

# Reach

- \* Building Communities and Networks for Professional Development
  - \* by Jeff Utecht - Chapters 1 & 2 available free at <http://jeffutecht.com/reach>
  - \* © 2010 by Jeff Utrecht, Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0: San Francisco, CA
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- For more go to DrDougGreen.Com      If you like this summary, buy the book



# The Author - The Book

\* Jeff Utecht is an international educator and technology consultant. He has taught in the U.S., Saudi Arabia, China, and is a Technology & Learning Coordinator at the International School in Bangkok Thailand. His global experience is key to understanding how the Internet is changing education. He has extensive experience teaching graduate classes online. He also has a learning disability, so this book an amazing accomplishment. It will help educators gain a sound understanding of topics like Web 2.0, Communities and Networks, RSS feeds, Blogs, Wikis, Twitter, Facebook, Skype, and Google Buzz. It is a great place to start for anyone who wants to join the growing community of tech savvy educators.

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# What is Web 2.0

- \* Unlike the first World Wide Web, today's version allows users to engage with information and people. Web 1.0 was a one-way information machine. Web 2.0 allows for conversations and for all users to become producers of content. As "prosumers" we create content as we consume. It also allows for the formation of online communities that stretch around the world. Some countries that never had telephone lines are now part of online activity. Businesses are looking for people who can learn, unlearn, and relearn quickly. A degree may be less important than communication and learning skills. Educators who join online communities can pass the knowledge and power of the network on to their students.

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# Really Simple Syndication-RSS

- \* Utecht explains how to go about setting up an RSS reader in order to access updates as they are made to websites of interest. This is how you can control the information that finds you. The difference here is that you don't have to join anything like FaceBook or Twitter to use this. He then shows how to do this in a step by step manner using Goole Reader, which is popular and free. You can also go to Jeff's website for this book to access videos and other resources to help you understand this concept better. [jeffutecht.com/reach](http://jeffutecht.com/reach)

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# Building Your Network

- \* Jeff gives fair warning that setting up your network is the easy part and that making it work for you takes effort and time. If you don't take time to reach out and learn from others, you're bound for failure. Much like a classroom discussion, you must be an active member to get the most out of the content being shared. You must also be willing to give. If everyone is a lurker, no information will be shared. Being active in a community is where many educators feel overwhelmed. Educators have enough to do managing their own classrooms so it isn't unusual for some to get stuck and give up. The trick is to learn to use your network in those 5 to 10 minute blocks as you find them, and to make your network more rewarding than the school faculty room.

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# Promote Yourself as a Brand

- \* In order to grow your network, you need to be recognized. That means you need to engage in self-promotion to some degree. This may feel uncomfortable for some educators. Think of yourself as a brand that you are trying to build. Everything you do either adds or detracts from your brand so be careful. You should have an “avatar,” which is a small icon that represents you and your brand. It can be a small picture, a character, or almost any image. You know you have a network when you are using the collective intelligence of others to find information and collaborate on projects. The best reason to have a network is to help you in your job. This should be the first step. Jeff gives lots of useful examples.

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# Tools to Get Started

- \* Blogs: Jeff shows how easy it is to set up your own weblog where you can post your own content. He notes that the hard part is attracting a steady stream of readers and those that leave comments. He suggests that you schedule time in your work day to post content to your blog and comment on other blogs.
- \* Wikis: Think of a wiki as a blog that can be edited by anyone. Check out [wiki.utechtips.com](http://wiki.utechtips.com) for an example.
- \* Ning.Com: A Ning site is more complex than a blog. Think of one as your own private Facebook complete with forums, groups, picture upload, video sharing, and personal pages.

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# Network Tool Twitter

- \* Twitter: When you sign up for Twitter, you can choose who you follow and people can decide if you are worth following. Utrecht has 5,000+ followers thanks to the quality of the tweets he sends out and the information on his blog. He feels that a network of 50 followers has great potential and gives ideas for building followers. Most useful tweets contain links to sites with information that includes text, pictures, and perhaps videos. You can also send out requests to your followers for things you are looking for. If you ask your followers to retweet your message, it can be seen by thousands in no time.

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# Network Tool - Facebook

- \* Unlike Twitter where you can follow people who don't follow you, Facebook requires two people to agree to be "friends." You can control who sees your stuff and you can create Fan Pages for stuff you want to be available to anyone. This might be something a teacher would do to allow students to connect without giving them full "friend" status. Jeff provides good advice to Facebook users and access to his Facebook fan page. He also discusses Facebook groups. He suggests that you teach students that it is ok to say no to someone who wants to be your friend, (Doug: especially if you don't know them.)

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# Network Tool - Skype

- \* Skype is the free international video telephone and chat service with more than 500 million users worldwide. While Skype to Skype calls are free, Skype to landlines or cellphones are inexpensive. You can use Skype to record podcasts that you can post. Educators should think about connecting to experts or classrooms around the world. Unlike Facebook (friends) and Twitter (followers) that are broadcasting tools, Skype is the most private of networking tools as it is about personal, real-time, connections. It only allows one-to-one or small group connections at a given time. Jeff includes a scenario as to how an educator can use Skype. He also includes information on Goggle Buzz.

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# Putting It All Together

\* Jeff explains that he wrote this book using Google Docs. This means that the application and the files are stored on a Google server somewhere. This lets you get at your files from any computer as your files are stored in Google's "cloud." He goes on to explain that you can connect your Facebook and Twitter accounts to each other. You can also access anything in the cloud on a mobile smart phone and you can consider smaller cheaper computers called netbooks that are designed to access the cloud and have very little storage.

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# Finding a Balance

- \* Building your personal learning network (PLN) will take time and usually means altering what you've done in the past. You will need to immerse yourself in order to learn what you need to know. You must also evaluate your network in order to find out what is important for you. Ideally, you will find a balance between your day job, access to your PLN, and your family life. Don't be afraid to take a break. Your network will be there when you return.
- \* Now its time to go to Jeff's site and download this book. If you wish to share with others please ask him about the cost.
- \* <http://jeffutecht.com/reach>

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