



Learning 2.0gether

WP 3 Needs Analysis: Understanding Training Needs of
Older Workers in SMEs and Use of Web 2.0 in SMEs

FOCUS GROUP REPORT:
UK

Executive Summary

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Background Information about Training Needs of Older Workers in SMEs & Use of Web 2.0 in SMEs – UK Overview

Figures from 2010 show that 22% of those aged 55 to 64 and 60% of adults over 65 have never used the internet, therefore understanding the barriers they face is increasingly important in an environment where the business and marketing depends on the internet (Taen, *Key Facts: Age, Demographics and Employment*: 2011). With an increased working age it is essential that smaller businesses harness the potential of older workers by keeping them up to date with emerging technologies and tools.

Focus Group Introduction

Aims and Organisation of the Focus Group

The focus group was carried out to determine the needs of Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) and 50+ workers in terms of Web 2.0 training, providing the opportunity for both groups to:

- Understand the opportunities social media can provide for business marketing
- Discuss the barriers they face when using Web 2.0
- Discuss their learning and training needs in respect to using Web 2.0 for marketing purposes

It took place in the UK over lunch on Monday 18th February 2013 and lasted approximately an hour and a half, being facilitated by two staff from Inova.

Overview of Participants Representative of Target Group

All 12 participants worked for SMEs or microenterprises; in order to get as much data as possible they covered a range of Web 2.0 abilities and usage. There were four participants involved who fell into the under 50 category, these workers all represented SMEs who employ 50+ workers and were able to give a differing viewpoint as to how their older colleagues view social media at work.

Themes Emerging from the Focus Group

- Keeping business and personal life separate
- Time constraints

'Sometimes think I have enough keeping up with e-mails.... without going on social networks regularly'

- Security
- Social Media as a marketing tool

"...cost effective, open, easy to manipulate."

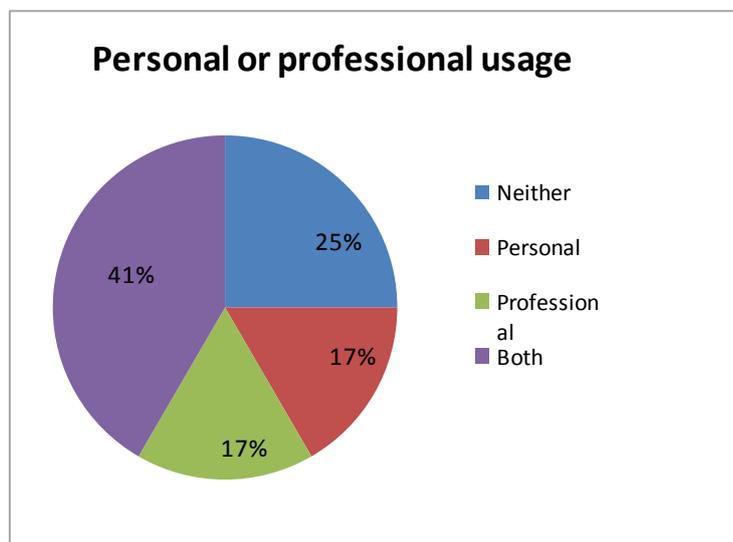
"Good for reaching wider community, reach different sections of society"

- The variety of tools available
- How to create client interaction
- Rapid change and age

"...by the time you have learnt there is a new technology."

Awareness of the role of Web 2.0 in the life of companies marketing

The majority of participants (83%) had a website to represent their business; other popular business marketing tools were Facebook and Twitter. It must be clarified that although many participants already had social media platforms for marketing purposes they were not regularly used.



How confident are you in using the tools?

All those over 50 who currently use social media, with the exception of one, felt confident in using it on a basic level but were unsure about the other tools available. Respondent's confidence differed across tools, with Facebook being the platform which was perceived

to be the one used most confidently whilst Twitter was the one they were most unsure of.

If not currently using why not?

Three participants did not use social media at all. The following comments show how important people feel that their age is in their lack of social media usage:

"Age is an important factor; it is not natural for older people"

"I am probably just too old."

"I think it is an age thing too. Young people are doing it all the time."

"...No interest from a personal point of view so would need to know what the benefits are"

Many participants were unsure of its effectiveness and that the possibility of negative comments from other users or privacy issues outweighed any potential benefits they could gain by using it.

How keen are you to start using them and why?

The majority wanted to start using social media for business and so that they can understand the advantages that come with it, such as keeping in touch with their target market and their needs.

"Useful to see what competition there is... other things on the market"

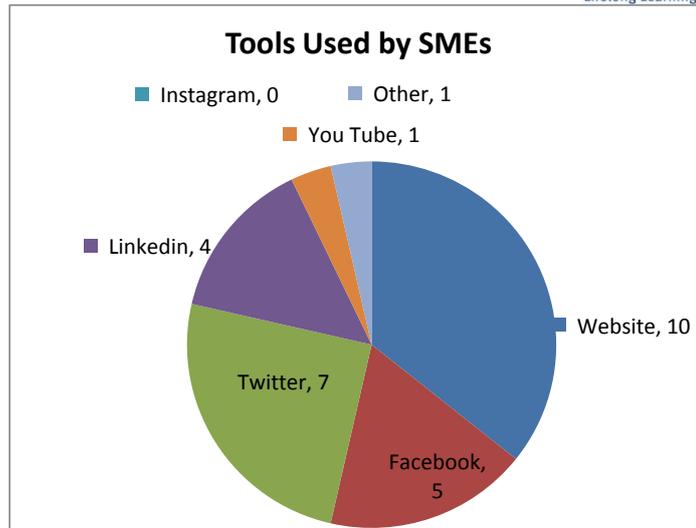
"Would like to know how it can be used to talk to people and share knowledge."

Companies' present approach towards Web 2.0

What is your company's current approach to social media and website use?

As a breakdown of those whose companies currently use social media the following were true:

- In-house social media department
- The company wrote the website content, an outside organisation creating a website around it
- Was given a website framework and adapted it to suit but came across issues and asked an outsider for help. The outsider was little help, resulting in the website being abandoned
- An outsider created a website and now the individual updates the content
- Social media generally used to publicise events



Participants seemed unsure of how frequently media outlets should be used.

How useful has it been for your business?

Other than social media's use in advertising events the majority of focus group attendees found it difficult to assess its effectiveness or how many potential customers had been reached.

Can you share any best practice with the group?

- *"You must be careful how much time you spend with social media as it is important to interact but then you could end up spending hours with it"*
- *"Understand who your audience is and what you are using it for"*
- *"Use Facebook to link to blogs, your website and other social media"*
- *"It is also important to share other information which could be interesting for the target group"*

What difficulties have you faced in using them?

- *"Finding time"*
- *"Stimulating conversation" e.g. two-way interaction*
- *"Understanding the right social media for you"*
- *"Very difficult to get an 'audience'... people to like your page or to follow you"*
- *"I am scared that I will get a virus, offend friends and acquaintances or reveal too much"*
- *"Legal issues"*
- *"Privacy settings"*

Workers' own knowledge, level of use and possible preconceptions of Web 2.0

The workers participating in the focus group had varying levels of use and knowledge of social media. Three participants had no prior knowledge, six were regular users and the

remaining three fitted into a middle category. The preconceptions which were evident from the focus group were that social media is more suited to use by younger people; it takes a lot of time to manage and personal information can be easily misused.

Gaps in training, advice and learning provision

Only two companies (20%) of those involved in the focus group provided training in social media. One provides it for other third sector organisations; the other company created a position for a volunteer to give training. This organisation found that the volunteer could be too quick when explaining issues and processes, thus making it difficult for the learner to follow and understand. The experience had not been positive for them.

Have you attended any Web 2.0 training before? In what area?

67% had not received any Web 2.0 training. Of those participants who had attended Web 2.0 training, two had had a diverse range in varying forms, including face-to-face and webinars. The majority of the training accessed covered general social media information and types of tools, e.g. LinkedIn and Twitter. One participant had attended many courses on social media but this gave general advice rather than tailored support helping them to achieve their own organisations' aims.

Interest in training

What do you think are the gaps in training and advice provision in terms of Web 2.0?

Respondents wanted examples of models that could be used to develop social media. For example a written guide or template to follow for specific aims relevant to individual business sectors.

If training was available would you take part in it?

Participants were interested in individually tailored training; some felt they needed very basic training whereas others felt that they wanted actual support in increasing their social media presence.

What type of training would you be most interested in?

- Different levels of training from beginner to advanced

*"Needs to be very much focused on how to use for **business** not just basic"*

- 'Hands on' – the learner physically completes the task and understands why they need to do it.
- Peer support as well as the ability to ask for help at any time.

"Someone on the other end of the phone to ask; a group every month to ask how they've got on and get support from."

What do you think the benefits of receiving training from a young person would be for your organisation?

It was generally agreed that learning from younger people is useful as they understand the topic. The quality of the trainer rather than their age was the main concern.

"I think I have learnt most of my stuff from younger people!"

How would you feel about being trained by young people?

The main feelings in regards to being trained by young people were that it would be good so long as there is mutual respect, jargon is explained and the trainers have the necessary skills.

"Need to want to learn it and the person teaching wants to be able to teach it."

"Teaching someone how to log onto Facebook needs a completely different skill set to how to use it for business effectively."

"I'd be worried about someone saying ah yes you're worried about that, that's a silly worry."

"...that it isn't in a condescending manner."

There were concerns that a younger person may not understand the needs of the older learner, the trainee not having the confidence to say they do not understand. It was also a worry that there would be a 'click click click' situation, whereby the younger person would do something so quickly the learner would not be able to absorb the information and use it themselves accordingly.

This feedback should be incorporated into the material for 'training the trainers'. The young people who will be trained need to learn how to support the older learners in doing it themselves rather than simply completing it on their behalf and expecting them to automatically remember. The young trainers should also be taught how to understand the worries of the older pupil and how they can help them overcome these worries without appearing to not care or sound condescending.

Conclusions and recommendations

From the information given during the course of the focus group and highlighted in this report the following recommendations can be made for any future social media training for SMEs and older workers:

- There should be different levels available
- Any training should be tailored towards the individual business
- Time is an issue: this should be considered when giving the training and when explaining the usage of social media in a business environment
- Issues regarding privacy and security should be addressed initially
- Age is perceived as a hindering factor; trainees should be supported and encouraged in their understanding and empathy towards older workers and the worries they have
- The trainers should allow the trainees to practice themselves
- A social media strategy template should be made available
- The concerns and needs of the trainee should be always in the mind of the trainer
- Trainees would like to learn about which tool is the most beneficial for their business
- Many potential learners need concrete evidence of the benefits of social media before investing time in it

Annexes

- I. Focus group promotional flyer
- II. Sample of focus group dissemination activity
- III. SME Information Sheet
- IV. Presentation Introducing Learning2.0gether
- V. Selection of photographs
- VI. Breakdown of participants