“It Helped to Know that I Wasn’t Alone”
Exploring Research with a Community-Building Platform Designed for Engagement, Social Presence, Gamification

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Jamie Snow, Yellowdig

2021 Online Learning Consortium Conference
Overview

- This presentation explores social presence and student engagement with Yellowdig.
- This session showcases our study which examines disruptive innovation theory.
- The findings suggest that instructors can leverage gamification and social media-like reactions to foster student engagement, course satisfaction, and critical connections.
Ideas for Student Engagement

What strategies and tools do you use for student engagement and connectedness?

Share with us at https://tinyurl.com/OLC21engage
About the Study

• This study came from Covid-19 campus-wide survey results that indicated that students needed connectedness.
• As a result, we searched for tools/technology that offered disruptive innovation, student engagement, and connectedness.
• Yellowdig presented an opportunity to engage students and allow for social media-like reactions and connections.
About the Campus

• Mid-sized, private four-year residential university adjacent to vibrant downtown area
• 10,500 students enroll in Fall 2021
• Students from 50 states and 130 countries
• Over 1,200 international students
### About the Courses

#### Spring 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Delivery</th>
<th>Classification(s)</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AWR 201: Research and Writing</td>
<td>FTF</td>
<td>First-Year/Sophomore</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAPC 602: Global Communication Design</td>
<td>FTF</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
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<tr>
<td>EME 606: Design of Online Collaborative Learning</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
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#### Summer 2021

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EME 605: Introduction to Distance Learning</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EME 642: Management of Change</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRI 281: Technical Writing</td>
<td>Remote</td>
<td>Junior (mainly)</td>
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</table>

#### Fall 2021 [Currently in-study]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
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<th>Classification(s)</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AWR 201: Research and Writing</td>
<td>FTF</td>
<td>First-Year/Sophomore</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>EME 601: Introduction to Instructional Design</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
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<tr>
<td>EME 603: Inquiry and Measurement</td>
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<td>EME 612: Media for Instruction</td>
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<td>ENG 491: Senior Portfolio</td>
<td>FTF</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>WRI 281: Technical Writing</td>
<td>FTF</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRI 381: Professional Editing</td>
<td>FTF</td>
<td>Junior/Senior</td>
<td>14</td>
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</table>
Methodology: Disruptive Innovation

- Ability to adapt
- Technology offers a solution to barriers of learning at a distance
- Rethink age-old assumptions of higher education

For Disruptive Innovation Framework, disruption describes merits of the innovation disrupting the path of the traditional method, turning it on its head to improve the production of education (Christensen, 2011).
Yellowdig Engage Platform

Designed For Active Learning Communities

Social
Gameful
Relevant
Data-driven
LMS Agnostic
Yellowdig Engagement
COMMUNITY HEALTH DASHBOARD ALLOWS FACULTY TO TRACK ENGAGEMENT

AT-RISK STUDENT IDENTIFICATION
Yellowdig: Facilitating Learning Results

Network Graph

Community Connections
Use this graph to analyze incoming and outgoing connections between community members.

Graph

Table
Community Connections
Use this graph to analyze incoming and outgoing connections between community members.
My Definition Of Leadership – Part 2

04/29/2021

Throughout this semester, I have compiled a list of traits that contribute to my definition of a good leader based on central ideas I took away from several of the LED Talks we watched. 1. Vulnerability. In my opinion, we don’t talk enough about how important vulnerability is in society. Vulnerability is a trait that allows us to connect with other humans on a level that is unlike any other. It also inadvertently establishes credibility in relationships due to the private emotions/feelings that are being exchanged and shared. If leaders are not vulnerable they lose a point of connectivity that is critical in establishing trust and with that trust comes a complete and unquestionable servitude to a leaders’ counterparts.

Collapse comments (5) ▲

04/30/2021

This is a really interesting take on leadership, and I totally agree with you, vulnerability is definitely a trait leaders need to have, I think @Genesishgarcia says it perfectly

04/30/2021

Absolutely, vulnerability is seen as a weakness if you do not know how to handle it. Vulnerability is a great trait that can be used to rally people and make them feel for you.

04/30/2021

I agree! Most people see vulnerability as a weakness but it is really a strength that more leaders need to have. Being vulnerable means being able to communicate to your team about your strengths and weaknesses and understanding that you are not perfect at everything.
Hello Everyone!

Does anyone ever feel like they are lagging behind on their career, even though we're literally still in college? I think part of this fear of mine stems from all the descriptions I've seen of "entry level" jobs asking you to have all this experience.

I was unable to attend last class so I have been looking at the "post for review" section of everyone's cover letters and resumes. I often feel worried about the amount of "professional" experience I have, because it is very minimal, and seeing some of your guys' awesome resumes makes me worried I'll never catch up. However, it makes me feel like I should start applying for things I feel too unprofessional for because I have to start somewhere.

I was looking at articles on "feeling underqualified," but most of them were too cheesy for me to take seriously. But I wanted to post here because after reading some of the cheesy articles, I realize a lot of people may feel the same way, or even just a few. I guess it's just best to remember that we're still in college, and it's OK if, like me, you've pretty much only ever worked a customer service job at a grocery store or something similar. That customer service experience can be leveraged when entering the more "professional" world if needed.

Yeah, I totally get what you're saying. I went for an English major to be prepared for the LSAT and get a good GPA, but I have no real experience. So many people have interned or worked at law firms, and that makes me feel so left out and far behind.

Sometimes to alleviate that stress, I like to go on law school subreddits or blogs communication things to see that a lot of other people the same path and have the same struggles. Obviously, law school isn't the next step for everyone, so there are definitely other subreddits and blogs communication things for English majors that feel left behind.
Methods

Research Question
What are the effects of social presence and engagement when disruptive technology such as Yellowdig, a discussion board tool designed with social media and gamification, is purposefully incorporated into courses to improve learner self-regulation, cognition, and satisfaction?

Participants
University students enrolled in classes of a team of two interdisciplinary faculty beginning spring 2021-through summer 2021. (The full study runs through Spring 2022.)
Methods

Design of study

This study uses a cohort design gathering quantitative and qualitative data from students to capture their perspectives of using disruptive technology designed with gamification in a social media type platform.

The results reported today offer preliminary results of the pilot phase beginning spring 2021 through summer 2021. The longitudinal study continues through spring of 2022.
Methods

- **Survey**
  eLss survey (Electronic Learning Satisfaction Survey) designed to measure learner satisfaction of electronic learning (Ritzhaupt, 2019). We offered the instrument using bipolar adjectives with a Likert scale to measure participants satisfaction of the community building discussion board. This was sent to all students in classes for a team of two interdisciplinary faculty beginning spring 2021. All students consented (100% response rate) to date.

- **Content posts**
  Content analysis underway

- **Focus groups**
  Planned for Spring 2022
### Results: Demographics (n = 43)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Delivery</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48.8% Graduates</td>
<td>60.5% Female</td>
<td>55.8% Z generation (1995 - 2010)</td>
<td>65.1% White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>23.3% AWR 01-37 Research and Writing</td>
<td>58.1% Spring 2021</td>
<td>48.8% F2F</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.9% Sophomores</td>
<td>34.9% Male</td>
<td>20.9% Y generation (1980 - 1994)</td>
<td>11.6% Hispanic/ Latino</td>
<td>16.3% WRI 281: Technical Writing</td>
<td>41.9% Summer 6 Weeks</td>
<td>25.6% Online</td>
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<tr>
<td>14% Freshmen</td>
<td>2.3% Transgender Male</td>
<td>16.3% X generation (1960 - 1979)</td>
<td>7% Two or more races, including Hispanic</td>
<td>14.0% EME 642: Management of Change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9.3% Juniors</td>
<td>2.3% Prefer not to answer</td>
<td>7% Non-disclosed</td>
<td>4.7% Black or African American, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>11.6% AWR 201-27 Research and Writing</td>
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<td>16.3% Remote</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.7% Seniors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.3% Asian, non-Hispanic, Two or more races, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>9.3% EME 606: Design of Online Collaborative Learning</td>
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<td>9.3% Hybrid</td>
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### Results: Statistical Analysis

#### ANOVA

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>4.482</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.241</td>
<td>6.215</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>5.048</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>.361</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9.529</td>
<td>16</td>
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#### Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: Q1_5-Please select the position on the scales below that best describes your overall satisfaction of your community building/DB experience with the platform you named above. - Unclear: Clear

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple Comparisons</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
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<tr>
<td>(I) D4-Age:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dunnett T3</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X generation (1960 - 1979)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Y generation (1980 - 1994)</td>
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<td>.079</td>
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<td>Z generation (1995 - 2010)</td>
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<td>-1.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>(J) D4-Age:</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Y generation (1980 - 1994)</td>
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<td>Descriptives</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X generation (1960 - 1979)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>.772</td>
<td>.187</td>
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</table>
Q1) Overall satisfaction Yellowdig platform -
1 = Hard to learn : 5 = Easy to learn

Q1_1-Please select the position on the scales below that best describes your overall satisfaction of your com…
Q3) Overall satisfaction of your Yellowdig platform - 1 = Unnatural : 5 = Natural
Q4) Overall satisfaction Yellowdig platform -
1 = Ineffective : 5 = Effective
Q5) Overall satisfaction of Yellowdig platform -
1 = Unclear : 5 = Clear
Q6) Overall satisfaction Yellowdig platform - 1 = Unsupportive : 5 = Supportive
Results: Frustration/Gratification

Q9) Overall satisfaction Yellowdig platform -
1 = Frustrating : 5 = Gratifying
Results: A Student’s Perspectives
I feel like gamification for certain things is helpful, but maybe not for this. I'm not a fan of how this system works so far. It feels like the only thing prioritized by this participation grading method is post length, which makes me feel like just coming in here and typing "potato" about 250 times to reach the post minimum everyday until I reach 5000 points. It doesn't look at the quality of the post or relevance of comments towards the original post. It's just length and I'm not a big talker. Sometimes I have nothing to say about a topic. I look at a post and say to myself "wow, I have absolutely nothing to add", but that's a no go with Yellowdig. Yellowdig to me feels incredibly vapid and leaves me stressed to engage with every post or else my grade may suffer. I don't like Yellowdig so far. It feels like forced engagement. 4/10.
Results: Another Student’s Perspective

Yellowdig is stressing me out

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Collapse comments (6)

I had similar feelings about Yellowdig at the beginning of the summer. I initially felt as though my posts had to fit a certain mold. As if there were some sort of right or wrong answer. What eventually changed my mind about yellow dig was when I decided to stop worrying about the points or if I thought I was saying something that would be agreed with. I personally value authentic thoughts and feelings over contrived expressions and verbose language. I for one appreciate your posts and point of view. If you don't want to talk about the weekly topic, I for one would love to hear more about your job. From the stories you've shared so far in class, it sounds very interesting. I'm sure there's quite a bit to be learned from your engagement with such a diverse bunch of stakeholders.
Hi @Dr Ensmann,

@Kohl.Young posted in Management of Change: EME642.

Off Topic: Anyone can flag a post as "off-topic." So, good job trying to use a cheat to get to achieve your goal but now you know that doesn't work to well. If you focus on the purpose to construct the learning about Management of Change together, you may just get more out of the class than points.

This post was reported by @Dr Ensmann.
Results: Survey Quotes from eLss

Q2-If this community building/discussion board method was an overall favorable experience for you, please elaborate here.

“The format was very modern and fun; the gamification aspect of it made interactions more significant and required more critical-thinking than most discussion boards.”

“I believe that Yellow dig was extremely helpful for me! I really enjoyed using it as a reflection tool and having my classmates comment back or react to my post. Yellow dig really allowed me to connect better with my classmates and allowed for me to realize that I was not the only one struggling at times or the only one procrastinating. Easy collaborative efforts, the points earned are rewarding to see and encouraging.”
Q3-If the community building/discussion board method offered was an overall negative experience for you, please elaborate here.

“My way of navigating to Yellow Dig was ineffective and contributed greatly towards lower participation. To access path was as follows: MyUTampa/BlackBoard/Course (EME642)/Community Building DB/Yellow Dig Log-in. This process was tedious, yet didn't create enough of a positive dissatisfaction for me to explore solutions for easier access. Also, this process while tedious, was still fairly simple if I was using my laptop. Most of the time I'm on the go though... During this term I was working 6 days a week (8 hour shift) and commuting about 120 miles round trip. This meant that the majority of the day, my primary means of accessing Yellow Dig was via my iPhone. I don't have all of my passwords saved in my phone, so my navigation path to Yellow Dig was ridiculous. In my opinion, Yellow Dig needs an App for quick access to the platform that remembers login (authentication) information. It wouldn't even need to be a full blown app, just a shell that remembers the authentication info, Opens Yellow Dig in a browser, and automatically verifies the authentication and signs the user in. This solution could probably be programmed by a University Student in the Computer Science Department inside the space of anywhere between 1 - 3 working days at a rate of less than $25hr.”
To date, this pilot study revealed a bit of insight into our longitudinal query:

What are the effects of social presence and engagement when disruptive technology such as Yellowdig, a discussion board tool designed with social media and gamification, is purposefully incorporated into courses to improve learner self-regulation, cognition, and satisfaction?

So, why the statistical significance between generation Z and Y during the 6-week summer term?
Discussion: Lessons Learned

- Need to help understand the points system several times
- First-year students often need more prompts from the instructor
- Network graph and reports (and YD reminders) to help struggling students
- Need for continued Research
Discussion: Benefits and Challenges

**Benefits**
- Increases connectedness
- Allows students not to feel alone
- Reduces instructor workload from minutiae to to invest into facilitating learning!
- Keeps students accountable

**Challenges**
- Gamers? Those who are stuck boycotting a new system.
- Takes time for some students get “aha” moment
- Students get from it what they put into it.
Discussion: Let’s Continue it!

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References


