Chapter 21
Dissemination of Practice

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ABSTRACT

The sharing of information and knowledge is vitally important for advancement in all professional fields. This is true in research and in education. Technology leaders have a responsibility to their organizations to remain current in technology trends and practices. There are many ways that this can be accomplished, but some of the best are attending and presenting at conferences, publishing academic articles, and becoming involved in professional organizations. This chapter is dedicated to giving relevant, useful information about each of these methods of sharing information and what technology leaders may expect. There is also a list of resources to aid in further reading.

INTRODUCTION

An illustration by Gary Larson (1984) once portrayed a group of cavemen burning their hands and grimacing as they “cooked” their food by holding it over a fire with their bare hands. Then, one of them noticed a peer of theirs sitting off to the side of the group using a stick to hold his food over the fire and did not burn his hands. The one who noticed this wonderful innovation immediately informed his friends. The innovative use of a stick made the lives of those other cavemen much better (and much less painful).

This is the essence of the sharing of technological information with the world. Alone, one may miss out on innovations developed by people all over the world, and the world would miss out as well. The simple fact is that there are too many new technologies that are being developed every day for any one person to keep track. There is no possible way to keep ahead of the game alone.

Technology leaders come in many shapes and forms in educational systems. They may hold a formal position as a technology manager or instructional technologist in an educational district, school, or university. Technology leaders also may be found filling the roles of instructors,
educators, or other staff members who attempt to help others with technology. Given the many different places and roles of these technology leaders within the educational systems they serve and the diverse landscape of the ever-expanding universe of technology, there is a dire need for leaders to share information with each other, discuss/debate issues, and ask each other questions. They need to find out what others are doing, what technologies are available, and how they can be used in conjunction with existing practices and methods in order to make the system better. The best ways for technology leaders to find and share this kind of information is to write and read the other technology leaders’ publications, go to conferences where people are discussing these issues, and become involved with professional groups that are focused on the needs of technology leaders in education.

Conferences, professional organizations, and professional journals are essential avenues for technology managers to acquire and let others know about new information. Do not get caught in the trap that many do and feel that these venues are exclusively for “academics” or only good to bloat a vitae/resume. Conferences and journals are practical and useful ways to give and receive cutting edge information. Professional organizations are excellent networks that help spread information and keep technologists connected with each other and with others of similar interests.

This chapter’s title, “Dissemination of Practice,” is a perfect description of this section because this chapter will, in very relevant terms, explain how to share experiences as a technology manager. The chapter discusses some practical tips and benefits about giving conference presentations, writing for professional journals, and becoming a member of professional organizations. The author also compiled a list of some of today’s most prevalent professional organizations to serve as a starting block for anyone to jump right in and begin sharing information.

### PRESENTING AT CONFERENCES

#### Choosing a Conference

The first step in presenting at conferences is finding an appropriate conference where you and your expertise will fit. Look for regional and local conferences for your first proposal to get an idea and a feel for public speaking. These conferences are generally less stressful, more cost effective, and great for networking. The technology leader will probably meet people at these conferences that are already known to the leader, but he/she may also meet someone that is from the surrounding area who could become a great asset to the leader and his/her organization.

Take advantage of local conferences because they are great resources especially for new presenters. Local conferences are relatively inexpensive, geographically close to home, and generally low stress environments. These conferences allow presenters to obtain a feel for how to present, how to prepare, and how to navigate the ins and outs of the entire conference experience. The low stress and generally forgiving audiences serve as a sandbox for presenter experimentation and discovering the style that fits best.

The technology leader can focus on larger scale conferences after experiencing several others. The smaller conferences help build a reputation, presentation style, and confidence. These conferences also allow for invaluable networking experiences that lead to relationships and resources that can be used in the presenter’s home district and even at the larger conferences down the road.

Conferences are not only great resources for new information. They are also exceptional arenas for networking with other professionals. People generally attend conferences to learn, but they also attend in order to make connections with people that they would not normally come in contact with. Social networking, blogging, and Twitter have all helped increase the odds of meeting like-minded people, but they still cannot compete with the
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