



FEATURE



## What Is Web2.0 All About Anyway?

[By Curt Finch, CEO, Journyx]

One of the original leaders of the open-source movement, Tim O'Reilly of O'Reilly Media, kicked off a "blogosphere" firestorm in late May by sending a cease and desist letter over the use of the term "Web 2.0" based on the fact that his technical conference is trademarked by that name. The complaint has since been withdrawn. Having open-source gurus involved in trademark disputes always seems ironic, but in this case it is particularly so since Web2.0 is all about openness, flexibility, and "freeness." What is Web2.0, why are people excited about it, and why should you care?

There is a lot of disagreement about what the phrase Web2.0 means. Let's clear that up.

One answer is that Web2.0 refers to the propensity of recent Internet applications to be more collaborative and provide for a richer user experience. Web1.0 was a website that looked like a brochure or a resume. Web2.0 is a blog. Web1.0 was your newspaper's classified ads, just webified. Web2.0 is eBay or craigslist. Web1.0 was Netscape (i.e., here's some software). Web2.0 is Google (there's nothing to install, but it's powerful).

Web2.0 is about harnessing collective intelligence and eliminating the software release cycle — it's about providing services, not products. It's about trusting users as co-developers of content or even of technology. As an example, [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) does this with its user review system.

A more cynical definition of Web2.0, found in the blogosphere in Europe (where they tend to be more conservative about technology), is "Bubble2.0." What they mean by this is that some marketers have gone off the deep end in applying this term to anything and everything. And they're right. Europeans are always right (just ask them).

Bubble1.0, of course, burst in March of 2000

when the NASDAQ reached 5,000 points (it's 2,200 today). Some companies emerged successfully from that bubble and some did not. Bubble2.0 will probably be smaller but will have some winners and losers, too.

Web2.0 includes a social dimension, greater openness and transparency in process. It includes the use of new technologies, such as Really Simple Syndication (RSS), Web Service Definition Language (WSDL), and eXtensible Markup Language (XML). It has a more open style and a "keep it simple" approach. Many of these attributes go hand in hand. For example, open-source technologies tend to be simple, transparent, and lightweight. It's more of an attitude than a specific architectural protocol. It involves collaboration and content repurposing, like with [Sourceforge.net](http://Sourceforge.net) or [Youtube.com](http://Youtube.com), and employs different business models with longer "tails," as with Google Adwords as opposed to DoubleClick.

Wikipedia is a great example of a Web2.0 application, as are mashups like [Zillow.com](http://Zillow.com). ("Mashup" is defined as a website or web application that combines content from more than one source.) "On demand" offerings from companies like Journyx and [Salesforce.com](http://Salesforce.com) fit into the new paradigm as well. With Web2.0, groups of users within companies control their own destinies by shared administration

responsibilities more than was the case in previous software models.

### New Technologies

Web-oriented architectures based on XML, SOAP, and WSDL make mashups possible. [Zillow.com](http://Zillow.com) is a website that combines real estate market data with Google mapping to produce an aerial photo of your neighborhood with all the home prices attached. It's a little scary the first time you see it. It relies on XML and JavaScript to accomplish this trick. IBM's answer to XML is Representational State Transfer (REST) which exposes elements of an application via the software-as-a-service (SaaS) model. Journyx Timesheet's WSDL API enables similar mashups to occur with its SaaS site. And [Salesforce.com](http://Salesforce.com)'s AppExchange push is based on the mashup concept as well and is heavily dependent on XML as the application programming interface (API) mechanism. IBM is another vendor that is shifting its innovation strategies towards enabling a broader web environment, as opposed to just adding new features to existing applications like IBM's Lotus Notes middleware tool. To this end, they're working on technologies like dogear (similar to [del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us)) and Feedme (an RSS-based improvement to the old IBM Tivoli Enterprise Console product). Technologies that allow a richer



FEATURE

user experience in the browser, such as what's displayed in Google Mail and Maps, are also considered to be part of the Web2.0 movement.

**Communities**

Youtube (video sharing), Digg (IT news voting), and Wikipedia (way better than [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)) exemplify the community aspect of Web2.0 thinking. The content comes from users, not authorities, and it's amazingly high in quality.

One of the greatest communities on the Internet is [Sourceforge.net](http://Sourceforge.net), where Python, Perl, Apache, PostgreSQL, and thousands of other great technologies were developed. The company that owns this site, Va Software (Nasdaq:LNEX), realized that the collaborative project-oriented atmosphere created on [Sourceforge.net](http://Sourceforge.net) would also be useful for large IT shops like those at FedEx if they added some security features and issue tracking. And so, Sourceforge Enterprise was born, which allows companies to securely pull external software developers into their development process—whether they're from partners, customers, or the public at large. For an example of how Web2.0 is impacting governments, compare sites like [DavisWiki.org](http://DavisWiki.org) to a traditional city website.

Older firms, like EBay or Amazon, are arguably successful precisely because of the

more collaborative nature of their websites. Amazon lets you vote on books and then vote on other peoples' votes. EBay has buyer and seller rankings based on feedback. And content is king in both cases. In fact, Amazon lets publishers (even small ones) include content relevant to their book in the listing for the book. The ownership of this information becomes questionable once uploaded. See how Amazon wins?



**New Business Models**

Web2.0 focuses on the fundamental shift in how businesses are delivering value. Third parties are empowered and consumers can become content producers or repurposers of content in new and fascinating ways. Napster is moving to a model where its 2 million monthly visitors will provide advertising revenue in addition to revenue from buying music. Two new tools are available with its free music service. Narchive is a new tool that allows a user to create a "Wikipedia" of his favorite music and related information.

Napster users will be able to share songs with friends via email, blogs, or Myspace pages.

New business models based on advertising, subscription, usage, or revenue sharing will crop up that will feel very different than traditional technology licensing. Web2.0 is a shift — a shift away from closed, inflexible, proprietary models to a more collaborative, participatory, open model for content. It's a shift towards a world where we are all authors, videographers, programmers, and contributors. Companies that enable that will win, and those that don't will lose. It's as simple as that.

**About the Author**

Curt Finch is the CEO of Journyx ([pr.journyx.com](http://pr.journyx.com)), a provider of web-based software located in Austin, Texas, that tracks time and project accounting solutions to guide customers to per-person, per-project profitability. Journyx has thousands of customers worldwide and is the first and only company to establish Per Person/Per Project Profitability (P5), a proprietary process that enables customers to gather and analyze information to discover profit opportunities. In 1997, Curt created the world's first Internet-based timesheet application — the foundation for the current Journyx product offering. Curt is an avid speaker and author, and recently published *All Your Money Won't Another Minute Buy: Valuing Time as a Business Resource*.

EmploymentCrossing is the largest collection of active jobs in the world.

We continuously monitor the hiring needs of more than 250,000 employers, including virtually every corporation and organization in the United States. We do not charge employers to post their jobs and we aggressively contact and investigate thousands of employers each day to learn of new positions. No one works harder than EmploymentCrossing.

Let EmploymentCrossing go to work for you.