



Volume XI: Issue VII

Web 2.0 is Branding 2.0

How businesses can leverage web technologies to increase brand preference

What is Web 2.0?

The concept of "Web 2.0" began with a conference brainstorming session between Tim O'Reilly and MediaLive International back in the early part of 2004. The group noted that despite the "crash", the web was actually becoming more important than ever. The group discussed what they felt were the core competencies of Web 2.0 companies and identified various sites and technologies that exemplified this new version of the web. Some examples of Web 2.0 considered were:

Sites	Technologies
· Ebay.com	· AJAX
· Amazon.com	· WebServices
· WikiPedia.org	· Blogs/Vlogs/Boards
	· Wikis

**Note to the reader: We assume that you are familiar with these sites and technologies, so we will not define them at this time. In the event that you are not familiar with them, check out WikiPedia.org (a fine example of Web 2.0 execution) for more detail.*

Brand Connections

Since the 2004 conference there has been much debate about what Web 2.0 really is, as seen by the millions of references cited in Google (also a Web 2.0 company) on the subject. Many argue that Web 2.0 is just a number—a way to track the progress of internet technology, much like the way we track software progression. Others feel it is more than that.

What we believe is going on is Branding 2.0. InformationWeek's September 18, 2006 article said it well stating, "Web 2.0 is all the websites out there that get their value from the actions of users." While it's true that many sites get value out of their users, if you take this a step further and look at emerging brand-building activities such as co-creation then the connection and value Web 2.0 brings to branding becomes clearer (and more exciting). For brand owners, building brand preference and brand loyalty is an increasingly important and equally challenging task. The fast food mindset, proliferation of media channels and "anywhere, anytime" content, is making it more and more difficult to establish meaningful connections between brands and consumers. The dichotomy is that while the Web plays a big role in this distraction, it also plays a large role in facilitating connections with a brand at a whole new level.

One of the core tenets of Web 2.0 is collaboration. Web technologies like blogs, boards, wikis, social networks and social media create real connections with boundless opportunities for knowledge share and collective thinking. This interplay brings a whole new level of brand-building opportunity.

In Rocketboom's August 30, 2006 daily videoblog, Joanne Colan interviewed blogger Steve Rubel from Edelman PR, during which Rubel spoke about the new Web technologies enabling new levels of collaboration and co-creation. He explains that it's an evolution of brand interaction where companies don't view consumers as consumers but, rather, as individuals who want to have a say and play a role in how products are marketed (and even created). Web 2.0 is enabling consumers to empower themselves through technology.

Business Connections

In the B2B space, companies often struggle to support and create fresh content to satisfy their users and complain that users find it hard to get information from their site. Yet, companies often don't know what the users are looking for. While it's true that initially customers and prospects look to understand a company's offering, we argue that in the long term they seek information they can use (tips, techniques and insights) to help them accomplish a goal or complete a task. Web 2.0 technologies and practices provide a means for companies to support the real needs of their users while alleviating some of the burden that comes with content creation. RSS feeds allow companies to dynamically pull relevant content from outside sources while blogs, boards and wikis allow users to publish useful and usable content for other users to leverage and expand upon. All the while Web 2.0 increases the level and quality of interaction between the company/brand and its customer.

B2B consumers are B2C consumers, and more and more they are openly sharing their wants and needs, as well as motivations, online. However, senior executives are often unsure of the value of this information and how to proceed. By leveraging blogs and boards and other emerging web technologies, businesses can become a part of, or create, a social community around their offering—a community comprised of their customers and employees. The communication that ensues can be used to drive new product innovations and provide real, almost real-time, insight into customer perceptions and preferences. Most importantly, the interaction will

deepen the customer's connection to, and preference for, the brand.

Trusting users as co-developers and harnessing collective intelligence is the key business takeaway of Web 2.0 or, rather, Branding 2.0.

The reach of consumer referral and social networking, combined with the potential of collaboration and co-creation, puts power in the hands of the consumer and provides insight that can shape the brand. Companies that listen to and engage directly in the discussions will create compelling brands, products and messages that connect and resonate with their customers at a much deeper level.

Dave Cannon is Movéo's Director of Interactive Services. He works with clients to define web strategies that integrate Web 2.0 technologies and practices to leverage the power of their userbase.

If you would like to learn more about how Movéo can help you "get there" please call 630-570-4800 or visit us online at www.moveo.com

Did you know?

Did you know that prior to the proliferation of Web 2.0 practices and the ensuing debate about its definition, Movéo's Lead Application Developer, Randy Parker, created one of the earlier community-driven websites? In June of 2002 OurCampaigns.com was created as a "collaborative political resource" to give people with penchant for politics a forum to share, reference and debate just about anything political. The site today, sourced by multiple national news organizations, boasts over 2,000 registered users who have generated over a million pages of content creating the most comprehensive set of current and historical election data available online.

Links:

- Steve Rubel's Blog: www.micropersuasion.com
- Rocketboom: <http://www.rocketboom.org>
- WikiPedia: <http://www.wikipedia.org>
- Our Campaigns: <http://www.ourcampaigns.com>



About Movéo Working in collaborative partnership, Movéo helps its clients build extraordinary B2B brands. The agency's integrated services—research, brand strategy and marketing communications—have helped global leaders such as Siemens, Motorola, US Robotics and CareerBuilder align their brands with their overall business strategy to produce bottom-line results. For more information on Movéo visit www.moveo.com/b2b

