
MARKETING AND COLLABORATING WITH WEB 2.0

BLOGS, WIKIS, PODCASTS, FEEDS AND OTHER PHENOMENA OF THE RELATIONAL WEB



THE CURRENT WEB COLLABORATION and interaction technologies, often referred to under the umbrella term Web 2.0, can be applied by organizations both internally and externally to transformative effects. Organizations and businesses are grappling with learning the “what” of these tools and applications with curious names, but to harness their power it’s equally important to know the “how” of Web 2.0 and the interactive dynamics it promotes.

WEB 2.0 COLLABORATION: UNLEASHING TACIT KNOWLEDGE VALUE

An *Economist* 2006 special profile entitled “The Battle for Brainpower” noted that intangible assets now account more than half the market capitalization of U.S. public companies, and according to an Accenture study, that is a shift up from 20% in 1980 to 70% in 2006. Those intangible assets reside predominantly in the domain of tacit interactions or transactions. With this shift, a primary talent for knowledge workers becomes the ability to solve complex problems or invent new solutions. Most significantly, much tacit knowledge resides in

the heads of knowledge workers, and becomes valuable primarily through interactions with others working on common problems.

“The more workers interact with each other often, the more likely they are to solve the problems of complexity of the modern organization.”

ECONOMIST, JANUARY 2006
COLLABORATION AND THE HIGH
PERFORMANCE WORKPLACE

Within companies or organizations, Web 2.0 technologies are referred to as Enterprise 2.0 as they are often integrated into corporate information systems. Several key characteristics of Enterprise 2.0 include:

- **Making information exchange among knowledge workers more widely available.**

A home page on a team or group wiki, for instance, will highlight all recent interactions and updates for everyone to see and allow team members to collectively edit and add to content.

- **Allowing for better persistence and therefore re-use of information.** E-mail chains often create disjoint interactions and bury important business thought. Group blogs promotes consistent discussion and commentary thread, and allows collectively developed content to be aggregated and applied to a project or set of problems.
- **Catalyzing broader ideation and knowledge transfer, especially at the beginning of project team work.** Wikis and mind mapping tools can facilitate more conversational and visual interactions when teams are in the start up “ideation” phase and exchanging basic domain expertise.
- **Accelerating project processes.** Syndication tools (feeds) can deliver information and updates on projects to team members. Wikis can eliminate cumbersome document exchange through emails.
- **Characterizing and capturing unstructured information in early stages of project conception.** Formal project and content management applications can be needed, but Web 2.0 tools can keep dialogues and discussions more dynamic, especially in early project stages.

MARKETING 2.0: SOCIAL MEDIA, PULL MODEL, COMMUNITIES, AND USER GENERATED CONTENT

Companies are no longer able to be the “single source” of information, pushing one-way toward the marketplace. In the era of the relational web, organizations are now part of a network, where their various constituencies and stakeholders (customers, partners, press, investors, competitors, etc) are networked with one another as well as with the organization. Internet interaction used to be focused on receiving information from a web site or passively researching and browsing.

In the relational or participatory web ecosystem, communication becomes conversational, two-way, and person-to-person. Social media tools and mechanisms such as blogs, vlogs, feeds are used to keep things conversational. As this two-way world has evolved and democratized the Web those organizations that encourage and enable participation find their web destinations increasingly attractive to their constituencies. While this is a challenge to pre-Web 2.0 norms of information creation and delivery, there are key values to this Marketing 2.0 era.

PULL AND PARTICIPATION

Individuals can now identify and receive information that they are interested in through the various subscription and syndication mechanisms of the web via feed services.

The benefit to companies is that they can tailor and “narrowcast” their messaging to more targeted audiences or groups that have self-selected to receive information.

ONLINE COMMUNITIES AND FORUMS:

TAPPING THE RELATIONAL ECOSYSTEM

The value of tacit knowledge applies to the broader external ecosystem as well. Online forums provide a virtual, interactive space where people can connect, engage and share information. While participants don’t have a formal relationship with a company, they are nonetheless motivated to participate by an interest in gaining information and knowledge, becoming a member of a community of interest, creating a sense of belonging, and gaining a sense of reputation as their expertise and authority is recognized.

Organization and businesses, in turn, can benefit from their customers being advocates for their brand and offerings, lower their cost of support, as customers may answer questions for one another, and as participants create valuable content and provide on-the-ground insight into products and services.

In the context of online communities, members collaborate with each other often more than they interact with the company, yet often result in providing the organization with a group of enthusiasts and evangelists who create valuable content (UGC or User Generated Content) and advocacy.

Community and forum members also provide a wider set of “eyeballs” on the market place. Each community member can themselves be highly networked individuals who can provide insight on new trends, and market or competitive research.

While organizations may worry that supported online forums may foster a public platform for negative comments, companies now recognize that individuals now have the capability to generate and socialize both positive and negative comments around the web. Online communities provide a venue for companies to readily assess and respond to issues, though often other community members will often take up and resolve issues without active company engagement.

Finally, consumers of Web 2.0 content are increasingly savvy about wanting information delivered in a variety of consumable and portable social media formats; vlogs, blogs, video, podcasts, forums and discussion groups. Tools and online services to create and distribute content are cheap and accessible to the average user of the Internet. Members of a company’s “relational Web 2.0 ecosystem” are also able to create User Generated Content (UGC) in Web 2.0 formats and channels as well. Companies must accommodate a range of content delivery models to engage and show at least a similar level of sophistication.