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Weave Web 2.0 into Business (and Sales) Strategy

by Janet Gregory

It is time to look beyond the techie buzzwords and acronyms of Web 2.0 and into the real benefits and business value for your company.

Web 2.0 connotes different things to different people; let's focus here on what it means to your business and, more importantly, your sales strategy. You want your website to enable communications between your company's business processes and your customers. Gartner, Inc. tells us that "through 2010, 80% of businesses that have deployed communication-enabled business processes will obtain significant competitive and revenue differentiation because of it."

Design your website to communication-enable business process for *the user*. *The user* should be defined as the loyal repeat customer. Enrich your website for your most important user:

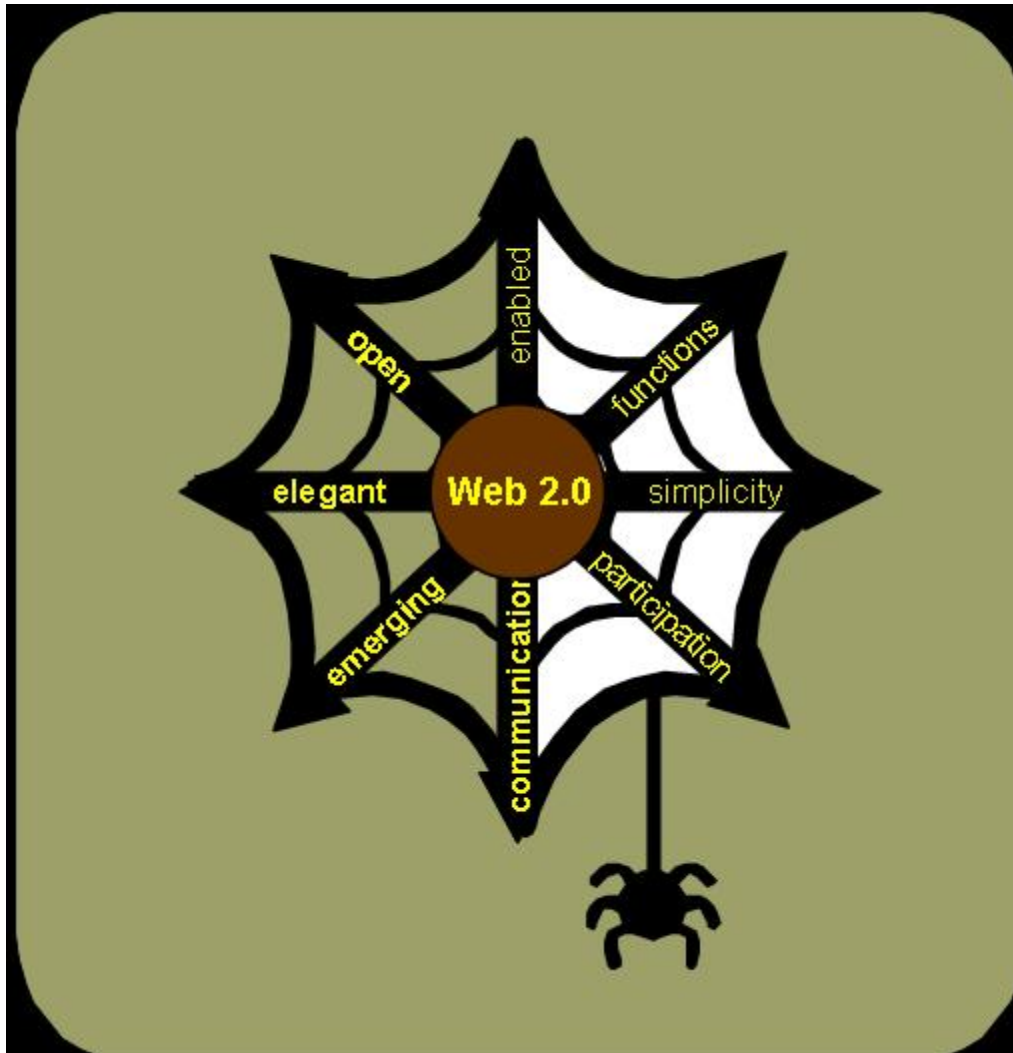
- A current customer user looking for your company's next great thing,
- A prospect user evaluating if and when they should become a customer, and
- A partner user determining if they should bring prospects to your company.

Functions emerging from use—Create an experience for users that is so natural that it almost seems to understand the user by learning from previous actions and behaviors. This is the ultimate in ease of use. As a result of this changing paradigm between human-computer interaction, marketing messages are also beginning to reflect this pattern. The user feels that you are uniquely communicating to them, the "target market of one." Marketing messages stick. Users come back for more.

- This can be true for mutual fund analysis and purchases or travel data and bookings or technology products and implementation plans or just about anything.
- The Web 2.0 functions that help create this experience include centralized sign on, preferences, consolidated applications, tagging, re-purposing information from one application to another and layering information based on use.

Elegant simplicity—Eliminate the clutter, let the user live in the moment doing one thing and doing it incredibly well. Relate the elegant simplicity of one experience with other application experiences as the user needs to access them. If each application experience is simple yet exceptional the user will want to do more.

- This can transform mundane actions like order status into exotic adventures showing a day in the life of the user's order being processed, built, configured, packed and shipped in pictures, sound and words confirming order status. Or this can transform a burning question into collaboration with the help desk via instant message, on line chat, voice-over-IP or whatever combination is necessary to douse the fire behind that burning question.
- The Web 2.0 functions that help create the elegantly simple experience include centralized deployment, mashups, RIA, lightweight user interface technology, linking, lightweight application-oriented protocols and a development process that can be driven by a small agile development team.



Open participation—Give the user (your customers, partners and prospects) an opportunity to participate in your business. Allow them to give feedback, make recommendations, contribute content, generate content and collaborate peer-to-peer. Yes, this gives rise to the social aspects of Web 2.0 feared by many businesses. Know that the user will go where they believe their input matters and they can get the answers they want without unnatural corporate control or corporate "double-speak."

- Your business is far more dynamic than a dictionary or an encyclopedia, so take comfort in thinking about how many times in the last six months you've been to Wikipedia versus Webster's Dictionary or Encyclopaedia Britannica. I rest my case.
- The Web 2.0 functions that help create the open participation experience include use of open source technologies, RSS, presence, collaboration, wiki's, collaborative authoring, distributed content and open business practices.

In summary, Web 2.0 is a personal experience. *The user* (your customers, partners and prospects) will love the engaging and informative experience of your website. Behind the scenes your IT department will love the techie aspects of mashups, Ajax, OpenLaszlo, Flash, single sign-on, RIA and big reduction in time-to-deliver applications. Marketing will love the cool factor, blogs, tagging, RSS feed and SEO are big improvements in time-to-market and generating attention. Most importantly, your sales team will love the numerous prospects and customers coming back for more—resulting in a big increase in sales!

Our Favorite Web 2.0 Related Acronyms & Buzz-words

Ajax, not the household cleanser, is an acronym for Asynchronous JavaScript and XML. A modern programming technique used in web application development to enhance usability and interactivity of applications.

Blog is a contracted word from web-log. It is a user-generated website where entries are made in journal style and displayed in a reverse chronological order.

Mashups are typically web applications that combine content from more than one source; a web application hybrid. Google Maps is a good example.

RIA is an acronym for Rich Internet Application. RIAs have the features and functionality of traditional desktop applications. You care about RIAs because: 1) you don't have to install any software, RIAs run in all traditional web browsers, 2) although users are on a website, they have the speed and feel of a client software application.

SEO is an acronym for search engine optimization. SEO is often considered to be a subset of search engine marketing. SEO is used to describe a process of improving the volume or quality of traffic to a website from search engines.

RSS is an acronym for Really Simple Syndication. RSS is used to refer to a family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated digital content.

Tagging relates to various methods of gathering data, learning, data mining and goal seeking.

Wiki is a website that allows visitors to add, remove, edit or change content. It allows for linking among any number of pages. [Wikipedia](#) is an excellent example!

About the Author

Janet Gregory is a veteran sales executive and co-founder of KickStart Alliance. For assistance with sales strategy, sales planning, assessing compensation plan options or any aspect of sales operations, contact Janet at janetg@kickstartall.com. Janet leads the sales readiness practice at KickStart Alliance. For help in aligning sales & marketing for results contact any member of the KickStart Alliance team at info@kickstartall.com.