not only support their own learning, but also develop a professional presence that connects them to wider communities and opportunities.

Social Considerations in PLNs

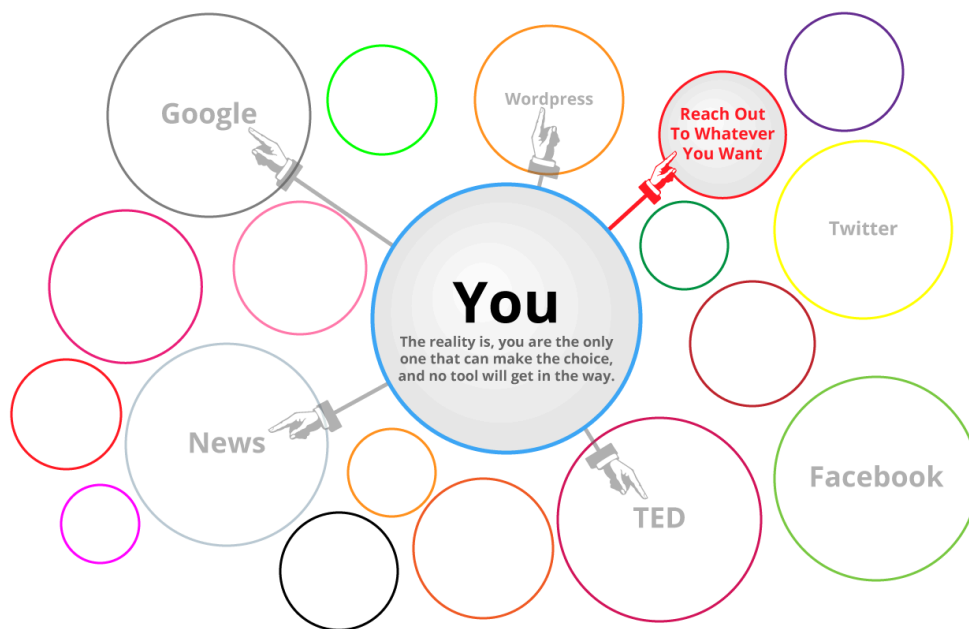


Figure 2. Filter bubbles limit exposure to diverse perspectives in PLNs.

[Diagram by Medium](#)

Personal Learning Networks are shaped not only by platforms, but also by how people interact within them. In many cases, users do not actively engage in discussions or disagreements. Instead of commenting or arguing, people are more likely to scroll past content, ignore it, or share it privately with others. This shows that participation in PLNs is often passive rather than openly interactive.

People also tend to behave differently online compared to real life. There is often a sense of distance or anonymity, which can lead to more curated or controlled behavior. Users may present a specific version of themselves rather than how they act offline, which can influence how information is shared and interpreted.

Another key consideration is misinformation. Even when users recognize that content may not be fully accurate, they do not always verify it. In many cases, people make a mental note about whether something seems true rather than actively checking the source. This allows information to spread easily within PLNs, especially when it appears convincing.

At the same time, social media can expose users to different perspectives. However, this exposure is often limited by algorithms that prioritize content based on user preferences. As a result, people are more likely to see content they already agree with, which can reduce the diversity of perspectives within their PLN.

Overall, social considerations in PLNs highlight the importance of awareness. How individuals choose to engage, interpret, and respond to content directly affects the quality of their learning network.

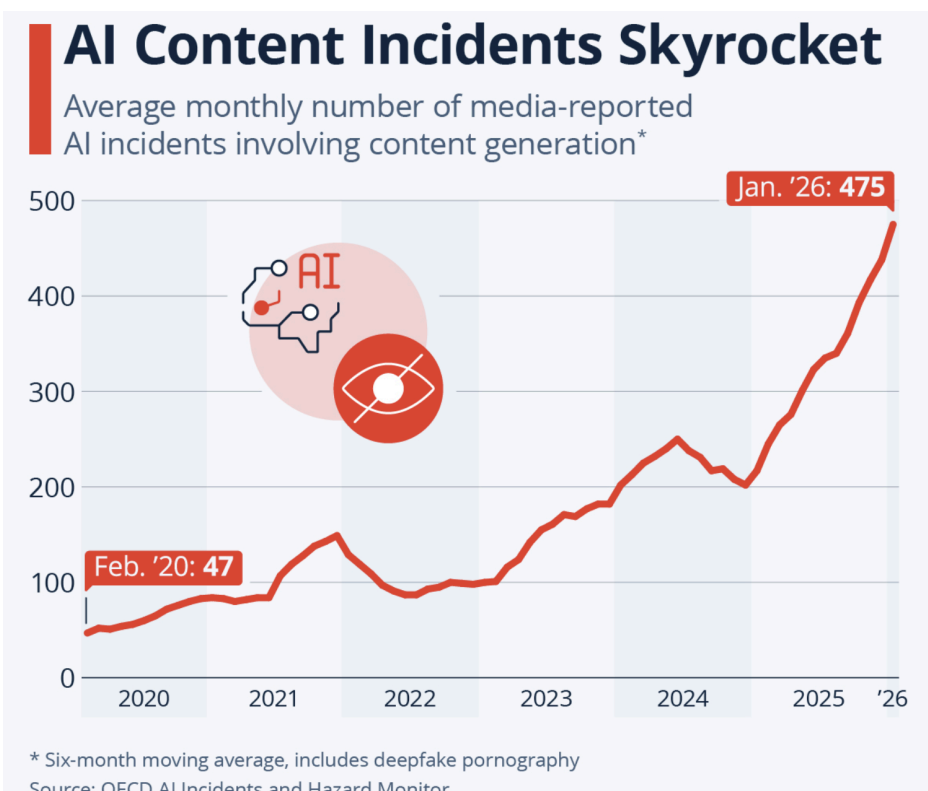
AI, Algorithms, and Misinformation in PLNs

Artificial intelligence and algorithm-driven platforms play a major role in shaping Personal Learning Networks. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube use algorithms to recommend content based on user behavior, which creates a highly personalized learning environment. While this makes content more relevant, it also influences what users are exposed to.

One of the main issues is misinformation. Content that looks professional or includes strong visuals, statistics, or confident language can appear more trustworthy, even if it is not fully accurate. In many cases, users do not fully verify sources and instead make a quick judgment about whether something seems true. This allows misleading information to spread more easily within PLNs.

Algorithms also reinforce this process by repeatedly showing similar content. When users are exposed to the same type of information multiple times, it can begin to feel more credible, even without verification. This creates a feedback loop where content is accepted based on familiarity rather than accuracy.

AI further accelerates this issue by increasing the speed and volume of content being produced. AI-generated or AI-amplified content can spread quickly across platforms, making it more difficult to distinguish between reliable and unreliable information.



To navigate this, critical thinking is essential. One of the most effective ways to avoid being misled is to check sources and compare information across different platforms. Being aware of how algorithms influence content is also important for maintaining a more balanced and reliable PLN.

Figure 3. Algorithm-driven content amplification increases exposure to misinformation in social media environments.

[Image link - statista](#)

Data, Privacy, and Security

When using social media platforms as part of a PLN, it is easy to focus on the learning benefits without thinking much about what happens to your data in the background. Every interaction, whether it is a like, a comment, a search, or even how long you pause on a post, is being tracked. Platforms use this information to build a picture of who you are, what you are interested in, and how you behave online. In many ways, this is what makes the personalized learning experience possible, but it also raises some important questions about what is being done with that information.

On one hand, this data collection can actually support a PLN. When platforms understand your interests and engagement habits, they can surface more relevant content, recommend connections in your field, or point you toward professional communities you might not have found otherwise. Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012) describe how digital environments support self-regulated learning by giving users greater control over their experience, and personalized feeds are part of how that works in practice. For someone trying to build a focused PLN around a specific career or interest area, this kind of tailored content can make the process more efficient.

That said, the risks are worth taking seriously. Data collected by platforms is not always used in ways that benefit the user. It can be shared with third parties, used to target advertising, or stored in ways that leave users vulnerable if a platform experiences a security breach. There is also something subtler happening. As noted in the section on algorithms and misinformation, repeated exposure to similar content can make certain ideas feel more credible simply because they keep appearing. The same mechanism that personalizes your feed can quietly narrow it, which affects not just what you learn but how you think about what you know.

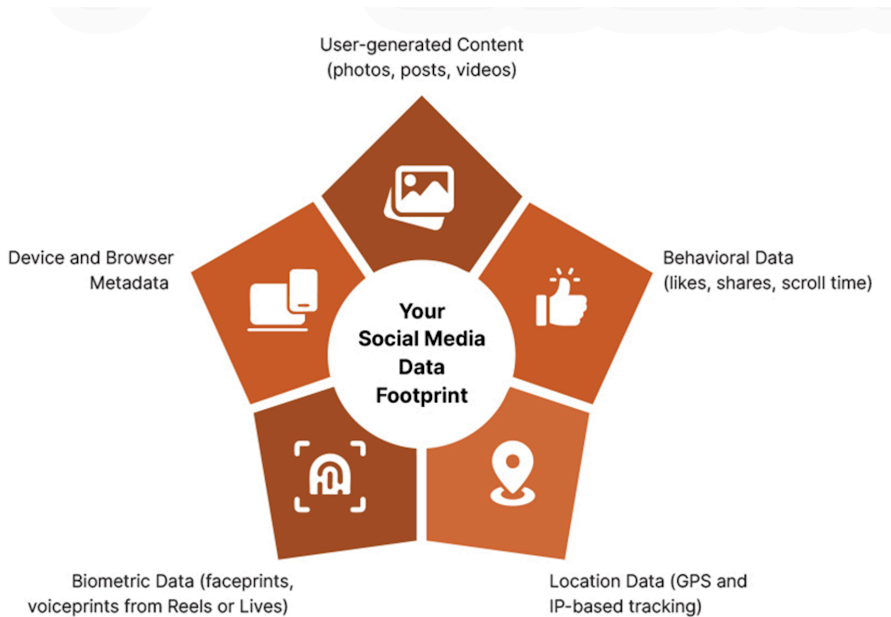


Figure 4. Social media platforms collect user data through engagement and interaction tracking.

[Image by Valuemontor](#)

For students and professionals building a PLN, a few practical steps can help manage these concerns. Reviewing and adjusting privacy settings on each platform is a good starting point, since default settings often share more than most users realize. Being intentional about what you post publicly also matters, especially on platforms like LinkedIn where your digital identity is tied to your professional reputation. It is also worth reading, at least in broad terms, the data and privacy policies of the platforms you rely on most. These documents can be dense, but understanding the basics of what a platform collects and retains is part of being an informed participant in any online space.

Ultimately, data and privacy are not separate from the learning experience. They are embedded in how these platforms function. Being aware of that does not mean avoiding social media as a learning tool, but it does mean engaging with it more critically and with a clearer sense of the tradeoffs involved.

Real-World Examples of PLN Success

One successful example of PLN is Eddie Woo's YouTube video channel. He is a high school mathematics teacher. He continuously releases mathematics teaching videos, which have enabled students from all over the world to connect through the comment sections of his videos, creating an interactive learning community. This fully demonstrates how social media has brought traditional classrooms to every corner of the world, and has solved the inconvenience of traditional classrooms that are limited to a specific location and time. His presence on YouTube enables students to continuously participate across regions through the comment section, which are all characteristics of the success of PLN (Woo, 2018). Another similar example is that Sal Khan used social media platforms such as Youtube to establish a global educational network and founded Khan Academy. At first, he only released some simple instructional videos, but later it gradually developed into a learning platform used by students all over the world. This example demonstrates how PLN has transformed from an informal content-sharing platform to a systematic educational platform. Another representative example is Marques Brownlee, who established his professional identity by consistently producing high-quality technology review videos and interacting with the audience. He gradually became a trusted voice in the consumer electronics sector. His personal learning network includes collaborations with other content creators, direct interactions with the audience, and connections with major technology companies. This indicates that social media can be used to build credibility and influence in professional fields (Brownlee, 2023). Overall, these cases demonstrate that individuals who actively engage in content creation, interact with the audience, and establish connections on digital platforms can become influential leaders in their respective fields through a PLN.

How to Build a PLN

1. Start with clear learning goals

A PLN is most effective when it is guided by a clear sense of purpose. Without defined learning goals, online engagement can easily become unfocused, with large amounts of information consumed but little retained. Goals may relate to professional development, academic interests, or broader areas of curiosity.

Establishing direction helps determine which topics to prioritize and which voices to engage with. At the same time, learning goals are not fixed. They often shift as understanding deepens or new interests emerge. What matters is maintaining a sense of direction that supports meaningful engagement rather than passive consumption.

2. Choose platforms that match your learning style

Online platforms differ in how they present information and facilitate interaction. Some emphasize in-depth explanations, while others focus on quick exchanges of ideas. For example, YouTube often supports structured, visual learning through tutorials and lectures. In contrast, X (formerly Twitter) highlights brief insights and ongoing discussions. Meanwhile, LinkedIn tends to center on professional experiences and industry-related content.

Because of these differences, a combination of platforms is often more effective than relying on a single space. Each platform can contribute in a distinct way, creating a more balanced and flexible learning experience.

3. Follow people who add value

The strength of a PLN lies in the individuals who contribute to it. These may include experts, educators, professionals, and individuals who regularly share thoughtful perspectives. Exposure to a range of voices can broaden understanding and introduce new ways of thinking about a topic.

Value, however, does not depend solely on formal expertise. Practical insights and lived experiences can be equally meaningful. Over time, the people included in a PLN begin to influence how information is interpreted, making it important to be mindful of whose perspectives are being prioritized.

4. Be selective and curate your feed

As a PLN grows, the volume of content can increase rapidly. While access to information is valuable, too much unfiltered content can become overwhelming. Curation plays a key role in maintaining focus and quality.

This involves regularly reviewing the network and removing sources that no longer contribute meaningfully. It also includes recognizing which types of content encourage deeper engagement and which tend to be overlooked. Through ongoing refinement, the PLN remains aligned with its intended purpose.

5. Engage with what you see

Learning within a PLN is strengthened through active participation. Simply observing content may provide exposure to ideas, but engagement encourages deeper processing. Interacting through comments, questions, or responses allows ideas to be explored more critically.

Even small forms of participation can contribute to understanding. Engagement also creates opportunities for dialogue, where perspectives may be clarified, expanded, or challenged. Over time, this interaction supports a more active and reflective learning process.

6. Share your own learning

Contribution is an important aspect of a PLN. Sharing ideas, summaries, or reflections does not require complete expertise. In many cases, articulating partial understanding can still add value and invite further discussion.

This process also reinforces learning. Expressing ideas in one's own words can reveal gaps in understanding and encourage deeper thinking. In addition, sharing content invites feedback, which can broaden perspective and support continued development.

7. Build connections over time

With continued interaction, a PLN can develop into a more connected learning community. Building connections involves moving beyond isolated interactions and fostering ongoing exchanges with others.

These connections may lead to collaboration, knowledge sharing, or mentorship. They also contribute to a more engaging learning experience, where ideas are not only encountered but also discussed within a network of individuals. This sense of connection can enhance both motivation and understanding.

8. Organize what you learn

A common challenge within a PLN is the rapid flow of information. Without some form of organization, valuable insights may be lost. Managing information helps transform scattered content into usable knowledge.

This may involve saving relevant posts, maintaining notes, or using digital tools to categorize ideas. Organized information is easier to revisit, connect with other concepts, and apply in different contexts. This step supports longer-term learning rather than short-term exposure.

9. Reflect and adjust your PLN

A PLN is not a fixed structure. As knowledge develops and interests evolve, the network should be reassessed. Reflection allows for evaluation of whether the PLN continues to support its intended goals.

This may include identifying gaps in perspectives, recognizing shifts in focus, or reconsidering the relevance of certain sources. Adjusting the network based on these reflections helps maintain its effectiveness and adaptability.

10. Stay consistent, but realistic

Consistency is essential for sustaining a PLN, although it does not require constant attention. Regular, focused engagement is often more effective than sporadic, intensive use.

Maintaining a manageable routine allows the PLN to remain active without becoming overwhelming. Over time, consistent interaction supports continuous learning and helps integrate the PLN into everyday practices.

Measuring PLN Success

The primary criterion for judging whether a PLN is successful is whether it can continuously facilitate interaction and knowledge exchange to support personal and professional development. It can be divided into three aspects. The first aspect is interactivity. According to Alec Couros' (2010) research, PLN enables people to connect with diverse knowledge sources and achieve continuous learning on the Internet rather than in traditional classroom settings. A key factor is active participation, such as participating in discussions, sharing content, and collaborating with others, which indicates that PLN is not merely a passive information acquisition tool, but a highly interactive learning network. The second aspect is sustainability, meaning it can continuously adjust according to personal goals and continuously provide value (Couros, 2010; Siemens, 2005). The last aspect is that PLN should help people establish positive digital identities, which is in line with Howard Rheingold's (2012) view. He emphasizes that participation and online presence in the network environment are crucial for building credibility. The specific manifestations of the success of PLN also include obtaining more meaningful interpersonal connections, constructive feedback from peers, as well as opportunities for collaboration, mentorship, or career development.

Personal PLN Reflection

My personal learning network is mainly shaped by platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and occasionally LinkedIn, particularly in the context of my academic studies. I often use YouTube when I need a clearer explanation of concepts covered in lectures, especially in subjects that involve more complex ideas. Being able to pause, rewind, and revisit explanations helps me learn at my own pace, which is something I find difficult to achieve in a traditional classroom setting.

In addition to YouTube, I use Instagram and TikTok more passively, but they still play a role in reinforcing my learning. I sometimes come across short videos or posts that summarize key ideas or provide quick insights related to topics I am studying. While these are not always in-depth, they can help me revisit concepts in a more accessible way. However, I am also aware that the accuracy of this content can vary, so I try to be cautious about what I rely on.

One thing I have noticed is that my PLN is most effective when I am more intentional in how I use it. For example, saving useful videos, revisiting content before exams, or searching for specific topics makes a bigger difference than simply scrolling through content. At the same time, I do not always actively engage with others, which means I may be missing opportunities to deepen my understanding through discussion.

Overall, my PLN supports my academic learning by providing flexible and accessible resources, but its effectiveness depends on how actively and critically I use these platforms.



Photo by [Vitaly Gariev](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Personal PLN Reflection

YouTube, Discord, and TikTok are the main parts of my network for learning. These platforms help me learn and go about my daily life in different ways. When I don't understand something or need to study for a test, I mostly use YouTube to find videos that are related to my classes. These videos help me understand things better. One of the best things about YouTube is that you can pause, rewind, and watch videos over and over again. It's hard to do this in a regular classroom.

I also use Discord to talk to friends about school and life issues in an interactive way. I can talk about different ideas and points of view with my friends or other people on Discord at any time, whether it's about school or life. This interactive way of learning makes up for the passive way I can only learn on YouTube. I can check to see if what I've learned is correct by talking to other people.

For me, TikTok is mostly a place to have fun and learn new things without really trying. I usually see a lot of different things when I watch short videos, like news and entertainment videos. Even though these things aren't always well-organized or detailed, and it's not always clear how accurate they are, they do help me learn more and see things from different points of view.

My PLN learns and gets information in both active and passive ways. YouTube helps me learn in a certain way, Discord lets me talk to and interact with other people, and TikTok is a more relaxed way to get information.

Personal PLN Reflection

When I mapped out my PLN using the Visitor–Resident framework, one thing that stood out right away was how spread out everything is. I'm not just using one type of platform or showing up in one way online. Instead, my time is divided between spaces where I'm just consuming content, spaces where I'm actually interacting with people, and others that are more focused on school or professional life. It made me realize that my learning doesn't come from one place, but from a mix of all these different environments.

On the more passive side, platforms like Crunchyroll and Netflix are a big part of my routine. I usually go on them to unwind, watch shows, and disconnect a bit. There's no real interaction happening there. I'm not posting anything or engaging with others. It's just watching and moving on. I do spend more time on Crunchyroll, which is why it stands out more for me. Even though these platforms feel purely for entertainment, they still influence how I think in small ways, whether it's through storytelling, different perspectives, or just exposure to new ideas.

YouTube feels a bit different because it sits somewhere in between. A lot of the time I use it the same way I use Netflix, just watching videos. But at the same time, I'm also subscribing to channels, checking comments, and sometimes interacting with content. Because of that, it doesn't really fit into just one category. It kind of acts like a bridge, where I can go from just watching something to actually engaging with it a bit more.

The platforms where I feel most present are definitely Steam, Discord, and Instagram. These are the spaces where I'm interacting with people regularly and where I actually have a sense of identity. Steam stands out the most since I spend a lot of time there gaming and staying connected with friends. Discord builds on that with real-time conversations and group chats, which makes everything feel more immediate and social. Instagram is a bit different, but it still plays a role in how I connect with others and present myself. In these spaces, learning

doesn't feel formal at all. It just happens naturally through conversations, shared experiences, and being part of a community.

On the more academic side, Brightspace is probably the most important platform for me right now. It's where everything related to school happens, from accessing course materials to submitting assignments. I'm on it regularly, and it requires consistent engagement. UVic Email supports that, but it feels more like a tool I use to stay on top of things rather than a space where I interact. LinkedIn is also part of this side, but in a different way. I don't use it as often, but it represents something more long term. It reflects my professional identity and connects me to future opportunities.

Then there's Gmail, which feels the most straightforward out of everything. I use it to send and receive information, and that's about it. There's no real interaction beyond that, and I'm not building any kind of presence there. It's just a tool that helps keep everything organized and running smoothly.

Looking at everything together, what stands out is how these platforms all play different roles. Some are just for relaxing, some are where I connect with people, and others are tied to school or future goals. None of them really replace each other, but together they shape how I learn, interact, and spend my time online.

Personal PLN Reflection

My personal learning network is built around a mix of platforms that serve different purposes depending on whether I'm in a personal, academic, or professional headspace. The platforms I use most don't really overlap in function, but together they shape how I learn and stay connected.

For casual and social use, Discord is where I spend the most time. It's my main way of communicating with friends, and since I'm also part of university servers, it naturally bridges personal and academic life. Instagram and Snapchat are there too, though I'm more of a lurker than a poster on both. I check in regularly, but I rarely put anything out.

On the academic side, Brightspace is the most consistent part of my routine. I use it to access course materials and submit work, but it doesn't really feel like a space where learning happens beyond the basics. GitHub sits in a different category for me. As a CompSci student, it's where I store and showcase projects, and I'm aware that it carries more professional weight than most of my other platforms.

YouTube and Reddit fall into a more passive zone. I use them to consume content, whether that's tutorials, discussions, or just things I find interesting, but I'm not interacting or contributing in any meaningful way.

One thing I've been more conscious of lately is how my professional digital identity is starting to matter more. I keep my personal accounts private and use separate usernames, which was an intentional choice. But I also recognize that simply having a clean personal

presence isn't the same as actively building a professional one. That's something I'm still working on.

Footnotes

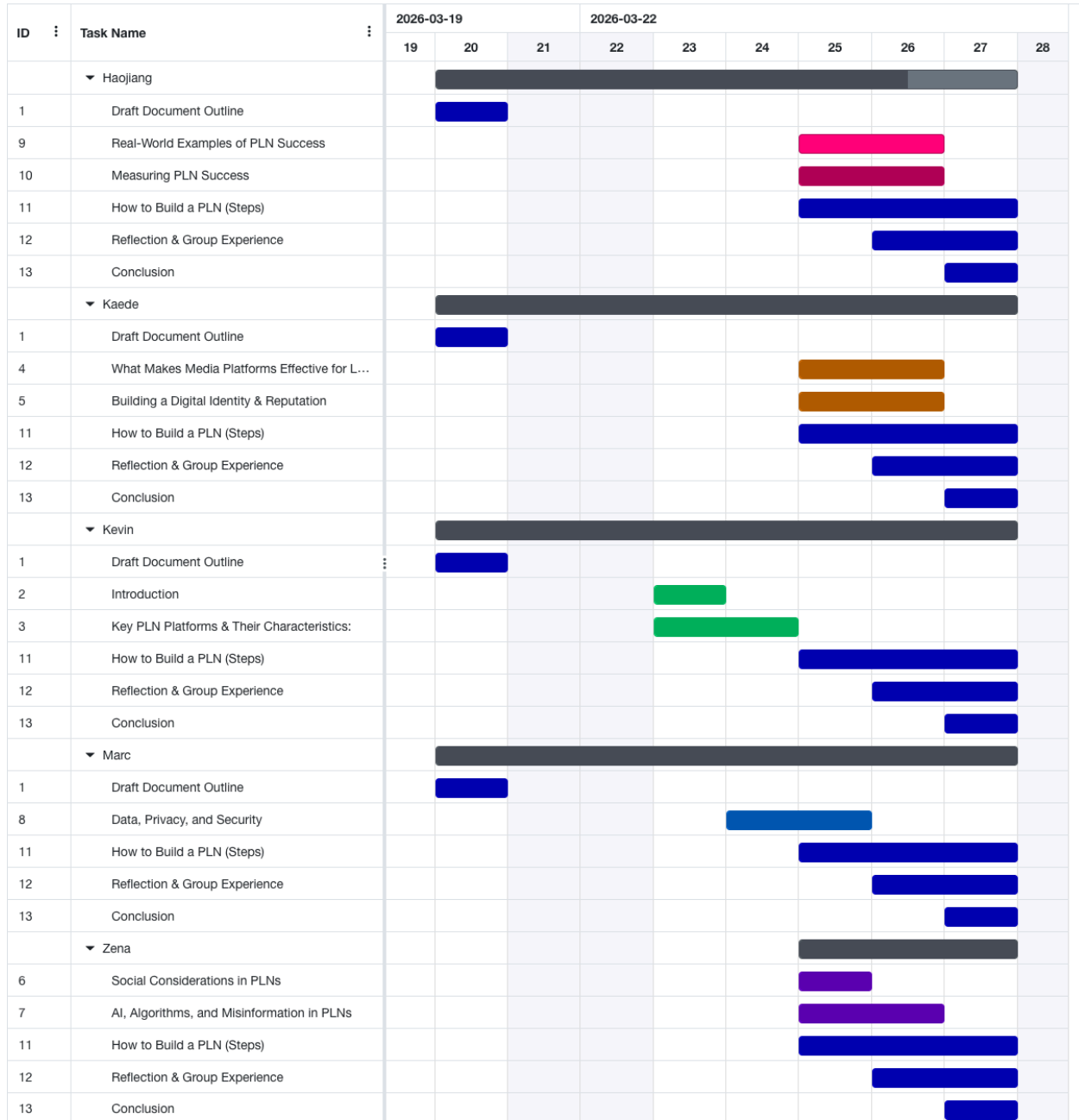


Figure 6. Gantt Chart of group work distribution

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