

# Using Social Media in Online Learning

**Exploring New Technologies, Media &  
Telecommunications**

Innovative ways to use social media and mobile technologies to make online learning and online collaboration more effective, efficient, and enjoyable.

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# The Role of Social Media

A definition of social media would encompass websites and applications that enable users to create and communicate in online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content. The utilization of social media platforms in the educational environment has been growing in value in the last decade and today's students have incorporated the technologies into every aspect of their daily lives. The refinement of social media within a classroom setting can produce better learning outcomes and critical awareness. Social media allows students freedom to collaborate and connect beyond the physical classroom. In such a collaborative environment, social media encourages information sharing which promotes the development of their creativity, critical thinking, and communication processes. It promotes autonomy in learning and encourages independent decision making. Social media affords the student the ability to seek answers independently and collectively with peers. The role of social media in online learning is to utilize the social media platforms as an adjunct method to enhance learning.

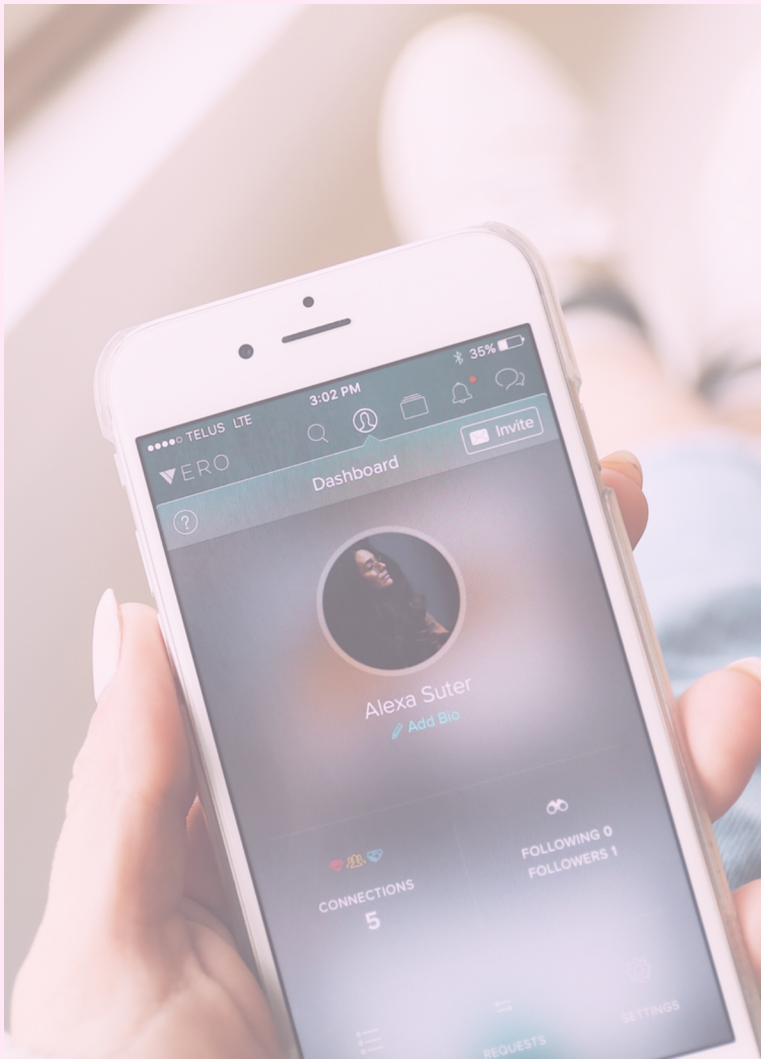


"Engage. Enlighten. Encourage.  
And especially ... just be yourself!  
Social media is a community effort,  
everyone is an asset."

-- Susan Cooper

Social media enthusiast & strategist

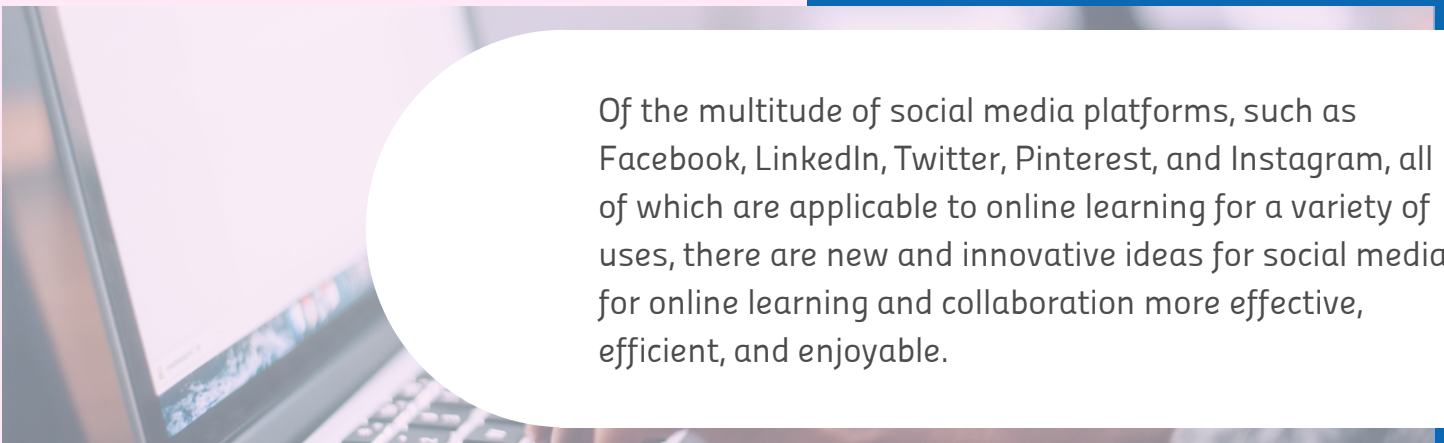




There are numerous technologies that can be used for online learning, and more are being developed every year. Generally, social media technologies are designed to accomplish a specific design goal and purpose.

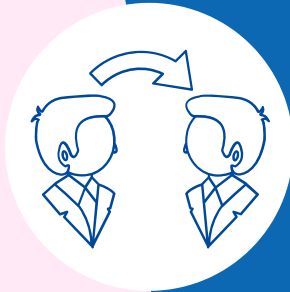
**"Social media replaces nothing, but compliments everything."**

--Neal Schaffer



Of the multitude of social media platforms, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram, all of which are applicable to online learning for a variety of uses, there are new and innovative ideas for social media for online learning and collaboration more effective, efficient, and enjoyable.

# Using Social Media Technologies in Online Environments



## Communications

There are many media platforms for use in the online and blended learning classroom. The creation of blogs and forums allow for student to express their ideas and for others to comment and contribute to the discussion. Email and messaging are common communication tools. Applications such as Twitter, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Google Meet, and Skype are popular methods for students to communicate with each other and for teachers to communicate with students.



## Collaboration

Similar to Communications, online and offline applications for groups of students to work collaboratively on a project abound on the Internet. Some examples are Slack, Canva, Mind Mapping apps, Trello and Dropbox. Collaborative document creation and editing can be found in Google Docs, Microsoft Word, Evernote and others.



## Sharing

The sharing of images, videos, information, audio, and personal profiles with others creates a social platform that can be utilized in online learning environments. Such applications as Pinterest, YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook, and podcasts contribute to the social aspects necessary to encourage learning.

# Exploring New Social Media Technologies for Online Learning

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“If you are on social media, and you are not learning, not laughing, not being inspired or not networking, then you are using it wrong.”

- Germany Kent

Innovative ways to use social media and mobile technologies to make online learning and online collaboration more effective, efficient, and enjoyable.

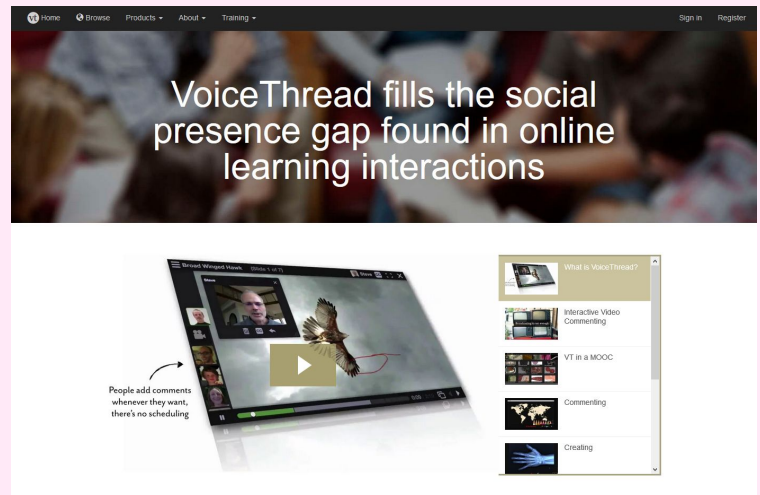
Of the multitude of social media platforms, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram are applicable to online learning for a variety of learners and uses. There are also lesser known, but equally valuable, new, and innovative ideas for social media for online learning to make student communications, collaborations, and sharing more effective, efficient, and enjoyable. Give these five a look!

1. VoiceThread
2. MindMeister
3. Elgg
4. TalkShoe
5. Mikogo

# 01 VoiceThread

VoiceThread is a tool for having discussions around media, such as a presentation, video or image. Participants watch or listen and then comment by telephone, web cam, microphone, text or by uploading a file. Users can then delete and re-record a comment, as needed. A small photo or drawing of the participant is then displayed around the media. To listen to comments, click the photos or the Play button. Although this approach to discussion does not facilitate real-time conversations, it does promote collaboration and threaded discussion.

VoiceThread features include control over which comments are shown, embedding the conversation to any web page, drawing on the presentation while creating a comment, ability to create groups, privacy options and support for most accessibility standards. VoiceThread has a for higher education that provides features for secure sharing and management of threads for students.



“VoiceThread is a powerful tool an instructor can use to design activities in which students leave comments, increasing student-student interactions and offering options for formative assessments.”

— Michelle Pacansky-Brock

How to Humanize Your Online Class with VoiceThread





# 02 MindMeister



MindMeister provides a browser-based service for creating mind maps through an intuitive interface. These diagrams can be used during brainstorming sessions, as a way to explain concepts, for information organization and for creative problem solving. Mindmeister's mind maps can be used in a collaborative environment, as well as saved and shared. When two or more users collaborate on the same map in real-time, all changes are replicated in a color-coded format so everyone can see updates instantaneously.

"In comparison to noting down text from a slide, mind mapping makes the learning process more meaningful and memorable for students."

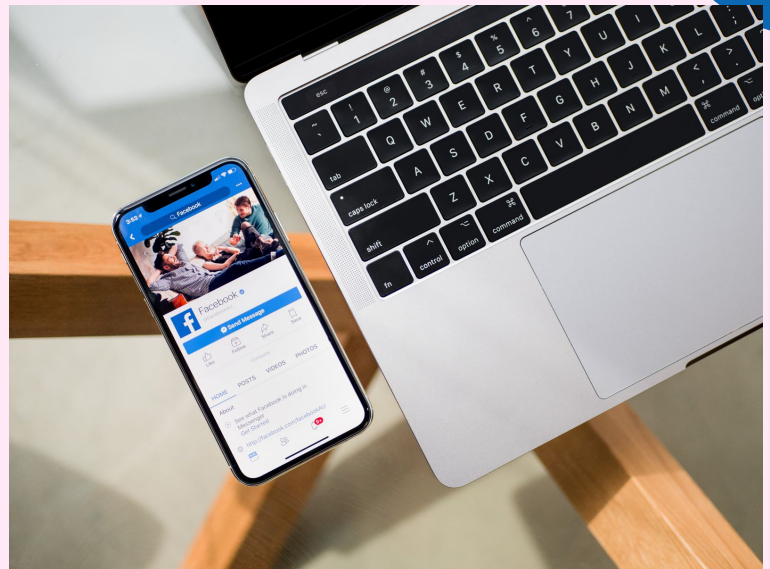
-- Nancy Morris

University Lecturer & Teacher Trainer

The screenshot shows the MindMeister website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Features, Common Uses, For Teams, Pricing, Log In, and Sign Up. The main content area features a large heading "What Is Mind Mapping?" followed by a paragraph explaining the technique. Below this is a mind map diagram with a central node "New Project" connected to four main branches: "TEAM" (with sub-nodes: Team lead, John, Jane), "IDEAS" (with sub-nodes: Let's try..., We could also..., How about...), "TO-DOs" (with sub-nodes: Research, Design, Implementation), and "QUESTIONS" (with sub-nodes: What if?, How much?, Where?). Below the mind map is a section titled "How to Mind Map" with a paragraph about adding visuals and embedding content.

# 03 Elgg

Elgg is a social networking engine and publishing platform for running your own social networking site on a public or private server. It's a free and open source application with templates and plugins for enhancements. Elgg is an aggregate of many social media technologies in one platform. Users can create and join groups, connect with friends, display a profile, blog and microblog (similar to Twitter). In terms of content, people can add pages, upload presentations, documents and multimedia files as well as tag the pages. This makes Elgg an ideal platform for learning and collaboration.



“Social media is about sociology and psychology more than technology.”

--- Brian Solis

Digital analyst, author, keynote speaker

The screenshot shows the Elgg website homepage. At the top is a navigation bar with links: About, Blog, Community, Download, Groups, Plugins, Showcase, and Log in. The main heading reads "Introducing a powerful open source social networking engine". Below this is a sub-headline: "Providing you with the core components needed to build a socially aware web application". There are three buttons: "Get Elgg 3.3.8", "Learn More", and "Open Source".

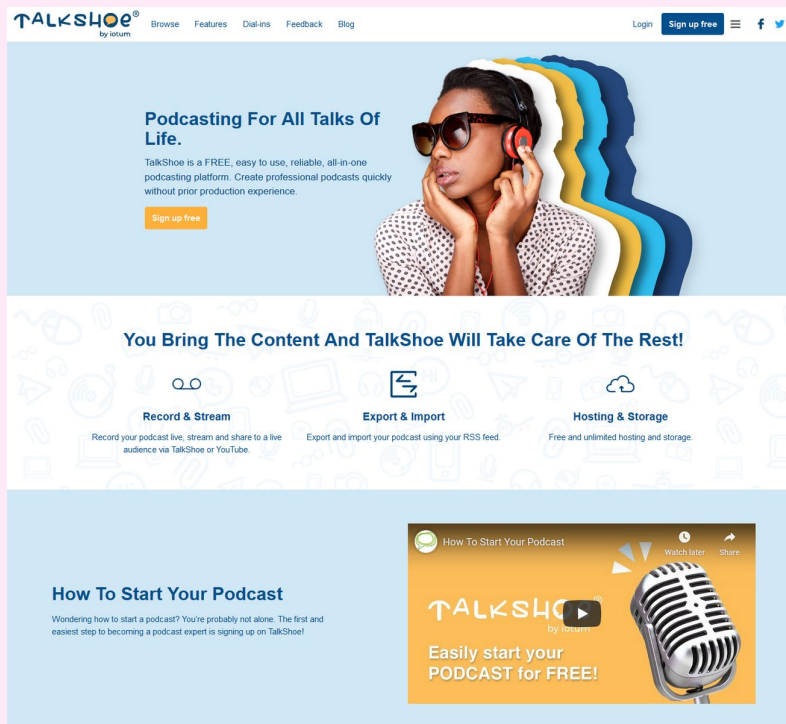
The main content area features the Elgg logo and a description: "Elgg is an award-winning open source social networking engine that provides a robust framework on which to build all kinds of social environments, from a campus wide social network for your university, school or college or an internal collaborative platform for your organization through to a brand-building communications tool for your company and its clients."

Below this is a grid of resources organized into two columns:

- Getting Started**
  - Install**: Learn about requirements and steps needed to install Elgg on your server.
  - Showcase**: Get inspiration from other projects powered by Elgg.
  - Plugins & Themes**: Find the ideal plugins and themes in our repository of community sourced projects.
  - Hello, World!**: Our tutorials will guide you through the first steps of building an Elgg plugin.
  - Beginning Developers Group**: Join our community group dedicated to helping get started with Elgg.
- Developer Center**
  - Documentation**: Find detailed information about Elgg's architecture, approach and features.
  - API Reference**: This is a handy resource to search and find out what functions exist within Elgg.
  - Source Code**: Elgg is an open source framework hosted and developed on Github.
  - Bug Tracker**: This is Elgg's bug tracker, if you find bugs or have patches for existing bugs then head on over and get involved.
  - Feedback & Planning**: Discussions about the past, present, and future of Elgg.



# TalkShoe



"The TalkShoe podcast platform is fantastic! It's super easy to produce, stream, record and share via RSS feed, not to mention the hosting and unlimited storage is free! It's the perfect platform for those new to podcasting or for professional casters. Give it a try!"

-- Todd Shapiro | The Todd Shapiro Show, SiriusXM

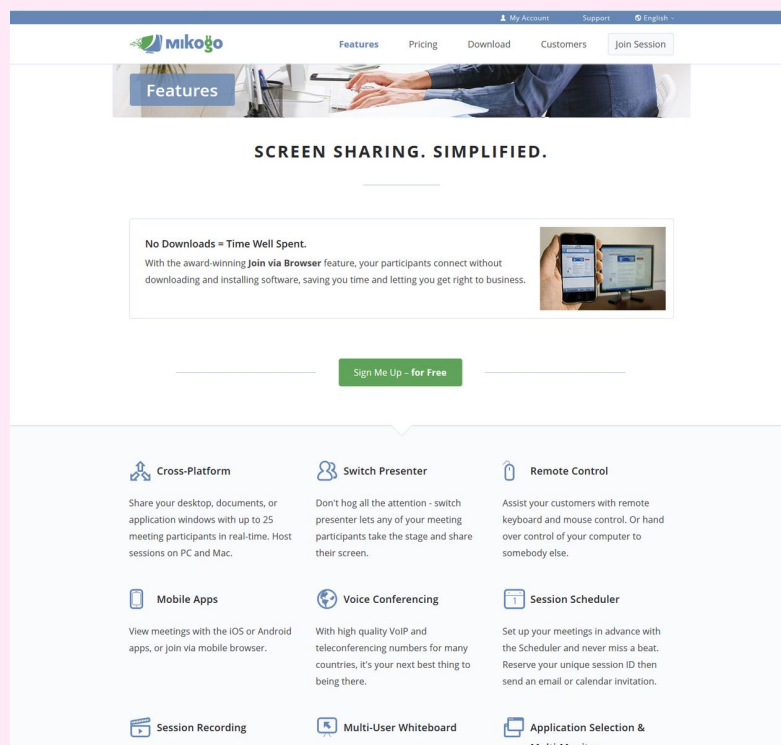
Think of TalkShoe as a way to have your own radio talk show. This is a free web-based service in which anyone can create, join or listen to live interactive presentations, discussions and conversations. Talk shows can be recorded, making them available as podcasts later. Talk show hosts control the process and participants can just listen or join in by talking or via text-chat.

For informal and impromptu learning, you can browse through their list of current and scheduled shows. To create your own workplace learning, you can schedule events on TalkShoe and then publicize them. Would you like a colleague to teach a course with interactive comments from a broader community? Would your organization benefit from a question and answer session with an expert, an interview with an author or a panel discussion using expertise outside of your organization? Then a live talk show may be for you.





Mikogo is an online meeting, training, and report support website that requires no downloading for participants and is free for personal use. It allows users to view and share a computer desktop and transfer control among connected users. It allows instructors to share solutions and demonstrations step-by-step. It has the benefit of web conferencing and webinars for online presentation and educational sessions in real time. It is iOS and Android through the mobile devices web browser, high quality voice conferencing, can be scheduled, and from the desktop just a connection via a web browser.



“If I closed my eyes and imagined a perfect system it might look like this. If it could also serve coffee – it would be even better.”

-- John Gardner

Director at Interax Accountancy Services

Social media in online learning, although not embraced by all educator, does bring new technologies, new methods, and today's students together for social communication, collaboration and sharing which encourages, engages and enlightens tomorrow's adults.



# Summary



## Examples of Social Media

- VoiceThread
- MindMeister
- Elgg
- TalkShoe
- Mikogo

Discovery of five new and exciting ways to use social media technologies to make online learning effective, efficient and enjoyable were examined.