

WORKING OUT LOUD WITH INTENT: GETTING STARTED

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You know what it means to work out loud (WOL), and why it is of benefit. Yet, knowing how to get started can remain confusing, and determining how to WOL in a purposeful way can seem daunting. The following activities are to you help navigate your way. They are provided with some context as to how they enable you to work out loud with intent. You might like to explore each of these activities over the course of a week, or perhaps set a goal of completing one activity per week for the next four weeks.

Expertise location: A fundamental element in a social network

Your personal profile in a social network is a fundamental element that creates your identity and the basis for developing your network. Consider your online profile - does it reflect who you are?

One of the greatest oversights is not adding a profile picture, using the default network image instead. In the context of your workplace social network, ask yourself - would you want to connect and share knowledge and experiences with a silhouette? We often hear from people that they see the lack of a profile picture as laziness. Similarly, we see (and hear of) people selecting inappropriate, unprofessional profile images for use in workplace and professional networks. Think carefully about your choice of profile picture and the message it sends your colleagues and network.

The second element critical to the ability to build professional connections with others is your expertise: your skills and knowledge of topics of interest. When we make connections in face-to-face environments we typically banter about these things - what do you do; where do you work? When we connect with people online, we look at their profiles, and we look at their connections: Who are our mutual connections? What do we have in common?

If your profile isn't up to date, how will you develop your online identity?

Why will people connect with you? Before you start a conversation, take a moment to review and update your profile.

Activity

- **List three keywords that represent your area of expertise**

Add these to your profile on social channels, both internal and external. Areas of expertise may include eLearning, Facilitation, Yammer, Jive, Office 365, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

- **Connect with others who have similar areas of expertise**

Search one of your areas of expertise on your network of choice, and use filters where available to narrow your results to 'People'. When you find others who share your area of expertise, consider connecting with them. Rather than simply clicking 'Friend' or 'Follow,' why not add a short message that explains why you want to connect? For example, you might state the expertise you have in common, and that you would like to discuss and exchange views.

Curating content to add value

We are familiar with people sharing links on social networks within our organisations, or on public networks such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. Many of these platforms now provide a preview of the article; however unless it has a compelling headline, opening sentence, or author you know, you are likely to ignore it. In our busy, information-laden lives we need our network to become our filter, helping us sift through the volumes of readings, surface the most important pieces, and draw our attention to articles of value.

Content curation is a powerful approach for creating and sharing articles that you believe will add value to your network. In a role not dissimilar to a museum or art curator, your intention is to develop and share your perspectives on topics related to your field of expertise. The curation process requires you to consider your perspective on a topic, and highlight key aspects that provide insights into both the curated

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content and your own point of view. The next step requires engagement with your network, the exchange of views, and the development of shared or differing perspectives.

Activity

- Select an item from your reading list that is relevant to your area of expertise. Share the link, explaining briefly the value and highlighting aspects of the article to which your network should pay attention. Read other people's curated content and like or rate them, make a comment, or share with your own network.

Share your insights, not your calendar

We often see people post status updates that read like a calendar listing: "Meetings with X then Y today before hitting the office!" Similarly, we see status updates that share the day's tasks: "Powering through a presentation before writing up my report!" Most of us have shared a status update like this, and whilst it's not *wrong*, when it comes to adding value, sharing this information serves little purpose.

When we take the time to consider what we have learned, discovered or developed - be it a new idea, concept or insight - and then share this back to our networks, we add value and purpose. We demonstrate to others that *their* participation has provided value to us that we have built upon.

The nature of this activity contains an element of serendipity. Some days you will be amazed by the richness and variety of content that becomes visible through your network connections. Other days you will be impressed by the insights people have developed from

what you have shared. Think of your network as an ecosystem, facilitated by WOL actions. What you contribute and acknowledge improves the strength of the connections in the ecosystem.

Make this type of sharing a regular part of your working out loud repertoire. Rather than following a posting schedule that says Thursday is "share my insights day" - post your updates in the moment, while you are still aware of the value you have gained.

Activity

- Share a status update with your network. This status update should not be about what you're doing (or about to do), but rather it should focus on new ideas or insights.

Reflections on activity: Connecting the dots

The practise of reflecting on our work and experiences is a rare commodity these days, but it is an important aspect of synthesising our learning and expanding our development. Block out some time in your calendar, grab a coffee, sit back and ponder by reviewing your activities and those of your network this week.

Gather the topics, your insights and other points of view, but with intention. What you are looking for through this process are connections and relationships. You may like to mind map or sketchnote - whatever works best for you.

Look for connections to your existing knowledge of a topic, extensions or a divergence that leads to a connection with related topics. Question your existing view, challenge your assumptions, and be prepared to shift or alter your perspective or look for something that will lead you to

act differently.

Now - can you anticipate future topics to further extend or augment your current view? Can you make this explicit, through writing?

The process of writing your reflections is a well-researched and proven method for consolidating knowledge development. The process of publicly publishing your reflections creates the opportunity to establish shared meanings within your network.

Remember: Your reflective piece is not a summary of events (what I did this week) or a reading list - it is an intentional process that makes your knowledge development clearly understandable to others, and leads to further opportunities to connect and continue conversations.

Activity

- Share your key learning insights from your first foray into working out loud. Unlike our previous activities, this one requires some commitment - a clear head and a little time (15 - 30 minutes). These four activities provide a foundation for you to develop your own working out loud practice. Remember, WOL is not a spectator sport - if you want to experience the value, you need to become an active contributor to the network.

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