

Innovation/Web 2.0

The Global Human Capital Journal

World of Mouth Asserts Itself at Web Content 2008 Chicago—Wherefore Art Thou, Control?

By Christopher S. Rollyson —Sunday, 29 June 2008

Reexamining "Content" in Light of "Conversation"

Web 2.0 is redefining content on the Web, and Duo Consulting's [Web Content 2008 Chicago](#), convened at the UBS Tower on June 17-18, 2008, was a rich opportunity to check in with the Web 1.0-Web 2.0 mashup. Embedded within the legacy concept of "content" (text, pictures, audio, video, etc.) is that few people create it and many people consume it, which is obviously less true with every passing month.



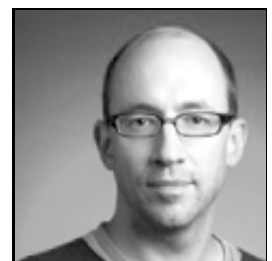
Something else is happening on the way to the forum, too: opinions about content are gaining more attention than the content itself, according to Day One keynote Dick Costolo. If so, where does that leave people who "manage" content? There is a whole ecosystem of professionals and vendors that manage content according to Web 1.0 rules, and many of them were here, sharing their visions and tactics for embracing Web 2.0. Day Two keynote Jerome Nadel provided a clue: a shift in emphasis to design: since "users" are creating the opinion content through their "conversation," I'll hazard that a key part of the concept of "management" will be providing a better whiteboard that enables people to share what and how they want with whomever they want when they want.

Moreover, everyone had control issues. Speakers as a group did not agree whether consumers were in control now or whether content creators still prevailed. [Chris Anderson's adage](#) kept flitting across my mind, "We live in an 'and world,' not an 'or world'." The conversation will not replace content; it will play with it. The two will synergize. As usual, I have summarized the remarks of speakers whose sessions I attended, and I'll wrap with my own Analysis and Conclusions.



The Next Content Wave: Hypersyndication, Dick Costolo, Google

Powerful context here relating to content: "The conversation about the content is more important than the content itself":



- Content is everywhere, and it flows by itself. Costolo showed examples from Reuters' home page in 2004 and 2008, and the difference was striking: non-Reuters content, linking to non-Reuters sites, had a prominent place on the 2008 site. Almost no one would have guessed that in 2004.
- 2004 featured centralized control, publisher-centric and "authority." In 2008, content is decentralized, subscribers have status, media is shared and authority has been replaced by "influence." Reuters wants influence, so in effect it gives a large part of its home page to non-Reuters content.
- Many providers like Blogburst aggregate algorithmically and deliver "related content" to Reuters'.
- Comments are the focus, not the articles. Now comments are available via RSS. Sites like FriendFeed aggregate your social graph and what they're reading. Costolo predicts that people who comment on content will become brands (as some bloggers have); only here, the new folks won't write any content, they'll just comment.
- Content flows anywhere; often the conversation starts as a comment on a site, then jumps to Twitter. Be prepared for that.
- Examples like CNN iReport will become increasingly common (users give reportage). Offbeatguides.com packages comments on a topic (say, hotels, restaurants and attractions in Edmonton) as pdfs so people can print them out very easily.
- Advertisers need a different strategy to monetize content since the content itself is less often the attraction, the perceived value is the comments.
- Deal with "negative" comments by weighing in—and not defensively, just tell your side of the story. Other readers will love it, and they'll judge correctly most of the time. Do not "blog back" at people.
- Getsatisfaction.com is a new concept: customers provide companies with customer service. Quotes from the site: "people-powered

customer service for everything" and "help with the products and companies you care about."

- An interesting point. "If everyone is against an idea, pay attention (it'll probably work)." Implied here is that "everyone" is laboring under a scared cow assumption.

The Many-Armed Starfish: Today and Tomorrow in Social Media, Darren Barefoot, Capulet Communications

Good overview of some of the major Web 2.0 and social trends, with a special focus on gaming:



- Barefoot opened with the idea that Shakespeare's Globe Theatre was just as much a virtual world as Second Life; the difference is that, in Shakespeare's time, one could be famous to a few people; today fame is unlimited (or, if you limit the definition of "fame" to humans in the "present," it's limited to the human population, ^). He added that the only drawing we have of the [Globe Theatre](#) was a syndication (of a sketch of the theatre by Wenceslas Hollar's, which he later incorporated into his own work, "Long View of London").
- He then offered several key trends:
 - The "Web" has permeated the world, far beyond the browser; "here comes everybody"; here he used the example of ARGs (Alternate Reality Gaming) that combine "Web" and "real world" into a gaming experience (i.e. "I Love Bees," [Wikipedia has an excellent overview](#) of the game and ARG concept)
 - What is creepy today will be normal tomorrow; he cited [Brightkite](#), which lets everyone know where you are via GPS (this refers to the concept and practice of "privacy")
 - The "Web" increasingly resembles "our world," and he gave [PMOGs](#) (Passively Multiplayer Online Game), and the average age of players is 33.
 - Phenomena like Twitter are providing a "user-generated" "river of news" about everything. By the way, humans aren't the only contributors; in Twitter, you can also follow [Mars Phoenix](#), which tweets about things that are happening on board
 - The "Web" is more networked; "social networking" will end up being a feature of everything, and it's most useful in niches. Don't start your own, go to where the people are, but, do start topics in other people's venues; and here, one of my favorites, he cited the "Quebecois Undertakers"
- Five lessons
 - Relinquish control: you never had it anyway: the results of Google searches are reality, instant and in your face; he referenced [brandtags.net](#),
 - Empower passionate customers
 - Think outside the page
 - Go to where the people are
 - End control

Marketing in a Connected World, Michael Silverman, Duo Consulting

Silverman did a great job of discussing the impact of Web 2.0 from the marketing executive's point of view:



- Don't do it just because you can.. Imodium bathroom finder?
- Apple and Radiohead show that the music industry has completely changed (Radiohead released its latest CD and let people pay what they wanted, including nothing).
- Silverman refreshed Josh and Charlotte's "[Ladder of Participation](#)"; remember, only about 18% of older (i.e. B2B customers) people create content (39% of Gen Y).
- Approach Web projects by beginning with people, then focusing on the objective, strategy and finally technology; many firms make the mistake by starting with technology.
- Some good goals are listening, supporting, embracing, energizing and talking; marketers focus too much on talking; this is a profound change.
- In the [Long Tail](#), people drive demand by being social and recommending things to each other; marketers still don't get this.
- The Internet is the platform now and data is the value (comments). "The cloud" is incredible and cheap (he cited Amazon Web Services). Salesforce.com is also in the cloud.
- The publishing industry is broken, the conversation is the content now.
- He cited a (Forrester) survey of marketing executives, "Assuming the economy is in a recession the next six months, how would that affect spend in these categories (display ads looking pretty vulnerable, but the percent of total spend not given, i.e. social networking is a fraction of display ad spend). Still, impressive:
 - Interactive marketing: 26% would increase, 46% same and 13% would reduce

- Social networking: 48% increase, 34% same and 8% reduce
- Email marketing: 41% increase, 47% same and 5% reduce
- Blogging: 40% increase, 43% same and 6% reduce
- Podcasting: 23% increase, 50% same and 12% reduce
- Display ads: 10% increase, 38% same and 41% reduce
- Silverman offered these "new rules"
 - Engage or be tivoed (pan in on Tower Records store looking in great shape)
 - Content matters (Long Tail reference; people build interest around highly specific topics)
 - Marketing is a conversation (blogs, Facebook, other examples); data growing exponentially (requires management to make useful)
 - Open your brand (mystarbucksidea, Dell Ideastorm, Salesforce Ideas references)
 - Always be learning (from customers)

Cross-Media 1:1 Marketing: Providing Personalized Content to Drive Sales, James Michelson, JFM Concepts

This session gave the audience a spin through some edgy cross-marketing techniques that are enabled by advanced content management systems:



- Marketing is much more targeted now due to our control over information and ability to create customized messages. We have tailored messages, custom art, accurate response tracking and seamless web/direct mail integration.
- He presented six components: analysis/name procurement, campaign/web design, variable data direct mail, build option/email lists, unique URLs to identify visitors and reporting on demand.
- Direct (snail) mail is still very useful; Michelson cited these stats: the average U.S. consumer sees 6,000 marketing messages (per day?), 52 of them are noticed and 4 are read, a whopping 0.00067%. 98% of U.S. consumers read their snail mail daily, and 77% act on first opportunity.
- With the Web, you have two strategies to present custom content: PURLs (personal URL) or real-time personalization via ZIP code.

Content Management Meets Facebook, Adrian Sutton, Ephox

This session drew lessons from Facebook's success at engaging members and applied the learnings to content management systems (CMS):



- Build a social network (context was enterprise) with a task in mind.
- Today's CMSs fall short of expectation because they don't get the right people to use them, they right people don't author content, content is duplicated, etc.
- Key learning: use the "social graph" (broadly, let users to rate and/or comment on content) to bubble up the most useful content.
- Here, the context is work, not play, so "friends" are teammates.
- Use personalization internally; let people have pictures and list their interests, even if personal.
- Common traps were implementing solutions that are too techie (wiki markup, anyone?); making content too open or too closed, being too focused on "your department" and system explosion (too large and/or complex to be usable).
- Screen shots had a vague similarity to Facebook, in a corporate way.

Can Web 2.0 Ruin Your Online Marketing?, Robert Rose, CrownPeak

The main point here was that Web 2.0 was overhyped and that no one *had* to do it. Gee.



- Rose began by citing a litany of hyped concepts (one was the Hagerstown, Maryland airport extension that ended up being a huge loss), PointCast, etc. Now social networking.
- Trends: consumerization of IT; technology is becoming invisible, but that means it's less important. Rose associates the rebirth of Apple with this; he was a PC guy for years and now he "just wants stuff to work." This led to an excellent conclusion: stop custom-building software unless it's really necessary (access resources from the cloud).
- Web 2.0 is a commitment to conversation. Don't just throw up a blog post or podcast and think you're doing it.

- Content is very important: good content leads to good SEO results; Web communities drive conversations. Publish content and ask for feedback.
- Web 1.0 was about watching where Web 2.0 is about doing, contributing. Marketers have to get over that people are talking now. Marketers have to learn to listen.
- Rose defined Web 3.0 as "small apps living in the cloud" that can run on any device. They are often distributed virally. Ask yourself how easily your content can be consumed anywhere, seamlessly.

Making 2.0 Work for You, Inside and out, Jerome Nadel, Human Factors International

HFI is a design and experience firm, so Nadel gave the audience a point of view about the role of design in Web 2.0, the era of conversation as content. He debunked the oft-bantered "users are in control." Designers are very much in control:



- Nadel began with an interesting graph that tied Web 2.0 to the "framework" pole, while enterprise 2.0 trends toward to "process" pole. Framework is related to function (getting something done).
- A key theme was "connect me." Web 1.0 connected people to content; Web 2.0 connects people to people; Web 3.0 will connect content to people.
- From a design perspective, don't ask, "Can people use it?" Rather, "Will they use it?" "Can do" is related to performance, while "will do" to persuasion.
- To get conversion (from a marketing sense), understand decision marketing, which leads to positive customer experience and conversion = adoption, usage, purchase, participation, contribution.
- People are no longer (only) voyeurs, they're now creators. Attract, engage, enable, and connect the audience, and build relationships. Relegate control (provide the framework), build the network, establish trust, think crowdsourcing and encourage contribution.
- Enterprise 2.0 needs to encourage more collaboration, provide a more organic experience that brings people together. It needs to accept virtual organization (and emergent)
- Don't throw away your taxonomist! You need taxonomy *and* folksonomy; together, they form a structured social classification. The distinction between "Internet," intranet" and "extranet" is largely gone; they're all part of the same platform.
- He commented on Facebook and MySpace to add to the tax/folksonomy point. Facebook provides a taxonomy far more than MySpace.

Additional Coverage

- Seth Gottlieb attended other tracks and [wrote them up here](#).
- I live microblogged [here via twitter](#). if you'd like off the cuff comments.

Analysis and Conclusions

Marketing and Word of Mouth

- Mass communication arguably started with Gutenberg's printing press, and since then the means of content creation and management were expensive and out of reach of most people. Powerful people came to control the means of mass communication, and they professionalized content creation, production, distribution and management. But word of mouth was everyone's little luxury, the ability to have an opinion and to share it. Now it's big, bad and digital.
- It can't be said often enough: "marketing" is steadily losing its influence over decision making because it's no longer the big exclusive voice. It can win it back by realizing that, not only must it share but also it will be more effective than it's ever been by collaborating with customers. By no means do I suggest that marketing will go away; it will become the flour in the cake, just a major ingredient.
- Word of mouth has always been pervasive, but it's been invisible because there has been no record of it. As [Andy Sernovitz says](#), it had no budget, so it didn't exist. Marketers and communications professionals use highly paid resources and processes for formerly-overwhelming voices (relative to individuals). Of course, people "engage" in word of mouth because it's fun and very human to share opinions about everything. Now it's digital, everywhere and free. How can marketers fight that? Suddenly the money behind their professionalism is a disadvantage. Obviously they can't, so they'll have to join in. Kind of like plunging into a mountain lake. More on this in [Consumer Empowerment—Rare Innovation Opportunity](#).
- Several speakers emphasized how important it was to go to where the people were. They will not come if you build it. Many enterprises are making this mistake by building "[internal facebook](#)s" using SharePoint. Yeah, *right*. Like drinking Dom out of a

boot.

Under the Hood

- Barefoot's premise that social networking was rapidly becoming a feature was on the mark. As I predicted in [Social Networking Crystal Ball](#), it will disappear completely because it will be everywhere.
- Michelson's session was a good reminder that "push" marketing still has a place, and its capabilities are increasing. To appreciate the advances, you have to be old ,-) to remember *real* mass marketing. That said, serving "personal" content based on ZIP doesn't feel very personal to me, especially as a city dweller in a very diverse population. But that's a nit, technology and technique will continue to improve specificity.
- Rose's session was one of the more interesting for me, but I feel the need to draw your attention to a few things:
 - Technology is not less important because it's invisible: more accurate is to say that it's less the focus. Kind of like electricity.
 - This talk would have been more on point if Rose had qualified his thesis better ("you don't have to do Web 2.0"). It came off as being a rationalization for doing an ostrich (keeping one's head in the sand). I think what he meant was, one doesn't have to do it just because it's hot, because others are doing it. That's true, anything done without purpose will likely fall short.
 - The point about content running on any device was right on. I covered [multiscreen strategy](#) considerably last year.
 - Although this is probably just semantics ,^) Rose's Web 3.0 definition wasn't in the zone. Web 3.0 usually refers to a transition from a Web that humans have to act on to get things done (go and search and put data together on that skydiving trip in the Andes) to an era in which "the Web" gets "smarter" and more proactive. Agents will find things for and serve people ("the Semantic Web"). Later, Jerome Nadel referred to this when he pegged "3.0" as content finding people. Web 3.0 also often refers to the GeoWeb in which physical objects have Web locators. For more on this, see "[Web 3.0: Where Are We Going?](#)" Also, as you might suspect, [Wikipedia has a solid entry on it](#).
- "Control issues": I think what Nadel meant was that designers, since they set the table by offering/not offering functionality and content, have a strong influence over the conversation, over what gets talked about and how. Notice I wrote "influence," not "control." If they fail to provide something that people want, people will just create another party somewhere else. Personally, I think it's a bit rich for anyone to say that s/he controls anything. It's all give/take.
- Nadel's tax/folksonomy point was right on. Another way of saying it is that we live in an "and world" not an "or world." Web 2.0 works extremely well in concert with structured systems, especially well designed ones! It's not replacing structured systems. What it *is* replacing is the exclusivity of structured systems.
- I'll stand by my [tweets after the first day](#): Web 2.0 puts "content management" in a weird situation: customers, using open tools, will be providing more navigation guidance to each other. Algorithmic software will help content manage itself more and proactively find people who might be interested. I'll venture that the whole concept of a "CMS" and the content management process will have to be radically rethought. Awesome opportunity!

Out There

- The idea that "the Web"/everything is all a big connected conversation may be a bit disconcerting at first blush, kind of like living in a small town in which a few people are most influential. It's always been true that, in group dynamics, the power rule holds: "established" voices (in a town or venue) are listened to (by the larger group) more than others. A big idea is that the world is rapidly becoming a small town.
- Then you may think, "Ouch, now there's only one town on the planet, I can't start over anywhere." However, the concept of a "small town" is changing. Most people associate "town" with a physical location, which is a [Geography 2.0 assumption](#) and decreasingly relevant. It will become more associated with the digital venue, where the conversation is happening, and there are infinitely many of those.

About the Author

Christopher S. Rollyson launched *The Global Human Capital Journal* in 2005 to address the most poignant issues of day for chief executives, namely global transformation, the reinvention of the enterprise, technology and culture. Mr. Rollyson has been a technology and marketing visionary and pioneer for over fifteen years, with distinction in corporate strategy and innovation. As a consultant and marketing executive, he has had a leading role in launching such game-changing offerings as: Java with Sun, e-business strategy with PwC Consulting, and SOA, Web services and architecture solutions with IBM and nVISIA. In 2006, he launched The Consumer Empowerment Adoption Curve™ and Transourcing™, a new approach to innovation that leverages high performance collaborative partner networks. He currently advises global enterprises on collaborating with Web 2.0-enabled customers

—to drive innovation and to engage emerging markets.

Recently the Vice President of Marketing at nVISIA, he developed executive marketing programs and service offerings to drive the value of software transformation through service-oriented architecture and Web services, working with IBM, Rational and Grand Central. Previously a subject matter expert for e-business and knowledge strategy in PricewaterhouseCoopers' Strategic Change practice, Mr. Rollyson developed original models and services frameworks for e-business strategy consulting. He consulted to clients in automotive, software, telecoms, consumer electronics, chemicals and petroleum industries, advising global enterprises in e-business strategy and technology start-ups on innovation and business strategy. Prior to PwC, he led marketing for KPMG's Midwest High Technology practice, where he built one of the firm's first intranets to transform the marketing organization to a real-time team. Before that the head of marketing at a leading edge Java consultancy, he played a key role in co-launching Java via marketing alliances with Sun and Netscape. Mr. Rollyson has done graduate work in corporate strategy and economics at the University of Chicago, with additional studies at Die Freie Universität Berlin, L'Université de Clermont-Ferrand in France and il Liceo Americano d'Aviano in Italy. He earned his undergraduate degree from Kalamazoo College. <http://rollyson.net>

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The Global Human Capital Journal addresses the global shift from the Industrial Economy to the Knowledge Economy, which is changing how human beings work and deliver value. In the Industrial Economy, products encapsulated the value of human work; in the Knowledge Economy, information produces the lion's share of value, and customer experience itself is the focus of commerce and government. A greater degree of collaboration among people of the world is possible than ever before, and increased interaction will bring unprecedented surprise and opportunity, especially because the potential is great to "level the playing field" among people of the world. Obviously, these developments hold significant ramifications for business and organizational strategy.

Global Human Capital covers two prongs of economic transformation: 1) strategically, how organizations can rejuvenate their relationships with customers and constituents by collaborating with them to drive innovation and 2) operationally, how organizations can build strong collaborative cultures and skills to engage the world's emergent network of expertise, both within and without their walls. We analyze how global sourcing and collaboration are transforming enterprise and government organizations, as they transition from relatively self-contained, closed entities to more networked, open organizations.

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