

Jennifer Shelden

# Professional Learning Network Plan

## Thought Leadership Goals

In my current role as a Senior Instructional Designer at Concur Technologies, my expertise is primarily in the design of content. I am known as the expert in creating clean, consistent, modern trainings that are visually cohesive with our company's brand and interactive e-learning courses that engage and inform. Unofficial titles I've been given include the "PowerPoint Guru" and "Design Master." My most recent standout project is the rebranding of our team's materials to represent new company branding. I worked to blend that branding with instructional design principles to create templates that the content design team can use and our audience finds accessible. Our e-learnings now offer a standard user experience, while still leaving room for creative courses using video, gamification, and other up and coming trends. The result is that our trainings will capture and keep attention, while delivering the intended message.

As a thought leader in both my team and my company, I hope to share new and innovative ideas in instructional design to team members, stakeholders, and other learning professionals to continually raise the bar of what we offer to our thousands of employees. Being a technology company, our employees expect a certain caliber of materials when they are being trained, and I aim to surpass that expectation. I also aim to help others in that goal so that Concur can be known as a company that offers outstanding training programs to their employees.

## Description of Professional Learning Network

Currently, my professional learning network is mostly made up of people from within my own team, but I am quickly branching out. In the past year, I have made contacts with learning professionals on other Concur teams, as well as connected with coworkers on similar teams at other companies within our parent structure of SAP. I have primarily accomplished these connections by participating in multi-team conference calls and pilot programs to test new learning functionalities. The pilot programs help me to both make connections, but also be known as a thought leader who is involved with new and improved processes and tools.

My professional learning network is also greatly enhanced by the addition of my networked learning space, the Concur Learning Professionals Community on Slack. I created a space where cross-functional training coworkers can share their experiences, answer questions, and connect on industry topics. This connects me and my coworkers to our peers across the globe, something that we often don't get the chance to do in-person or virtually. This broadens my network significantly to create an internal network that is almost external given its broad reach.

In terms of external professional learning network, I primarily rely on LinkedIn and it's Elevate tool. Elevate allows me to curate content easily for myself and my coworkers and see content from other curators that can all be auto-scheduled to be posted to my

LinkedIn profile. Intermixed with these industry articles, I share out my own blog posts from my website. The combination of these two methods allows me to see what other industry leaders are writing about and learn and share from them, as well as bolsters my credibility as a thought leader by sharing my own thoughts and suggestions around instructional design topics. I also am able to connect to my network via LinkedIn by viewing and responding to their posts on the site, thus strengthening professional connections.

## Role of Base Camp Site and Networked Learning Space

My base camp plays a large role in my thought leadership goals. It lends to my authority on instructional and visual design in many situations. Whether it be applying for other positions, working with new stakeholders, or simply interacting with coworkers, having a space to showcase my work allows me to stand out from a crowd. It shows both my skills as an instructional designer of many types of media, as well as my creativity and a bit of my personality. My base camp has become a standard of what to look for when hiring new people on our design team, and my blog within the site has helped coworkers discover and implement new tools in their trainings. By continuing to post to my blog, it will show that I am invested in the field of instructional design and continuing both learning in the field and contributing. It will also give me something to post to my social channels, like LinkedIn, that is current and hopefully worth sharing by my connections.

I plan to use the networked learning space I created to expand and deepen these connections through consistent communication. By creating this space, I have established myself as a thought leader within the company in the field of instructional design and training, and I hope that my peers will get value out of connecting. I enjoy helping my peers to learn new practices, tools, etc. and this Slack workspace allows me to do that on a broad scale, and also get my own questions answered when needed. I look forward to being able to connect with my coworkers, ask them questions about internal processes or design software, and just stay in touch in general.

## Strategic Plan for Establishing Web Presence

### Regularly Update your Professional Website

It's already been established that I will continue to post to the blog section of my website. I can pull from class discussion topics, tool reviews, articles I have read and synthesized, as well as anything else that comes to mind and is valuable to instructional design field. Additionally, I will continue to update my portfolio section with additional pieces, including replacing older or less experienced trainings with new, updated ones as needed.

### Track your Traffic

Currently, I rely on the analytics offered by Weebly, my website provider. These offer basic traffic statistics on how many unique visitors the site receives as well as views, which often is a different number. These statistics have served me well so far, but I am also researching adding Google Analytics tools to get a better understanding of the traffic on my site. Currently, I cannot see which pages are most popular, so it's hard to tell which blog content is most engaging. Using Google Analytics will help me define and

analyze those trends to tailor the content I post to what the audience is most interested in.

I have also begun to look at the SEO of my website. I have submitted the site for Google indexing as well as set the site description to a short and succinct explanation of my base camp. For my meta keywords, I chose multiple variations of my name as well as topics relating to instructional design and e-learning development.

### [Publish your Work via Social Media Sharing Sites](#)

The only thing I can really publish to my social channels right now are my blog posts. I don't have any teaching materials, manuscripts, or presentations that would be relevant to a broad community. The presentations I create are only for an internal company audience, so I can't share them on a site like SlideShare. If I ever give conference presentations to either the company or a broader audience, then I would come back to this piece and consider adding.

### [Leverage Social Networks](#)

As stated earlier, I really plan to leverage LinkedIn as my main professional social network. While I understand that Twitter is a great channel to connect and interact, it's not my network of choice, so I will be using it sparingly. As I've started to use LinkedIn more in the last year, I think that it offers great communities and focus in a way that I don't have the time to follow on Twitter.

### [Be a good user of others' content](#)

I'm not currently reviewing or contributing to community content, but I am interested in the idea of blogging on professional sites, and as I gain steam in my blogging experience, I will pursue sites that look for outside content creators to see where I can contribute.

I do, however, have a resources section on my base camp website. I am growing a repository that houses the blogs I read, communities I turn to for help, and resources I use to create trainings.

### [Complete all profiles](#)

In all the locations that I "exist" online in a public sense, though we all know that nothing online is truly "private," my profiles are completed and consistent. I have tailored the messages in each space so that, while they may not be identical, they all connect to my overall identity online. Profiles include LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, and Instagram.

## [Description of Privacy Concerns and Strategies](#)

Privacy is an issue on two fronts for me, starting with the fact that I don't like to share my personal life online. I don't think the world needs to know, nor cares, about my personal updates (except maybe my Instagram cats, people love cat pictures), so I set personal accounts like Facebook to the strictest privacy settings. Because I rarely post updates besides travel photos, cat photos, or quirky things that have happened in my life, I don't have too much concern about adding coworkers to those private networks, but I do

refrain from adding people I don't know in person. This keeps what I am sharing to a smaller group whom I trust to not misunderstand or misrepresent my posts.

To alleviate my privacy concerns for my base camp, I always decide to err on the side of "professional" when posting content. I only have professional headshots and landscape photos, and none of my blog posts will be personal in nature. This keeps a very clear distinction for me between personal and professional.

Privacy also plays a part in what I am *able* to post to my portfolio and blog, as opposed to what I *want* to post. Some of my best projects can't be shared online because they contain company sensitive information, for internal distribution only. It's a fine line that you don't ever want to cross. I've traversed that line by getting all work-related projects approved by my manager before including in my portfolio. Blogging about these projects is a little different. I've found that it's easier to share my work in the form of a blog post because I can describe what I'm doing, without having to show the specific content. I can discuss a project's development, the general topic, tools used, etc. without having to show a finished product to the world. It's a nice compromise that I think solves this particular privacy issue.

## Next Steps with Social Networking/Media

My plan for social networking is just to continue what I'm doing for the foreseeable future. Given my personal goals of trying to use my computer and phone less outside of work, I don't have the time or interest in really diving into developing a major Twitter presence. The exception to this is, of course, LinkedIn, which I feel is a necessity in the job market today. It's possible that if I were ever actively seeking work outside of my current employer that I would ramp up my online presence, but I think that what I have created thus far is a healthy medium that allows me to maintain a professional presence without spending too much time cultivating it.

I really want to start focusing more heavily on face-to-face networking. Over the next year, I hope to attend several industry conferences and trainings where I hope to meet and connect with other instructional designers to broaden my online network that way, instead of connecting first online. I am interested to see if this forms stronger or more lasting connections by connecting "traditional" networking with "online" networking.