

Web 2 point what?

By Jeri Koehler, September 2008



The latest buzzword regarding the internet today is Web 2.0 (pronounced Web-two-point-oh). Maybe you're wondering what it is and where you can buy it. Is it available at the local computer store? Is it compatible with Windows Vista?

This newsletter will offer some insight into Web 2.0, and how it can be applied to your small business today.

First off, let me define Web 2.0. It is not a software program or a website and cannot be purchased. It is the term coined for the latest generation of the internet. Maybe you remember the first websites built over twelve years ago. They were flat and just basically business cards online.

The second generation of websites hit in the late 90's and allowed users to make purchases online. This transformed the online economy and eventually led to the internet bubble explosion, or the 'dot-com bust', which happened in early 2000.

This latest generation of the internet is what is referred to as Web 2.0. This includes social websites and also refers to blogs, podcasts, forums, wikis and RSS feeds, all of which allow users to control the content they view, watch and read. Here are some definitions that may help clarify.

Social media – Unlike traditional media sources such as newspapers, television and magazines, social media depends on interactions between people as the discussion and integration of words build shared-meaning, using technology as a conduit. Examples of social media sites include [Myspace](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Blogs – A blog is a website maintained by an individual or organization that contains posts and commentaries on topics of interest to the user and their audience. Blogs can be used by companies, consultants, individuals or anyone else that wants to put notes on the internet about timely subject matter. Small business owners can put blogs on their websites to update customers on a variety of topics.

Podcasts – Podcasts are audio or video files on the internet. Much like a newscast, a podcast is an individual or group making content available to download or listen to directly from a computer. Podcasting can be used by most small businesses today as a way to inform customers about services and timely topics of interest. An example of a video podcast can be found at www.helpmybusiness.com.

Wiki – A Wiki is a page or collection of websites that allow anyone to add content. The most popular example is [Wikipedia](#). The wiki feature is being added to many websites today to allow users to add or modify content and collaborate with each other.

RSS Feeds – RSS stands for Real Simple Syndication. Most websites today have a RSS button that allows users to subscribe to the site and receive updates via email. The emails don't go into the typical inbox, but are instead compiled in a separate folder, using very little storage space. I subscribe to many RSS feeds for sites I like to visit, but don't have time to pull up. So updates and news releases are easily accessible without leaving my inbox.

Tags – Simplistic technology that gives users the flexibility of bookmarking specific web pages and sites of interest. Users not only tag the sites or articles, they can also share them via services such as [Del.icio.us](#), [Digg](#), and [Stumbleupon](#).

So what's next for the internet? How about the 'distributed web'. This is the process of allowing users to customize their phones and mobile devices to make using the internet 'on-the-go' far easier. These types of applications can be used as far as your imagination can stretch, from dining out while watching your weight, to shopping for a house. Mobile applications are popping up everywhere to change the way the internet is used.

So how does all of this help your business or organization? Familiarizing yourself with these tools will help you stay in touch with what's going on, keep you on top of the latest web tools available and help guide your social efforts as well. This gives new meaning to the old adage of 'the only constant in business is change'.