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Linking Theory & Practice – Articles on telework and on social media in management education

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EAM White Paper Series

Editor-in-Chief's Introduction

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OMJ has offered a White Paper Series every year or so since 2006, and these next two papers are a part of that series. White Papers are generally solicited although they go through a peer review process; not all papers solicited are published. The White Papers, which have been among our most cited articles, are normally published in the Linking Theory & Practice section, and they generally summarize past activity in their subject field, assess the current state, and present expectations or even forecasts going into the next decade or beyond. The two articles published in this issue fit that profile.

In the first article, Tim Golden of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY, summarizes the history of the past couple of decades in the area of telework, which is defined to include working usually from home using a computer, fax machine, telephone, and whatever other techniques can allow one to perform organizational duties for a firm. Usually, these duties have formerly been performed by workers on-site, but not always. There have been pros and cons about such work. Does it encourage sloughing off on the job? Can it possibly be as effective as if the workers were on site and can it possibly improve productivity? Does it engender resentment within workers doing the same or different jobs on site? Does it truly save the firm money in the use of office space, vehicles, on site resources and so on? Lately, does it truly lower environmental pollution and our energy footprint by eliminating commuting emissions? Golden, who does much of his research in this area, chronicles the increase in telework in the last few years as it has been increasingly aided by new technology. Yet if telework is to be truly successful going forward, it faces many challenges. He concludes with a discussion of these challenges and makes recommendations to managers to help telework fulfill its promise.

In the second article, Charles Wankel of St John's University in New York, NY, author of many management education books and book chapters and a past Management Education & Development Chair of the Academy of Management, introduces us to the multiple uses of Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn, and

especially, Second Life, in management education. Most of our readership has probably had all it could do to know the names and capabilities of all these social media initiatives, which are finally only the most notable of a much longer list of such media. Yet, Wankel has used many of them as a critical piece of his management education classes. He also knows of many others who have done so, and his article introduces you to them and a little about what they have done with these media at their universities and in their courses. This is of special significance in a global era because the technology available through them will allow management educators to do things on a global scale that most had no idea they could do with their students or as students, themselves. In fact, these technologies promise to play a highly significant role in bringing emerging economies into a more developed state.

This is not just about communication. For example, in Second Life, where Wankel owns an Island, students can assume identities that help free them to contribute their ideas in a way that may not be available to them when they are sitting in the classroom, or at their computer, involved in standard online classroom discussions. The personal history and familiarity of many modern students with electronic games can free their creativity when they are in Second Life. Yet, readers should not get the idea that reflection is impossible in an environment like Second Life. That's up to the instructor. If none of this is making much sense to you, read the Wankel article, ''Management Education Using Social Media.'' It may astound you as to what is happening right now in some management classes and what is possible in management education over the next 20 years.