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## Virtual Professional Development and Informal Learning via Social Networks

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People are increasingly engaged in profession-related learning via social networks supported by Web 2.0 tools. Some of these informal online learners are already actively engaged in a profession, whereas others are preparing to enter a profession. Their online interactions enhance their formal education and face-to-face professional experiences

**Virtual Professional Development and Informal Learning via Social Networks** will examine how individuals and organizations are using Web 2.0 tools to create informal learning and professional development opportunities. Informal learning is learning which occurs outside of a formal educational context, typically driven by a personal question or an immediate need. In other instances, informal learning may occur as a by-product of other social interactions. In this context, we focus on informal learning that occurs through online social networks on a voluntary basis. Professional development, then, is defined as learning that will enhance one's job-related knowledge or career growth. This book is perfectly suited for academics and practitioners as it is written in a manner that is clearly accessible and includes implications for practice.

### Topics Covered:

- Pedagogical frameworks for informal online professional development
- Social networking frameworks for informal online professional development
- Technology support for informal online professional development
- How professional development networks are designed and developed
- How norms and practices develop in professional development networks
- Technologies used for professional development networks
- Case studies of social network development
- Evaluations of online professional development networks
- Empirical research on network interactions in professional development networks
- Case studies of cognitive apprenticeship, mentoring, and knowledge brokering through online social networks.

**Market:** This premier publication is essential for all academic and research library reference collections. It is a crucial tool for academicians, researchers, and practitioners and is ideal for classroom use.

**Vanessa P. Dennen** is an Associate Professor of Instructional Systems at Florida State University. She earned a Ph.D. in Instructional Systems Technology from Indiana University. Her research investigates the nexus of cognitive, motivational, and social elements in computer-mediated communication, concentrating on two major issues: learner participation in online activities, and interactions, norm development, and informal learning within online communities of practice. Vanessa's publications, which have been well cited, have appeared in *Instructional Science*; *Distance Education*; *Computers in Human Behavior*; *The Handbook of Distance Education*; *The Handbook of Research on Educational Communications and Technology*; and *The International Handbook of Collaborative Learning* among others. Additionally, she recently co-edited (with Stefan Hrastinski) a special issue of *The Internet and Higher Education on Social Media in Higher Education*.