

## Interview: Jane Hart on New E-Learning

**Jo Murray:** Welcome to *The Knowledge Tree* Everybody. Today we are speaking with Jane Hart, who is famous for her [Jane's E-Learning Pick of the Day](#) blog. Welcome Jane.

**Jane Hart:** Hello. Thank you for inviting me

**Jo Murray:** My pleasure. Thank you for letting us do this. Let's hear from you about where you are based and what's your role in e-learning.

**Jane Hart:** I am based in the UK in England in a town called Wyncanton which in the south-west of England about an hour south from Bristol and there I run an independent e-learning consultancy, but most people know about me through my work online and as you have pointed out I've been running my E-learning Pick of the Day for some years now, but the material I use to choose my Pick of the Day comes from the work I do in the background which is basically to keep up to date with what is happening in the e-learning world. And I have been doing that since I started off in e-learning in 1994, but let me just go back a bit further than and say that I used to work in education, in a further education college and then in the university between about 1983 and 1997, so about 14 years and it was there, whilst I was teaching at the university that the Web really was born in the early nineties and I realised quite quickly how important it was going to be for education and so I started to create online learning for my own university.

In fact I was one of the first universities in the country to set up a web based materials for the degree course that I was working on. But after a while I decided that I would like to spread my wings and move into the business world and so in 1997 I left to provide consultancy services to education and business and so since that time I have been working on many, many different projects, but my main interest is obviously to keep up to date with e-learning and from an early date I started up a website called the [E-learning Centre](#) which people may have known about, but last year I sold that to another company so since this year I have moved on a bit and I have tried to specialise a little bit more in just learning tools, because I see there are so many different tools out there, both free and commercial, that have such an important part to play in learning, both from a teaching and training point of view and from a personal learning point of view. So the [Centre for Learning and Performance Technologies](#) was born earlier this year and there I maintain a directory of learning tools and it's from that directory, as I add new tools every day that I select my pick of the day. So there is a brief introduction for you...well not very brief introduction (laughing).

**Jo Murray:** Thank you, Jane, that is lovely. It gives us a really clear picture of where you have come from and what drives you to do what you do. I have been looking at your site and I came across an article you had written where you talked about New E-Learning. I wonder if you could spend a couple of minutes defining 'New E-Learning' for us please?

**Jane Hart:** Yes, for sure. New E-Learning was really my way of expressing the move from what I call traditional old school e-learning, the first generation if you like of e-learning, which is sometimes known as E-Learning 1.0, to a newer approach to learning and a lot of people tend to call that E-Learning 2.0, but that is always a bit complicated. People don't really understand, that it is dependent upon the new Web 2.0 tools and so forth, so I like to call it the New E-Learning which made it easier to understand, but essentially it is about moving from a content based approach to learning, where you create lots of courses, many times, sometimes very big courses, deliver them through learning management systems and very much a passive activity for the learner where they just receive this content themselves, whereas the New E-Learning is about being much more part of the process, being much more collaborative and sharing learning and working more together with other people, not such individual type learning.

As you can see there are so many tools now that support this approach to learning. Every day new tools are created that provide opportunities for collaboration and sharing, not just things like wikis, but also things like social networking tools where you can contact friends, colleagues, other students to discuss things, perhaps just not academic content or training content, but pastoral or social type content. Things like social bookmarking tools where if you find a good resource you can immediately share it with your colleagues, so this whole approach to learning, collaboration and sharing, is derived from the new way that the Web is moving and I think that is really exciting and the other great thing of course about it is that most of these tools, most of these activities you can do in this area, are free. The old school course development tools, a lot of those were expensive, commercial tools, but there are so many tools now that just allow you to do this collaborative approach to learning and which are free.

And the directory I have created now lists about over 1000 different free tools that would support content delivery for sure because that is still going to take place. We still need to create courses or learning materials, but a vast number of those are what I would call communication collaboration sharing tools which allow people to come together and learn together and work together, so that's my definition of new learning.

**Jo Murray:** If somebody goes to your site and they see 1000 different tools, how do they find their way through that to find something that they can create an e-learning solution with quickly and easily?

**Jane Hart:** That is a very good question because obviously the more tools we have got, the more complex it is. When you only had one or two authoring tools it was pretty easy, you chose one or the other, but now vast numbers of different tools in each that are in different categories. So what I have tried to do is a couple of ways into that maze of tools. One is to provide a guide to the tools and this includes some very high level information sheets, as I call them, which just provide a summary of the tools and how they can be used for learning purposes. Some resource lists which for those people who really understand about tools, but want to read some key reading resource materials about some of the technologies underpinning those tools, some examples of how the tools are being used as well as some reviews on some of the key tools in each of the categories.

So that was one way in, but I just recently started another way in, which is to invite other e-learning professionals around the world – and I know quite a few now - to, to provide me with their [Top 10 Tools](#) for learning. It might be for their personal learning, it might be for creating learning and now it was about 15 people now on the website who have listed their top ten tools and it is interesting to see how some of these tools are beginning to rise to the top. So my intention is to get a lot more people to contribute to their top ten tools and then compile a [Top 100 tools](#) list, so that people can really get a feel for what other e-learning professionals think are valid and useful and recommended in this world.

They could be things for creating solutions so we are already seeing some key content delivery tools coming out at the top of the list, as well as things for personal learning so what tools do you use on a daily basis to help you with working and learning? So I invite anybody out there listening to these podcast to come to the site and send me their top ten tools because the more the merrier and we can see what the tools are that people are really finding useful in this world of learning.

**Jo Murray:** So what a great example of collaborative sharing online, that is fantastic.

**Jane Hart:** Exactly, yes.

**Jo Murray:** So moving on to what you are seeing in the work that you are doing and across the e-learning specialists that are coming to your site, where do you think the most innovative work is happening in e-learning?

**Jane Hart:** That is a good question. I think the innovative work is happening probably in pockets all over the place. Within universities I am seeing some very interesting work being done by lecturers and teachers in their own classrooms, in their own courses, using these tools in very clever ways to make the whole learning experience pretty, pretty fantastic for their students and in corporates and businesses they are still using good old courses, for sure, to deliver learning but they are also beginning to realise the power of other tools, collaborative tools to support their learners, not just their formal learning, but to support their informal learning and this is one of the key things that is coming through now that, as research shows us, most learning within organisations is not formal. Most of it is informal.

About 75 per cent of your learning within an organisation is informal and I have been to many conferences recently on how organisations can support this informal approach to learning. Well of course there are all these tools that I have mentioned really can do this and so it is about helping organisations move tools like blogging and wikis into their organisation, recognise that these tools are powerful to support people's ongoing learning, performance support and performance improvement purposes and not just be seen as often seen, for instance, with blogging, that it is just somebody who wants to write their opinions on a daily basis, that blogging tools can really support the information and communication issues within organisations.

So this is where some of the really interesting work is taking place, which is not necessarily formal learning as I said, but much more, less obvious ways of learning, but which really are having a big impact on people's working. So of course in addition to that we are seeing some interesting work taking place in things like serious games, uses of virtual worlds for learning, but for me, the use of these tools for informal learning purposes is very key. And on the other side we are also seeing people using these tools in their daily lives for their own enjoyment, using social networking tools and using RSS feed readers to read their news and as people use these tools more and more in their personal lives, they will want to transfer them into their working life and use them for their working and learning purposes, and so I think we are going to see a big shift from maybe a top down approach to learning, where organisations tell people what they have to do, they have to learn, when they have to learn it, how they have to learn it, to individuals taking much more responsibility for their learning, identifying their own learning needs, finding the right appropriate resources for them to learn and building what is becoming known as their own personal learning environment.

Once again, a fantastic number of tools to support personal productivity, aggregating all these tools on the desk top and making working and learning really very exciting and enjoyable.

**Jo Murray:** Thank you very much. That's a fantastic description of the sorts of things that you are coming across. Is there anything that you think really needs to happen that hasn't happened yet or any directions that you think e-learning needs to go in, that it hasn't started to move in yet?

**Jane Hart:** Well for my part it is going back to what I was saying about supporting people's personal learning. I think for me many organisations feel that it is their duty to provide people with what they have to learn and tell them when to do it and so forth and manage it all. I think it is time now we, kind of, allowed people to do this themselves and I think it will only happen when organisations feel, perhaps, less threatened by some of

these tools that are around and which really are there to provide a great opportunity for the whole organisation to learn.

So I think we are going to have to see a little bit of a different mind shift in learning and development departments in terms of understanding their role in supporting a more personal approach to learning.

**Jo Murray:** Hmm. Okay well let's watch out for that to happen. So, Jane, any other interesting projects specifically that you have been looking at that you want to share with us?

**Jane Hart:** Well I am always working with different organisations, doing different things and that is the beauty of learning, it is never the same, it is not just, as I say, about course development any more, it is about understanding different ways people want to achieve different things and it is about ... my main interest, as I have said, is about helping organisations understand how these different tools can support them in delivering workplace learning, in helping organisations improve performance and helping learners themselves understand how they can be more responsible for their own learning.

Those kind of projects that I am working on are really very exciting because with those you can really see a big difference in the way learning is perceived within the organisation. It is no longer about classroom based, going off site, something completely different from work. It is now being seen as embedded in work, it is part of work. Learning and working are really becoming one and the same thing and I think that is really the key to the whole of this new era of learning, that it is not just something that you do in a separate place, but is something that happens every day of your life, whether you are at home or you are at work.

**Jo Murray:** Fantastic. Thanks very much Jane. I am really looking forward to lots of people going to your site and giving their top 10 tools and then seeing what comes from that. That would be really interesting for all of us I reckon. So thank you very much for your time today and thanks for speaking with *The Knowledge Tree*.

**Jane Hart:** Thank you very much.

## Useful links

[Jane's E-Learning Pick of the Day blog](http://janeknight.typepad.com/)

<http://janeknight.typepad.com/>

[Centre for Learning and Performance Technologies](http://www.c4lpt.co.uk/)

<http://www.c4lpt.co.uk/>

[Top 10 Tools contributions](http://www.c4lpt.co.uk/recommended/index.html)

<http://www.c4lpt.co.uk/recommended/index.html>

[Top 100 Tools list](http://www.c4lpt.co.uk/recommended/top100.html)

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