

The added value of using Solid personal data pods in a lifelong learning context

Short abstract of a talk at the BDSA Day, Brussels, May 27nd 2024

In this session we explored how Solid can play an important role in an ecosystem of education, training, and learning. We kicked-off by presenting the different concepts and paradigm shifts for the Web behind Solid technology (inspired by <https://ruben.verborgh.org/blog/2017/12/20/paradigm-shifts-for-the-decentralized-web/>). Covering the story of Solid from why we must break down data silos, to how it can push innovation and allow trusted data re-use. Explaining the inner working of Solid Pods and its Web protocols revealed several opportunities to a consortium of education-technology professionals. We linked back to SolidLab research on Solid affordances for companies, our audience for the day. Such affordances make tangible what the Solid protocol brings to the table as added value to companies, answering the question “What’s in Solid for me?”

In a lifelong learning context, currently organizations that operate in this sector face similar issues of (often undeliberate) siloed data. Think of developers of assessment tools, learning material, school management systems, employee training and even organizations in which you build up certain soft skills experience like a chess club, sports club, theater... In case data from one organizations is relevant to another, there is really no way to do this but e-mail or call contacts within these organizations.

Shining light on the lifelong learning context, we therefore concluded the major added value for Solid is the centralization around the person, instead of around organizations. Think of an employer who would like to verify you were indeed the president of the chess club, giving you some track record in soft skills in management and leadership. Solid provides a way to centralize all this data, that is about the person, around the person, in their pod. Additionally, becoming an intermediary “mailman” for these organizations (requesting a PDF document at one organization, sometimes even in person, and delivering it to the next one) becomes a thing of the past. Solid empowers end-users to simply share access to their (validated) skills data, turning data subjects into skilled people.

In a next session of the data sharing in education, training, and learning we will dive deeper into the business model specifics of data sharing. We will explore how the general value propositions, different business models for different roles, and an ever-evolving landscape of data sharing initiatives translate into the lifelong learning context. Stay tuned for more...

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