



**WHAT
WEB 2.0
MEANS TO**

Facilities
PROFESSIONALS

By Scott Allen

It's official – the Web is now social.

Actually, it's always been social to a degree, but now it's *mostly* social. According to Comscore, the number of worldwide visitors to social networking sites in the past year exceeds 530 million, almost two out of every three Internet users. In some countries, such as the UK, social networking sites account for more than 75 percent of all Web traffic. Even those sites that are ostensibly commerce-oriented have a growing number of social features.

A lot of terms have been coined or adopted to describe various aspects of this phenomenon – social media, social networking, consumer-generated media (CGM) and Web 2.0. While it's hard to define *exactly* what Web 2.0 is, or when Web 1.0 ended, it's clear that the Web today feels very different than it did five years ago.

While it may be impossible to describe Web 2.0 in a single sentence, there are a few broad brushstrokes that can help paint the picture:

- 1. Web 2.0 is social.** People now look for answers from other people. Web users are now inclined to trust the collective opinions of their friends or “people like themselves” as much or more than advertisers, critics and other official sources. Web users want to develop, track and leverage relationships over time, not just a single transaction. And when static information and automated tools fail to provide quick solutions, they turn to real people, whether from official sources or informal social networks.
- 2. Web 2.0 is open.** In Web 1.0, you generally had the assumption of privacy, i.e., it was assumed that you generally wanted privacy and would only share your information and content on a limited basis. In Web 2.0, there is an assumption of openness. If you create a social networking profile, unless

you specify it as private, it will be open to the world. Even if you're not producing content yourself, if you have any social or business life at all, others are creating it about you. You're better off realizing this and learning how to deal with it responsibly rather than trying to fight it.

- 3. Web 2.0 is quick and easy.** Web 2.0 enables users to do things that used to require a webmaster or developer. Blogging, for example, doesn't really enable anything that couldn't have been done previously, but it's an order of magnitude simpler now. A variety of data feeds and other embedded applications can be added to a Web page or social networking profile with a click of a button or copying a single line of code. Applications that would have taken months to develop now take days.

Let's look now at some of the specific ways facilities professionals can leverage this technology:

- **Recruiting** – While general job boards like Monster and niche boards like APPA's Job Express are still essential tools, increasingly hiring managers and recruiters are using professional networking sites like LinkedIn to tap into the vast market of passive candidates. Heavy participation is not required, but at a minimum you want to connect with your past coworkers and other professional colleagues.
- **Showcasing your work** – Are you doing great work in your organization? A blog is an effective way to communicate that to your institution, students and the public. The big stuff may garner awards or merit press releases, but the day-to-day stuff tends to get overlooked. Telling success stories from your organization will enhance both your personal reputation and that of your institution. Check out UC San Diego's Greenest University *blog* at <http://greenestuniversity.blogspot.com>.
- **Dialog with your stakeholders** – Web 2.0 enables conversations. Want open, frank feedback about your facilities and related services? Give students and teachers a virtual



space to talk about it. You'll get far better input than you will via private feedback alone. Virginia Commonwealth University, for example, uses a blog to solicit suggestions about their library: <http://blog.vcu.edu/libsuggest>.

- **Knowledge sharing** – Some questions just can't be answered with a Google search. If you're looking for peer feedback to help you with a challenging problem, try the APPAinfo discussion list. Or for niche expertise in other areas, LinkedIn's Answers feature can be an invaluable resource. And by participating and answering questions, you can hone your own skills,

build relationships and enhance your professional reputation.

- **Build campus relationships** – A growing number of educators and administrators are discovering that by participating in student-preferred social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace, they are building stronger relationships with their students and even with each other.
- **Application development** – Publicly available tools enable the rapid creation of any number of useful applications for facilities management. For example, did you know that you can add locations from your campus in the public Google Maps? Or

that you can use their application and your own campus maps to create an interactive map that works just like Google Maps? Want to see it in action? Check out Iowa State's interactive campus map at <http://www.fpm.iastate.edu/maps>.

- **Professional development** – Participating in social media in your industry is a good way to keep up with current industry trends and issues, build your reputation, meet new people and generate publicity opportunities for yourself and your organization. If you don't want to maintain a blog of your own, you could try your hand at being a guest blogger. See the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* Building & Grounds Blog for an example: <http://chronicle.com/blogs/architecture>.

This is just a sampling of the potential ways Web 2.0 can help you be more effective in your job and career. Any business function that can be enhanced by relationships can be enhanced by virtual relationships. Once you realize that and detach yourself from the idea that "real" relationships only take place face-to-face, you'll discover a web of opportunity awaits you. ☺

Scott Allen is managing partner of Link to Your World LLC, a consulting firm that helps organizations transform virtual relationships into real business. He is coauthor of *The Virtual Handshake: Opening Doors and Closing Deals Online* and *The Emergence of The Relationship Economy*. To learn more, visit www.cornerstonespeakers.com. He will be speaking at the APPA 2008 annual conference on the topic of "Mastering Web 2.0 and the New Age of e-Business." This is his first article for *Facilities Manager*.

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