

Unit 5 Assignment: Creating Your Personal Learning Network (PLN)

Student Name: Glen Buchanan

Course: LDTC 600, Learning Theories

Date: June 16, 2026

Part I: Creating Your Personal Learning Network (PLN)

1. Research and Selection

To build my PLN I searched across professional organizations, communities, and individual practitioners that work where instructional design meets AI, which is where my own work sits. I reviewed five distinct connections before choosing two to focus on:

1. **IEEE ICICLE (Industry Consortium on Learning Engineering):** a professional body working to define learning engineering as a discipline. <https://www.ieeeicicle.org/>
2. **The Learning Guild:** a practitioner community for learning and development, known for the DevLearn conference and its research reports. <https://www.learningguild.com>
3. **Association for Talent Development (ATD):** a large professional organization for workplace learning and talent development. <https://www.td.org>
4. **Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT):** a research-focused organization for educational technology and design. <https://www.aect.org>
5. **Connie Malamed, The eLearning Coach:** a thought leader who connects cognitive science and visual design to instructional practice. <https://thelearningcoach.com>

From these five I selected the two that best fit where I want to take my career: building evidence-grounded AI training for working adults.

Entity 1

Name: IEEE ICICLE (Industry Consortium on Learning Engineering)

Link: <https://www.ieeeicicle.org/>

Description: ICICLE is a volunteer professional organization working to establish learning engineering as a profession and an academic discipline, under the IEEE Standards Association. It matters to me because my goal is to design AI-related training on evidence, not opinion. ICICLE

brings together people from industry, research, and academia who treat learning design as an engineering problem, with data and iteration at the center. That is the exact frame I am building my own courses on, and it connects directly to my goal of moving from instructional design into learning engineering with an AI focus.

Entity 2

Name: The Learning Guild

Link: <https://www.learningguild.com>

Description: The Learning Guild is a practitioner community for learning and development professionals. It runs the DevLearn and Learning Solutions conferences and publishes practical research, including recent work on AI in L&D. It is valuable to my PLN because it sits closer to day-to-day production than an academic body does. It shows me what tools and methods working designers are actually using right now, which keeps my own designs current and supports my goal of shipping real, usable AI training rather than theory.

2. Analysis of Benefits

Together these two connections cover both ends of my work, the discipline and the practice.

Resources. ICICLE gives me access to working groups, a competency framework for learning engineering, and a community defining the field's standards. The Learning Guild gives me practical playbooks, conference sessions, and research reports I can apply to a course the same week I read them. One feeds my thinking; the other feeds my production.

Mentorship. Both offer a path to people ahead of me. ICICLE's special interest groups and events let me learn from researchers and senior practitioners who are defining learning engineering. The Learning Guild's online community and conferences put me in contact with designers solving the same problems I am, which is a more peer-level form of guidance. Between the two I get both upward and lateral mentorship.

Current trends. This is the strongest benefit for an AI-focused designer, because the field moves monthly. The Learning Guild's reports and conference tracks surface new AI tools and methods quickly. ICICLE keeps me grounded in what the evidence says about whether those methods actually help people learn. The pairing protects me from chasing hype, because I get the new ideas and the research check inside the same network.

Engagement vision. I will engage with each connection differently. With ICICLE I will join a special interest group that fits my work, follow its events, and contribute questions about

evidence-based design for AI training, learning directly from the researchers and senior practitioners defining the field. With The Learning Guild I will take part in its online community threads and conference discussions, share the corpus-grounded design approach I use in my own courses, and ask for feedback on specific design decisions. One connection is where I learn the discipline's standards; the other is where I test my practice against working peers.

Credibility. ICICLE operates under the IEEE Standards Association, a credible standards-driven home. The Learning Guild has run respected industry conferences and research for more than twenty years. Both are established, named organizations rather than anonymous sources, which is the first test I apply to anything I add to my network.

Part II: Professional Learning Plan

1. Future Goals

My long-term goal is to work as a learning engineer who builds AI-readiness training grounded in evidence. My PLN supports that in two ways. ICICLE keeps me connected to the discipline I am trying to enter, so I learn its standards and language and meet the people already doing the work. The Learning Guild keeps my production skills current, so the courses I ship reflect current practice. Over time these connections give me both the credibility of the field and the practical skill to deliver in it. They turn a solo career goal into something I am pursuing alongside a community.

2. Continuous Learning Strategies: Engagement Plan

I do not plan to treat my PLN as something I only read from. My plan is to contribute as well as consume.

- **Participate in discussions.** I will join one ICICLE special interest group and take part in The Learning Guild's community threads, starting with questions about evidence-based design for AI training.
- **Share resources.** I will share the corpus-grounded design approach I use in my own courses, including how I keep content tied to sources. Sharing what I am building is how I earn a place in the network.
- **Contribute insights.** When I solve a real design problem, such as how to teach a procedural security task to a nervous beginner, I will write it up briefly and post it.
- **Seek feedback.** I will post design decisions and drafts and ask specific questions rather than general ones, because specific questions get useful answers.

3. Continuous Learning Strategies: Leveraging Your PLN for Updates

To stay current without drowning, I will curate rather than collect.

- I will keep a short, regular rhythm: a weekly scan of The Learning Guild's new posts and reports, plus ICICLE's events and group activity.
- I will save only what is relevant to a current project into one knowledge base I keep, instead of bookmarking everything.
- I will judge credibility before I act on anything. My test is source, evidence, and recency. Is the source a named and accountable person or organization, does the claim point to evidence rather than opinion, and is it recent enough to still be true in a field that changes fast. ICICLE's research grounding helps me apply this test, because it models the difference between a claim that is popular and a claim that is supported.

4. Reflection

Building this PLN clarified something for me. Connectivism, as Siemens (2005) described it, treats learning as the ability to form and maintain connections across people and sources, not just to hold knowledge in your own head. Downes (2006) added that the value of a network grows with the diversity of its nodes. A PLN is how I put that idea into practice. In a field like AI-related instructional design, no one can stay current alone, because the tools and the evidence both change too quickly. A network is not a convenience here; it is the only realistic way to stay capable over time. The pairing I chose, one discipline-focused and one practice-focused, is my attempt to build a network diverse enough to keep me both grounded and current. The real value is adaptability. When the field shifts again, my network shifts with it, and I learn the next thing through the same connections instead of starting over.

5. References

Downes, S. (2006). *Learning networks and connective knowledge* [ITForum Paper No. 92]. Instructional Technology Forum, University of Georgia. <https://www.downes.ca/post/36031>

Siemens, G. (2005). Connectivism: A learning theory for the digital age. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning*, 2(1), 3-10. http://www.itdl.org/Journal/Jan_05/article01.htm

Note on AI use. I used an AI assistant as a thought partner to brainstorm candidate organizations and to pressure-test the structure of this plan. The selections, analysis, reflection, and wording

are my own and reflect my professional goals. This follows the course policy on using AI to generate and refine ideas rather than to produce the work.