



# Staying on Top of Web 2.0 Communities with a CMS

| A business whitepaper |

## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>It's All about Users</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Challenges of Maintaining Balance in a Dynamic World</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Problem #1: Communities built unguided, without clear mandates</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Problem #2: No man is an island, but communities can be!</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Problem #3: Maintaining consistency</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>What's The Plan?</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>CMS: The light at the end of the tunnel?</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Choosing the right CMS</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>8</b>

## Executive Summary

Internet Guru Tim O'Reilly refers to Web 2.0 as "an architecture of participation". In an era where Web 2.0 is perhaps one of the most over-defined terms around, O'Reilly's summation gets right to the point.

For all that is said about the 2.0 world, it has led to a staggering degree of innovation. There are startups mushrooming almost every day (every hour?) with sometimes compelling new ideas or simply a new twist to existing ones, but all with the same goal – to drive participation. How does an organization built in the 1.0 (or previous) age adapt to this? For an audience that is accustomed to the kind of user experience on Flickr or Blogger, a company Web site without some degree of possible interaction can appear archaic. This audience demands an interface that looks good, is easy to use, simple to navigate, and allows them to do something with the content they see.

In many ways, Web 2.0 is about crowds. Instances of companies actually relying on consumers to develop ideas and even products abound. There is, apparently, much to be said about the 'wisdom of crowds'; Wikipedia is a strong example. Clearly the crowd is ready and willing to contribute and speak its mind. The challenge is managing this, and using the new wave of social marketing to create strong networks and lasting relationships. While this world promises unlimited opportunities, it also throws up multiple challenges.

There are clearly several ways to approach this, and this white paper cannot address them all. Specifically, this white paper explores the advantages of building strong online communities, the challenges of maintaining such communities, and how a CMS can help marketing professionals easily add features that drive user experiences to new heights.

- ▶ Staying on top of Web 2.0 Communities with a CMS

## It's All about Users

The 2007 Pew Internet and American Life Project released a study that showed 57% of 12- to 17-year olds online (that's 12 million individuals) are creating content of some sort and posting it online.

Web 2.0 is all about users. Web sites have to provide the freedom to tweak, reorganize, add and customize content in ways that users want. Indeed, many 2.0 cyber spaces are only about user-created content – like YouTube, for example. This culture of participation and dialogue can be leveraged by organizations to extend the reach of their brands far beyond what can be achieved by conventional means.

'Word-of-mouth' has always been regarded as a good way to build brand loyalty. The 2.0 world has now made it possible to extend word-of-mouth to a staggering number of users – a far bigger audience than that reached by traditional advertising. Progressive companies in this era are, therefore, scrambling to set up blogs, podcasts, discussion forums and online communities to build informal dialogue with existing and potential customers.

The participatory Web clearly has a lot going for it:

- ▶ Top-down communication has been replaced by multi-linear flows of information, which can add relevance and value to existing information.
- ▶ Users no longer want to be fed information – they demand a rich experience; providing a unique experience that delivers value in unprecedented ways to consumers can put an organization well ahead of the competition.
- ▶ In order to adapt to these levels of collaboration, several creative business models have emerged.
- ▶ Communities play a crucial role in this collaboration. Participating users can bring in fresh content, build networks, and discuss thoughts with other users. Brand 'champions' – individuals who strongly promote a product or service simply because they believe in it, can fuel acceptance and adoption.

## Challenges of Maintaining Balance in a Dynamic World

By its very nature, open communication is hard to monitor and control. While technology today allows organizations to easily build online communities or networks, these social media can present significant challenges in management.

- ▶ Staying on top of Web 2.0 Communities with a CMS

## PROBLEM #1: COMMUNITIES BUILT UNGUIDED, WITHOUT CLEAR MANDATES

Enthusiastic business leaders from your company may build networks or online communities to connect with customers. However, unguided, and with no clear mandate or guidelines from the group, you soon have a situation where different business units post different sets of messages about your brand. While you may have increased user participation, brand value may be diluted as the customer gets different sets of messages from different business units.

## PROBLEM #2: NO MAN IS AN ISLAND, BUT COMMUNITIES CAN BE!

Companies have already spent significant amounts of time and money ensuring that business information is not locked away in silos. But with multiple communities and blogs created by diverse business units within the same organization, ensuring a 'unified view' of the customer becomes a challenge. Each community may have its own ways of collecting data; ensuring that this data is available and more importantly actionable at short notice can be nearly impossible without proper planning. The result: community 'islands' that are hard to manage.

## PROBLEM #3: MAINTAINING CONSISTENCY

Your marketers know the value of maintaining brand and style consistency across customer touch points – but simply may not have the time, technical know-how or patience to ensure that all of the organization's online and customer-facing content is compliant with overall brand guidelines. This results in customers having a different (and sometimes disorienting) experience, and subsequently a lower conversion rate.

For an organization that is grappling with the challenges of managing and updating content, in addition to requirements of usability, design and information architecture – survival in the Web 2.0 world scales these challenges up to a new level.

Some common questions that emerge include:

- ▶ How do you design, develop and maintain different personalized digital assets?
- ▶ How do you manage unstructured and ad-hoc content creation by users?
- ▶ How do you moderate information posted by readers?
- ▶ How do you measure the popularity of content by taking note of user feedback such as comments, ratings or subscriptions?

And the clincher:

- ▶ How do you allow non-technical users to make changes to an existing Web site with little or no training? How do you take advantage of new technologies without extensive and complex integration?

## What's The Plan?

To get it right with online communities, it's important to have a plan. And this plan should be built around the answers to these questions:

What do you want to achieve with the community?

Setting clear and measurable goals for your online communities is obviously among the first steps. Your communities could, for example, advertise and build awareness, allow consumers to provide feedback on new products or services, enable access to fresh markets, and even generate leads and revenue.

Once you've established goals, what are the market segments you want to address?

You've finalized an overall strategy; now you need to understand the various subsets within your market. Consumers have different needs, and while it is impossible to tailor individual messages, it is necessary to talk to different market segments in the style they're used to. Mapping your product/service lines to different segments can also help refine this activity.

How do you control building and maintenance of communities from the inside?

A good governance policy is essential to establish boundaries. This includes identifying community 'owners', drawing up approval workflows for new communities, setting up filters to ensure flagging inappropriate content, and finally defining metrics that allow the entire activity to be tracked in ways that can add business value.

How do you ensure that all community activities help marketing?

Your marketing team knows your customers best – to ensure that community activities help marketing, it is important to give more content control to marketers. And they should be able to refine campaigns on-the-go without technical knowledge.

## CMS: The light at the end of the tunnel?

Content Management Systems (CMS) help organizations maintain consistency across different digital assets so that branding and design are controlled to the level desired (through style sheets, templates, etc.), regardless of who is responsible for the actual content.

Creating content to cater to multiple mediums and audiences is also much easier, as a CMS allows publishing of multiple forms of content from a single source. Blogs can be published with detailed workflows for content approvals or comments that are posted by users. Organizations can consider using a CMS to gain greater control over their corporate blogs by employing workflow, approvals and archiving over both postings and comments. A CMS also ensures that content passes through appropriate quality mechanisms before it gets published.

► Staying on top of Web 2.0 Communities with a CMS

The biggest advantage of a CMS is that it offers flexibility without loss of control. For instance, completely configurable workflows enable organizations to assign tasks to any person, with provisions to escalate in case defined thresholds are crossed. For example, e-mail alerts can be sent to content owners of specific sections on a Web site if these sections are not updated within specific time periods.

When integrated with other standard business applications like a CRM or Web analytics solution, a CMS can automatically 'push' popular content; for example an article that is frequently downloaded can be pushed to the home page, and content repurposed easily across blogs, forums and discussion groups. While the data is provided by the Web analytics solution, the CMS acts upon this data based on a defined workflow that can be flexibly modified. Accordingly, different metrics can be defined by the organization in a content management system's workflow, and the Web site can be quickly modified as per business needs.

A CMS can also help take advantage of new mediums such as RSS feeds and podcasts. Further, visitors to a company's site can personalize their RSS feeds by defining a keyword or phrase. When new content related to the keyword or phrase appears on the Web site, personalized content is automatically pushed.

## Choosing the right CMS

Besides traditional installed CMS, organizations can choose between homegrown solutions, open source applications, or work with a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) provider. In terms of speed of deployment, ease of use and total-cost-of-ownership, the SaaS model scores over the other options.

With no hardware to buy or software to install, a CMS delivered using a SaaS model can be up and running quickly, as there is no laborious process of installing, configuring and testing the software on different computers. The major difference between traditional applications and SaaS-focused vendors is that SaaS applications are built from the ground up to be rapidly configured and deployed.

A SaaS vendor can also keep costs low, while continuing to deliver high quality value-added services. It is estimated that more than 60% of the total cost of owning an application is due to upgrades, support, security management and troubleshooting. With the SaaS model, costs are lower as the vendor takes care of implementing, managing and upgrading the application.

The real value of a CMS is visible after the system goes live: typically, there has to be a dedicated team responsible for managing the hardware, software and the network. You will also need an expert who is always available on a 24/7 basis to modify a template, change a workflow, or troubleshoot an end-user problem. Every time you need to change a layout, make a small change to your template or add a new section, you need developer guidance. Not surprisingly, it is estimated that close to 91% of support requests for organizations deploying a CMS are unrelated to software, but still require dedicated software personnel to solve content-related issues. In a SaaS model, this 91%, that is the cost of support and maintenance, is already factored in. In this context, the importance of SaaS vendors who provide lifelong active support increases in significance.

This is the main reason that though open source software is available “free” of cost, you still have to invest money to install the software on a server, configure and maintain it. If your organization does not have in-house expertise install and deploy the CMS, you will need to invest in training employees, or hire a third party service provider to help configure the CMS. The costs of implementation which include installation, training and customization could easily outweigh the costs incurred in procuring the license.

## Conclusion

Web 2.0 technology scales up the user experience, and gives the marketing function techniques to deliver clear and targeted messages to their customers. A CMS can help your organization easily synchronize different pieces of your content information landscape, and create relationships that go beyond what traditional marketing and branding techniques can achieve. With so many options of mediums available, and at a fraction of the cost of television, print or radio advertising – a CMS can help you take advantage of the phenomenal reach of social networks and communities, and connect with your customers in an entirely new – and more effective ways.

CrownPeak  
5880 W Jefferson Blvd  
Unit G  
Los Angeles, CA 90016

[sales@crowpeak.com](mailto:sales@crowpeak.com)  
[www.crowpeak.com](http://www.crowpeak.com)  
Toll Free: 800-887-1944  
Tel: 310-841-5920

CrownPeak™  
MANAGE CONTENT NOT TECHNOLOGY