

In the Classroom 118

My Strategies for Seek, Sense, Share

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Stan Skrabut: Well, hello, everyone. Thanks for taking the time to listen to this podcast. It certainly means a lot. I know you could be doing other things, perhaps you are, and you're still hanging out with me, and I really do appreciate it. Let me ask you this. How do you stay abreast of changes in your field of study, or how do you learn about new ways of teaching? As many of you may know, I am a huge fan of informal learning or lifelong learning this idea of informal learning or lifelong learning has taken me further than what I was able to learn in school alone. I am someone who needs to find a way to find information, make sense of it, and use it in a meaningful way.

Because of this interest in informal learning, I keenly appreciate what Harold Jarche had written about personal knowledge management, and more specifically, his seek sense and share framework. During a national extension conference, I had an opportunity to listen to Jarche as he spoke on this topic, and Jarche explained his framework. It's basically a process to stay current in a rapidly changing world while making sense of it through personal experience. In my personal opinion, one of the most important elements is sharing what you have learned for the benefit of others. I want to unpack this idea of seek sense and share, this framework and how I do it. Let's dig in.

First of all, seek the first part of the framework is seeking, looking for information. As I come to understand the seek element, it's basically keeping my eyes and ears open for what is happening in the world. Seeking is about pulling in information that is new, naturally, the information I pull in tends to pool around areas that I'm interested in, or it's problems that I'm trying to solve for myself, or maybe problems I'm trying to solve for another person. This idea of seeking is pretty rapid process for me, I continuously scan what's happening throughout my day, and if I find an article that attracts my eye, then I will squirrel it away for basically another day.

Normally I open it, I read it, decide if it's worth keeping or not, I plug it into my systems, then I deal with it maybe at another time or maybe at that same time. It really depends on what the information is, I have a number of ways that I pull information in. As I noted, this is part of my daily routine, and I have different feeds that are coming in, and I work with each of these feeds. Most of it happens during my morning routine. As I'm settling into work, I set aside time in order to process through all these different feeds. From there, I just go on with the rest of my day.

One of the fields that I typically have is my email. My email, a lot of information comes through email, I may get an email specifically addressed to me that is information that is worthy of sharing or saving and potentially sharing later. If the

information is really noteworthy, I will probably forward it to Evernote, or in most cases, if it links to an article, I'll open that article up and save that to Diigo or do something else with it. It really depends on the information, but a lot of information comes through email. This is also a way that I will share information.

Part of my email traffic, I have a number of e-newsletters that I subscribe to. Most of these e-newsletters focus on how to better leverage social media for marketing, instructional design, instructional technology, or some other aspect of leveraging technology and education. Those are some of my prime interests, and so I subscribe to various newsletters that helped me get that information.

Paperly is a tool that I have used in the past. I don't tend to use it as much as I used to, but I had at the time a number of Twitter accounts, and so I use Paperly to filter through that information and give me things that were relevant to me. Paperly has changed their business model a little bit. I'm not as tied to Paperly. Basically, it's a newsletter that aggregates Twitter feeds, depending on the topic, I will filter it for that and it'll bring me in various newsletters that are associated with that topic.

LinkedIn and Facebook, I also go to these sites to see what's going on. They keep changing. One, they'll be more prominent than the other, and then it'll switch, and they keep changing their algorithms, some things are more important than others. I do subscribe to various groups both on LinkedIn and Facebook. With those groups, I will get messaging that is relevant to me, and I'll look at those messages, look at what they're sharing and decide if I want to do something with it.

Facebook is primarily about family and friends where LinkedIn is more professional, and that helps decide what I'm going to save or share in the future. One tool that I use a lot is called Feedly. Feedly allows me to aggregate and filter RSS feeds or basically blogs that I'm following or news sites that I'm following, I'll run through Feedly, and that way, I can have just one place where I can go in and review the feeds and find out things that are relevant to me. Those different blogs that I subscribe to those who constantly change. I'll watch them for a while, and if they're no longer relevant to me, then I'll take them off and add new ones. I'll keep changing those out. Those feeds typically are around certain interests, such as informal learning, gamification, e-learning, lots of other things.

I'm really amazed by the content that's being shared. We have a lot of giving people. I really appreciate that one of my go-to sources for information now. I have to tell you that this constantly evolves that at one time, I was more into Twitter, but now podcasts, podcasts are where I go to get a lot of information. I load up my collection of podcasts on my phone, and when I'm out driving or walking, I listen to my podcast. I will capture notes or highlight a podcast episode. If a certain podcast episode is really important, I find the information really important, I will forward that episode to my email and then deal with it later. Usually, I'll go back to the transcript and take notes from the transcript, but the first place I start is just listening to it and seeing if it's relevant to me.

Magazines and books are also another cornerstones of my lifelong learning process. There's a few professional magazines that I get, that are sent to me every month, but

books are probably the main area where I do most of my learning. I regularly purchase books, and I switch between Kindle and paper books mainly because of the note-taking. I've learned about some new tools, which are taking me back to my Kindle and being able to capture notes through my Kindle. I usually stock up on books when I go to conferences, although with the COVID, I haven't mentioned too many conferences. Now that my house is smaller, I have to be a little more selective on how I get books. I may start leveraging the library more than I used to.

I have talked about reading as being important, especially in Episodes ITC 90, which talks about a reading strategy for students, and then 106, Episode ITC 106, which talked about using or how to get students to read more. According to many of those top CEOs that I listened to, reading is part of their daily habit. I feel it keeps me more productive and more innovative. I definitely encourage others to go out and read.

Another place where I go to get information, our webinars, MOOCs, online courses, virtual meetings, those four different events help to keep me up, and learning. YouTube is another place where I go in and just catch videos on how to do various things. I find those are quite important. I'm spending more time on YouTube than other places, but that is once again part of the phase. I'm just moving through different phases to figure out what's working for me.

Online courses are also an important feed. Sometimes I teach them, sometimes there I'm just a participant, but I'm always pulling great ideas from these things. When I'm actually going through this different content, I have different strategies in order to save that information. Normally, if I find a web article I like, I'll save it to Diigo. Diigo's one of my places to save it. Now, because of a recent find, I talked about in Episode 116 talked about Readwise. Now, Readwise allows me to take information from my Kindle, the notes that I'm highlighting in my Kindle, and send them right off to Evernote.

Well, I also found there's an add-in for a tool called the Hypothesis. Hypothesis, I have spoken about in the past. It allows you to annotate blog posts, annotate PDF documents. Well, now Readwise will allow or capture that information automatically and also send it to Evernote. Now I'm really starting to use Hypothesis as I'm reading articles and capturing the essence of those articles. It's just speeding up my process to get to the next stage. Those are strategies that I'm using to go about and seeking information in order to keep me moving forward. What ways do you use to stay abreast of things in your field or learn how to be a better educator? How do you go ahead and stay current? Feel free to go to the blog post that supports this and add comments. I'd appreciate it. Or wherever you find it, add comments. That'd be great. That is the first phase, that is called seek. My second phase or the second part of the framework that Jarcho spells out is called sense. Continuing on from the seek element, these are ways that make sense of all that I collect.

I use a number of tools to collect and reflect upon what I find. Jarcho describes this process as sense-making. As Jarcho notes, "Sense-making should be a regular process where one filters new information through a personal-experience filter to develop new knowledge or reinforce what is known. Sense-making is what we put into practice." For me, the process of sense-making is necessary before I share

information with others. In my various roles as instructional technologists and martial artists, a podcaster, I believe it's my responsibility to help find and distribute new content in order to help others achieve their goals. Sense-making is a key component to this process because I have to first understand the information and know how the new knowledge will benefit others before I can share it. Sense-making may occur while I'm seeking information, or it may be a distinct function as I'm getting ready to share information, but I use a bunch of tools. Part of this is going out and-- sense-making happens in the sharing aspect of this.

One of the tools that I use in trying to make sense of everything is my blog, and it's probably the centerpiece of my sense-making. It started out as an exercise for a class I took with Dr. Michael Day and has evolved into a place where I reflect and share what I'm learning. I don't have a particular audience for this blog. It's just a place where I document my learning journey. If others can benefit, absolutely great. Another place where I use to go to make sense of the information I get, and this is really focused on my professional reading is I will take notes in a tool called Zotero. Zotero is a citation management tool. I have countless articles and books listed in Zotero with my notes. I'm able to quickly research this resource to capture new understanding on a topic. It was certainly indispensable during my dissertation writing process. Now, I'm leveraging this as I write new books.

Throughout my blog, I've written a number of posts about Zotero. Especially important at a period of time, was my interaction with Kindle and Zotero. It made a wonderful combination, but then Amazon made it more difficult. However, a new program called Readwise will automatically stream my Kindle notes to Evernote from which I will move them to Zotero. A little process is going on, but right now, Evernote's holding area and I'll take that information, put it into Zotero.

Evernote, Evernote is for me an indispensable tool. If I'm watching a webinar, attending a presentation, listening to a podcast, I will usually have Evernote ready to capture my notes. If I'm taking a note in a notebook, I can later photograph the page and save it to Evernote where I can subsequently search for it. Additionally, I have scanned previous notes captured at events into Evernote, so I can reference them. Evernote is so versatile as a tool, I cannot imagine working without it. Now that it's paired with Readwise, it's even more powerful. Readwise will automatically take my notes I collected in Kindle or using a tool called the Hypothesis and save them where I can then further decide what to do with them.

Speaking of Hypothesis, this is a new tool-- Well, not too new. I talked about it in a previous episode, but because of Readwise, I'm now using Hypothesis a lot more. It's become more useful to me. When I review a PDF document or a web-based article, I can mark it up with hypothesis. I can highlight different areas. I can make notes on it. Then, all this information, all these notes and highlights are then sent automatically to Evernote. From there, I process them further.

Diigo has also been a centerpiece of my sense-making collection strategy. If I'm capturing a web-based resource, I will typically save it to Diigo. Currently, I have over 20,000 articles saved to Diigo and they're all tagged for easy retrieval. I'm regularly referencing my collection as I write blog posts. When I'm writing a blog post or

creating a podcast episode or making a presentation, I'll have Diigo. I'll pull Diigo up, look at what I've already collected and see how those articles fit together. If someone asks for references on a topic, I will generally give them a Diigo tag linked to their topic and all these different resources that I've collected and vetted, they'll have at their fingertips, just like I have at my fingertips.

Another way that I make sense of things is just when I create presentations. This is very much a sense-making process. To build a presentation, I have to organize the material in a way that makes sense to me and others. Often, when working through the process of building a presentation, I will develop some new insight into the problem I'm addressing, which I'm always pleased when I could walk away and have learned something new. I share my presentations on SlideShare for the benefit of others. Podcasting is another area. This is a tool that I use to share my learning adventures.

Each week, I go learn new things as I'm listening to other podcasts and everything that I'm reading. I pull together an episode to share what I've come to understand at the moment on that topic. If you look back to episode 116, I just tapped into Readwise. Well, it's been a couple of weeks later, and I'm so much further ahead with that product now and really excited. It's a constantly evolving process. There's things that I was using extensively at one time, and now I've backed off of those, or I have found a new way to use them. It's always learning. I'm always trying to learn and make sense of that and then share it out with others.

Book writing. That is also something new. I have one new book. I have one book under my belt, I'm working on another, and I have some other projects in the wings. The book I'm currently writing is *Evernote for College Students*. The entire process has been a learning experience and it's causing me to explore my understanding of Evernote in much more depth. This is definitely a sense-making activity and I'm finding it quite rewarding. As far as the other projects in the wings, stay tuned, I'll let you know. That's how I go about trying to make sense of this rapidly changing world. How do you go ahead and make sense of it in your case? Once again, let me know in the notes.

The last part of seek, sense, and share is the share aspect. While I found the other two elements critical to this framework, I'm especially a fan of the share element. Sharing is an opportunity to add to the world knowledge base with your interpretation of what you have learned. Sharing helps others develop with diffusion of lessons learned and ideas. The seek and sense elements of the framework focus on individual development. However, the share element not only helps with individual development, but also organization and community development.

Learning is all about dialogues, dialogue with the content, dialogue with others. By sharing content, you open a door to dialogue and learning with those you network with. Over time, others actually begin to better understand you as an individual. Through what you share, they come to learn about your likes, your dislikes, your interests, your motivations, and then they're able to in turn, share relevant content with you.

At that National Extension Conference as Jarcho talked about, sharing information back out to the world. He cautioned that we had a responsibility to add value to what we shared. Don't share for the sake of sharing. Help to make a difference by helping others connect the dots. My personal sharing tools are rather limited. I don't go always the extra step to add value as I should, although I keep improving on this. I use sharing as an opportunity to work out loud. This was also discussed at length by Jarcho and Hart at this National Extension Conference. I'm a huge fan of working out loud. I talked about it also in a previous episode.

Here's the tools that I primarily use for sharing the information I had. First one is blog. Blog is my number one tool for sharing what I've learned. As I said, it's started out as a school project, but has developed as a means for documenting my learning journey. I use this blog as a way to share new ideas on how to use technology in supportive learning or teaching a new principal or even an old principal, but that is working quite well and get it out to folks that are not aware of it. Really, I have used the blog to answer questions that others have asked of me. I've had various blogs in support of work, and this is how I've used them. It's the idea of working out loud. As I mentioned, I podcast about this and you can find that in episode ITC 63. Working out loud really helps others because it addresses the problem that they have. If you can do that, you're really adding value.

When I create a blog post, it will automatically feed out to Twitter and Facebook and Tumblr and LinkedIn. I do this in order to save time, but also to spread the word as far and wide as possible. That's one of the ways that I do it. Email, naturally email is a way to share information. I don't use email extensively. When I do, I usually share one of my blog posts or in other cases, I'll share a specific article with an individual or a small group of people that I believe applies to them. This is a strategy I picked up from Keith Ferrazzi's book, *Never Eat Alone*. I recommend the book.

Most recently, I have been using podcast, this podcast in particular in the classroom. It's a mechanism that I share my learning journey, but also, I'm trying to research ideas and specific topics that will help faculty and other instructional technologists. I build my podcast using a tool called the Udacity and then from my Udacity, I share it on a site called Libsyn. Then it goes out to my blogs and all the other platforms where I want to share things.

YouTube is another place where I share things. If I want to show how to do something, I will create a video and I will put it on YouTube. YouTube is the platform of my choice. Typically, I will create the video either with Camtasia or Zoom, and then go ahead and share it. Currently, my channel has about 500 videos arranged into various playlists, and some of the playlists contain videos created by others. There's no reason that you don't want to reinvent the wheel. I will often take the videos and embed them back into the blog posts, get as much traffic as possible. Right now, I'm well over 600,000 views on those 500 videos, so I'm feeling pretty good about it.

I have used Twitter. I share a lot of Twitter, a lot of it's automatically fed, so when I make a blog post, when I put a new podcast episode out, it automatically goes to Twitter. In some cases, I will share what's on my mind or share an article and send it

through Twitter with my thoughts. Evernote, every so often I will share notes that I've taken, my raw notes. I will share from Evernote, put them maybe into a blog or something like that, but not that often.

Pinterest is another place where I will share things that I have created through the blog, through the podcasts, any book reviews that I do, they will always make it out to Pinterest and I share there. Then finally, if I'm creating a presentation, then I will share it to SlideShare. SlideShare is where I house all my presentations. Right now, I am working on a project to take all these podcasts episodes and eventually turn them into slideshows and videos and get them out there both on YouTube and SlideShare. We'll see where that goes.

Well, that is how I implement the seek, sense and share framework. It is a way that keeps me tapped into getting new ideas, trying to make some sort of sense out of them, but more importantly, sharing back out where others can benefit. So far, it's worked for me. This is what I try to do. Hopefully, others are benefiting from my learning journey. As it was noted, leave a trace, right? Work out loud, leave something for others. Well, that is it. That is my little story on seek, sense and share, but before I let you go, here is a quick plug for my book.