



*We Share Our Knowledge*

**Article no. 13**

**WEB 2.0**

**The Internet Revolution Is Here**

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# 1. Introduction

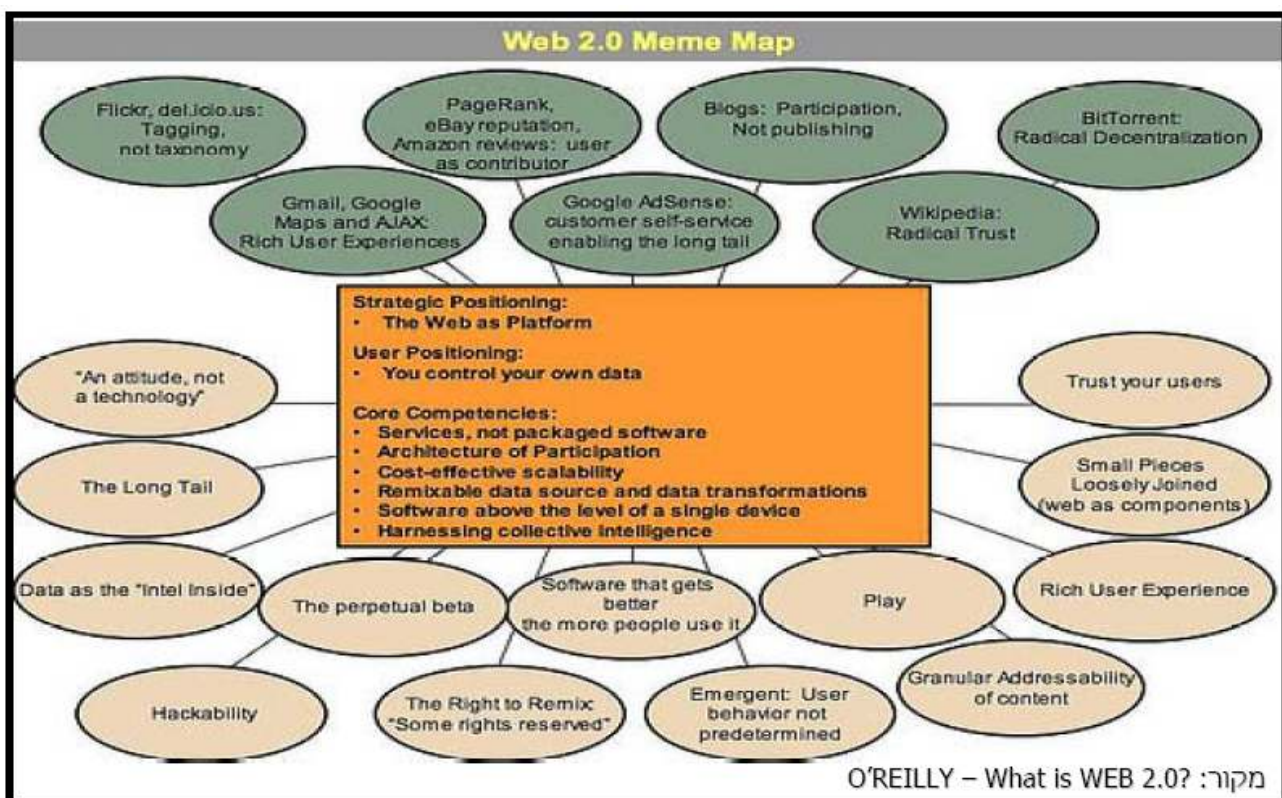
In the past two years, the term WEB 2.0 has been capturing the attention of Internet and business professionals worldwide. However, many unsuccessful attempts have been made to decipher the true meaning of this term. In the base of these attempts lies the question how to identify and classify an application or an approach as belonging to the "new age" – the age of WEB 2.0.

This is quite a pressing issue, mainly because the term WEB 2.0 has become so common, that certain companies insist on using it as a marketing slogan, without fully comprehending its true meaning, whereas others view it as a term describing the turning point in the post 2001, dot.com bubble burst internet world.

Hence, the objective of this article is to try and clarify the meaning of the term WEB 2.0.

# 2. The Internet as a Platform

As part of a brainstorming workshop conducted during the 2<sup>nd</sup> WEB 2.0 conference held a year ago, attempting to clearly depict WEB 2.0 characteristics, workshop participants concluded that WEB 2.0 can be defined as an array of existing internet principles applied by different websites, services and applications, that come together to a sort of virtual "solar system", revolving around one central core, as described in the following chart:



According to the above chart, WEB 2.0 can be envisaged as a collection of ideas and principles developed over the years by post WEB 1.0 companies, who are Internet industry leaders in the current WEB 2.0 world. Such companies include: eBay, Amazon, Yahoo, Google, and others.

These capabilities are the WEB 2.0 core, out of which the ideas and principles are "radiated" into the web, with more ideas being conjured, based on the same capabilities and applied in new websites.

Sometimes, due to those new ideas, more advanced capabilities need to be developed in order to add to the central core. Thus, the core and its surrounding system – the Internet – nourish each other.

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These same capabilities are used in websites that the abovementioned companies and their like operate, and in the services these websites offer, such as: Yahoo maps, Yahoo search marketing, Wikipedia, Gmail, Google AdSense, Google Earth, P2P services, blogs, etc.

Principles such as "trust your users", "user experience", "the approach, not the technology", "the better we are, the more people use our services" and others, are all applied in these websites and services, while utilizing core capabilities.

This is all directed towards one goal: enabling the user to control his personal information and/or the information he is interested in, and to manage that information using the Internet as a platform.

### **3. What Can Turn Us into a WEB 2.0 Company?**

After a comprehensive examination of companies classified by conference participants and internet specialists as WEB 2.0 companies, and after comparing them to companies classified as "old age" companies, i.e. WEB 1.0 companies, 8 ground rules were established, describing the WEB 2.0 core capabilities, all or part of which must be included in the capabilities of any company aspiring to become part of the rapidly evolving WEB 2.0 age.

The following rules describe the capabilities that differentiate WEB 2.0 companies from WEB 1.0 ones:

- Extending activities into full web accessibility.
- Attaining unique information sources.
- Sharing with users for the sole purpose of added value.
- Creating generic default rules to benefit users.
- Working towards collective "adoption".
- Adopting the approach of "eternal beta version".
- Cooperating with other online services.
- Implementing applications on a variety of devices.

#### **4.1 Extending activities into full web accessibility**

The combined power of small websites collectively turns them into the main providers of Internet content. Constructing Internet niches enable those niches to become foremost in the variety of applications offered online. Therefore:

*Self-Services for customers should be expanded, and accordingly, so should algorithmic information management, so that not only central, large websites, but all websites are used, even fringe ones. This is called the Long Tail Policy.*

*For instance: Google AdSense enables any user (or customer) to post an ad on virtually any website and/or webpage, using algorithmic information management, so that ads will appear in the context of the website/page the user is browsing.*

*This is called Context Sensitivity.*

#### **4.2 Attaining unique information sources**

Applications are becoming more and more information-driven. Therefore,

*in order to create a competitive advantage, a company must aspire to obtain unique information sources, which the competitors will find difficult to replicate. These sources must be constructed in a way that the more they are used, the more enriched they become.*

#### **4.3 Sharing with users for the sole purpose of added value**

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The key to competitive advantage in internet applications is the volume of information added by the users, on top of information already gathered and provided by the application, as it has already been proven that the more a certain service is used, the better it becomes, in comparison to competing services. Therefore:

*Rigidly structured "sharing architectures" aren't viable, as they make it hard for users to contribute to the service / application. A better course of action is including and sharing with users both directly and indirectly, and urging them to input their own added value.*

#### **4.4 Creating generic default rules to benefit the users**

Users' influence on and contribution to the web is the key to dominating a WEB 2.0 application and Internet service market. However, not all users will "bother" to voluntarily add their own value. Therefore:

*Default rules should be created, in order to compel every user to contribute some information as a prerequisite to application / service usage. This information will be gathered from all users, thus creating users' added value, as a product of their use in the service / application.*

#### **4.5 Working towards collective "adoption"**

The protection of intellectual property limits recurring usage of certain applications, and prevents any type of experimentation by the application user. Therefore,

*application limitations on personal / private usage, such as license per user, should be avoided. The company should act to promote collection "adoption" of the application, so that more and more subscribers will use and reuse it.*

*Licenses should be as unrestrictive as possible, and "adoption" barriers should be lowered, while still keeping up with existing standards, and with the assumption that such usage of the applications is much more productive.*

#### **4.6 Adopting the approach of "eternal beta version"**

When software and applications are jointly connected to the Internet, e.g. music files\_downloads, the Internet applications used are no longer classified as "software", but as "advanced services". Therefore:

*Users should be trusted and regarded as partners in the application development process. Hence, a company should operate according to the Open Source doctrine: Release Early and Release Often: i.e., instead of periodically releasing new application features in one package, under new version titles (each version usually comes out a few months after the previous one), new features should continuously be released. Every new feature should be released immediately upon its development, regardless of other/additional features. That is, the company should adopt the "eternal beta version" approach, in which the application is constantly developed, and as part of the user experience, the user is also included in the development process and can add new features. Additionally, usage of new features should be tested using testing tools in real time, so that we can learn how those features are being used, in order to immediately improve them.*

#### **4.7 Cooperating with other online services**

WEB 2.0 applications are based on sharing information services. Therefore:

*One should think in terms of cooperation with other online services and instead of aiming to control the information received by the end user, one should syndicate the data outwardly (i.e., the end-to-end principle). Additionally, simple online services with "simple" interfaces should be offered in order to enable cooperation with others' information services and others' usage of our information services.*

"Remixability" and "hackability" should be enablers. *That is, other services should be allowed to "hack" into our interface and use the services we offer and vice versa. Additionally, we should*

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allow "remixing" of our information services with those of others', using our own interface, so that for example, the user can copy other users' internet pages.

Systems such as RSS and AJAX incorporate such capabilities.

#### **4. 8 Implementing applications on a variety of devices**

The personal computer (the PC) is no longer the only means of access to Internet applications. Therefore, applications limited to PCs are losing their value in comparison to those enabling a variety of Internet connection options. Therefore:

*An application should be constructed so that the services it offers can be implemented on a variety of devices, such as cellular devices (phones, modems, NICs), PDAs, laptops, PCs and Internet servers.*

The next time you hear about a self proclaimed WEB 2.0 company, examine it according to the rules specified above, and according to its technological capability to comply with said rules. And remember: the more capabilities a product/application/service/website has, and the more rules it complies with, the more the company behind it deserves the title "a WEB 2.0 company".

## **4. Conclusion**

Even though we still can't unequivocally answer the question "What is WEB 2.0?" and although current answers to that question are countless and diverse, even when asking the very people who first thought of this term and who thus marked the beginning of a new internet era, we can still conclude that the WEB 2.0 is definitely more than just an empty marketing slogan. It can now be clearly identified as a technological turning point in the Internet market, a virtual revolution, where new kinds of technologies are getting ready to take the spotlight.

However, we shouldn't forget that this technology, including its users, is driven by an array of marketing ideas and principles. Consequently, the marketing world has a pivotal role in defining WEB 2.0, a fact which clearly renders the "frame of mind" guiding the internet world in the WEB 2.0 age as quite different from the traditional frame of mind prevailing in the technological world of IT.

## **About Synergy**

**Synergy** is an international consulting company, specializing in Analytical CRM solutions.

**Synergy** offers marketing oriented business ventures, formed by a team of leading local and international industry experts.

**Synergy** aims to provide its customers with the ability of acquiring commercial advantages by informative analysis of their customers' shopping data.

**Synergy** has vast experience in working with leading commercial organizations, both locally and internationally, and its clientele includes foremost industry leaders in the communications, financial and retail fields.

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