

# Technology Trends: Online Community in a Web 2.0 World

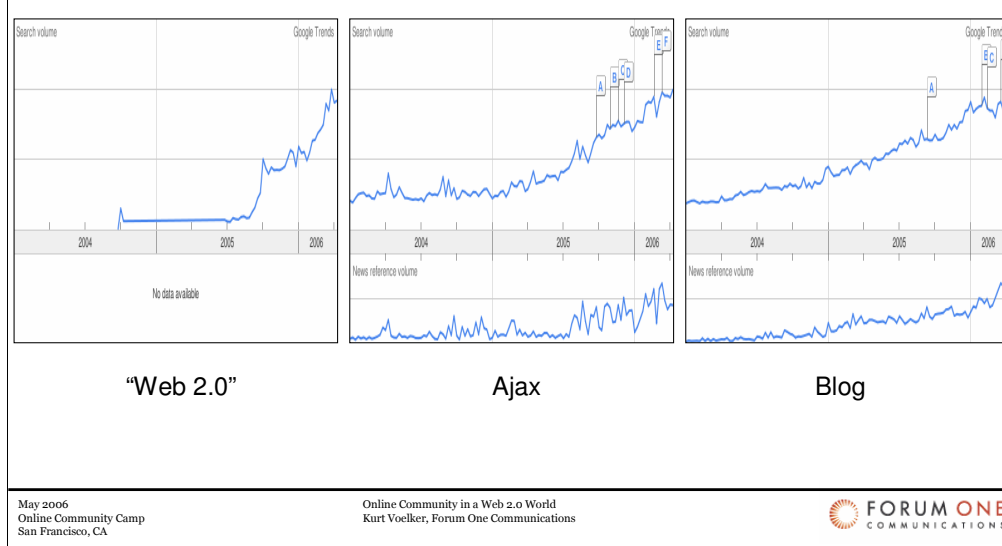
Kurt Voelker  
Online Community Camp  
May 2006

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San Francisco, CA

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# It's a Web 2.0 World...



Unless you've been hiding under a rock, you know that "Web 2.0" is the dominate meme in the internet space today. And if you read the news, you'd think that a new technology age is upon us. But its not new, it is really a re-affirmation of what you and I (the online community community) have known all along – that conversations matter, that user participation baked into your web site or software strengthens it. We've basically discovered what we've known since the ClueTrain...

# The web IS the community.

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That really, the web IS the community. Not in the traditional “that’s where the people are” sense, but in a Scott McNeally, the network is the computer sense. The network itself, the medium and all of its interconnectedness collectively - this is our community platform. And the ‘online communities’ we build can and should run well beyond the 800 x 600 borders of you destination web site. Online communities are everywhere the network runs – which, increasingly, is everywhere.

# So what?

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What does this have to do with Web 2.0? The operating principles and technology enablers that are fueling this renewed interest in all things internet are completely aligned with this notion. So today, I want us to explore how these “2.0” principles and technologies are making their presence felt in online community – and hear your thoughts on where the future is taking us.

These ideas and technologies matter (the ideas more so than the technology, frankly) because they are about establishing and retaining the attention, trust, and participation of your users. And who isn't that important for? If you are ignoring the core principles behind Web 2.0, you are not properly leveraging the medium through which you are engaged with your users.

Web 2.0 is a philosophy – it's all the things we've known about online community from the Cluetrain days:

- The Web as a Platform – Community beyond the edge of your browser (itzle, co-comment, bookmarklets, and extensions)
- The Network Effect – User participation as value creator
- Conversations in human voices matter – Stories still anchor communities
- The Long Tail – We can efficiently service millions of vibrant communities... of 4 people each
- The Edge – Participate from where you are, ride the aggregators coat-tails

And a set of Technologies that have been around for awhile as well:

- AJAX
- Micro content - XML/RSS
- HTTP APIs – SOAP & REST

# The Dead Horse – What is Web 2.0?

## PRINCIPLES

- **The Edge:** My life is digital. My life is portable.
- **The Web as Platform:** Forget 800x600
- **The Network Effect:** Value amplified
- **The Long Tail:** Millions of mini-markets

## ENABLERS

- Micro-content & Syndication
- AJAX
- Simple SOA (HTTP APIs, REST & SOAP)

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I really did not set out to put together yet another presentation on “What is Web 2.0”, but we need to establish the principles before diving into their impact on online community.

Web 2.0 is a philosophy – a set of ideas; and a few simple technologies (not new) that enable the ideas.

The ideas, I feel, are more of a confirmation of – it’s all the things we’ve known about online community from the Cluetrain days:

- The Web as a Platform – Community beyond the edge of your browser (itzle, co-comment, bookmarklets, and extensions)
- The Network Effect – User participation as value creator
- Conversations in human voices matter – Stories still anchor communities
- The Long Tail – We can effeciently service millions of vibrant communities... of 4 people each
- The Edge – My Profile is Portable Participate from where you are, ride the aggregators coat-tails

And a set of Technologies that have been around for awhile as well:

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DW: Drop the enablers section? Or make a separate slide after you go thru the principles

The Edge:

## My Profile is Portable

[www.thevoelkers.info/feed/](http://www.thevoelkers.info/feed/)

[www.flickr.com/photos/thevoelkers/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/thevoelkers/)

[del.icio.us/rss/kvoelker](http://del.icio.us/rss/kvoelker)

[ws.audioscrobbler.com/1.0/user/kvoelker/recenttracks.rss](http://ws.audioscrobbler.com/1.0/user/kvoelker/recenttracks.rss)

[www.youtube.com/rss/user/kvoelker/videos.rss](http://www.youtube.com/rss/user/kvoelker/videos.rss)

[www.icalx.com/public/kvoelker/kvoelker.ics](http://www.icalx.com/public/kvoelker/kvoelker.ics)

[www.bloglines.com/public/kvoelker/export.xml](http://www.bloglines.com/public/kvoelker/export.xml)

*Users are telling their  
digital story all over the  
web – don't make them  
repeat themselves.*

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COMMUNICATIONS

blog feeds, amazon wishlists, flickr streams, bookmarks, music playlists – I am a walking producer of digital content. Increasingly, we are all feeders. As

Aggregate your user's personal feeds to add richness to your community – *and make sure your community adds to the digital portfolio.*

The Technology Making it possible: RSS

The Web as Platform:

# Forget 800 x 600 and your domain name.

Browser extensions, desktop widgets, bookmarklets, syndication, and SMS let your community exist well beyond the boundaries of your 'web pages'

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Examples:

- Itzle
- Co-Comment
- MoSoSo

The Network Effect:

# Value Amplified

User participation 'stats' + some  
computing = amplified user value.  
Extract info from participation and use  
it!

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Examples:

- Flickr interestingness
- Boxxet.com's seeded "Box Sets"
- TechMeme
- New York Times Redesign

Technology

DW: does the google search trend you use count in here?

**The Long Tail:**

## Support vibrant communities... of tiny numbers.

Unlimited shelf space lets you efficiently serve a community of four as effectively as a community of millions. And in real life, it's the communities of small communities that make things interesting – the strength of weak bonds.

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Not at all interests are distributed evenly – but the new web lets you support even the smallest group in meaningful ways – *and lets you connect that group to other related areas of interest. Your tiny interest group is discoverable – and probably not as tiny as you think.*

### Examples:

- iTunes: who listens to that podcast anyway?
- Blogs in general –

### Technologies:

- Syndication
- Tags for discoveries

# A few more 2.0 lessons...

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# The del.icio.us principle

Emphasize usefulness to the individual first, and usefulness to the community follows.

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Making it happen:

- Collaborative ranking
- Content Tagging

# The New Navigation: Geography and Time

Rollover Einstein. Open Mapping and  
Calendaring API's make mashing your  
community content with Space and  
Time a breeze.

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## Examples:

- Frappr

## Technology Making it Possible:

- AJAX
- HTTP APIs to Google, Yahoo, & MSN Maps

•Re-emergence of “local”. For a while it was “geography doesn’t matter. But we know it does. Targeted ads, user contributed news, craigslist, meetup. Face-to-face community organized online

# Cash Incentives Made Simple

AdSense becomes a monetizer  
that motivates participation.

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Examples:

- Newsvine
- Rollyo

Technology:

- \* The magic of google adsense

# Multimedia Booms

Cheap storage and a digital lifestyle bring audio and video to the fore.

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Examples:

- YouTube
- Chevy Tahoe

# Simplicity Wins

Every available option reduces  
user understanding of “what I’m  
here for”

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\*

# Tags?

Have we discovered they suck, or  
just beginning to tap their  
potential?

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Example:

- Jon Udell's "Information Explorer"

Technology:

- AJAX on the interface
- SOAP, RSS, XML to suck the data from anywhere

DW: two other thoughts:

- Offline/online connections (e.g., I like what the Washington Post does in print to drive online activity or uses online to get print content, activity)