

## Web 2.0: What is it really, and why do I care?

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A few weeks ago I invited NACC readers to join me in wading into the waters of Web 2.0. I realize how easy it might have been for you to say: “That’s interesting, but I’m really busy with today’s firefights. I’ll look into it another day.” You’ve got so much “have to do” work that there’s little room for “want to do.” Moreover, I’m pretty sure it’s not solely your responsibility to worry about leveraging the current and prospective customer base to protect or enhance your brand. But like it or not, Web 2.0 momentum is building, and your actions – or inaction – will decide whether *you* do it, or someone does it *for* you (or to you).

### What is Web 2.0 Anyway?

If you want to dive into definitions, go to Wikipedia (a Web 2.0 tool!), which defines it as “a *perceived* second generation of web development and design, that aims to *facilitate communication, secure information sharing, interoperability, and collaboration* on the World Wide Web.” (Emphasis added) Web 2.0 is your new, global community – of customers, prospects, CSRs, SMEs, and people who like to “help.” It’s the new millennium version of “How to win friends and influence people” (with all due respect to Dale Carnegie) but with fewer best practices and niceties. It’s more “Wild, Wild West” than “Twelve Ways to Win People to Your Way of Thinking” and “How to Change People Without Giving Offense or Arousing Resentment.” In fact, many participants in the Web 2.0 world may actually be trying to give offense or arouse resentment! A single person can communicate with the masses – their friends, or the public – real-time, through a variety of channels, with positive *or* negative spin. By “tweeting” on Twitter, “blogging” on Blogspot, answering questions on forums, uploading videos or photos, promoting links to useful information, rating a product, service, or content, and populating wikis, they will try to influence, gain feedback or reactions from, and disseminate information to others.

Figure 1 shows the principles of the Web 2.0 community sharing information. Users contribute content through a variety of media that others may proactively receive (whether they consume the content or not) or seek when desired. A key premise underlies this activity: if content begets content, votes, subscriptions, or commentary through secondary contributions (what I’m calling a “boost”), it gains value in the community.



Figure 1: Web 2.0 Enables Information Sharing Across the Community



## ***Why should you care***

Web 2.0 is *viral*. Facebook has 175 million users. It's not just Gen X and Millennials anymore; the 30+ year-olds are Facebook's fastest growing demographic. Lance Armstrong had 317,000 followers and growing on Twitter, last I checked. That's only slightly more than the CEO of Zappos. Think about that! Tony Hsieh is promoting a brand and engaging his staff to serve customers in ways we couldn't fathom just a few months ago. Comcast is monitoring Twitter feeds to hear what customers say and respond. [Yes, "Comcastcares."] As I write this article, I could "Ask a question about Apple and get help from 14 employees and tens of thousands of customers" on GetSatisfaction. A major soft drink brand is not yet actively engaged there, yet I could ask a question about their products and "get help from hundreds of customers." Want to write a "how to" about something? Go to "WikiHow" and write to your heart's content. Then the community will add to, edit, and discuss your content. Imagine if your customers (or CSRS!) start finding answers to their questions through these sorts of resources.

The harsh reality in the Web 2.0 world is that you don't control the information flow and structure like you're used to in the call center world. Web 2.0 empowers the community of users, like it or not, ready or not. We *hope* the community filters, cleanses, counters, and weights information, and the good stuff emerges at the top. But there is no guarantee. And that's a powerful argument to get involved with "good" information and turn this resource into something valuable.

## ***What should you do***

It's easy to think this phenomenon is someone else's problem – or opportunity – because it goes way beyond the contact center. It does. Opportunities exist both within the company for internal communication (agents, supervisors, subject matter experts, other departments) and outside the company for external communication (customers, prospects, analysts, competitors, and others who want to respond to your customers' or prospects' questions). But the contact center *has* to get involved. In fact, because of the opportunities it presents, it may be the best thing that has happened to customer interaction in a long time. It will force cross-departmental collaboration and get others across the company engaged in customer care.

As a next step, think about how you would use Web 2.0 capabilities within the center, across the enterprise, and with external parties. You'll be a rare contact center if you can handle all of this yourself. Since the center typically only controls things within its boundaries, you may want to start there. But you *need* marketing. This is the "seize the moment" opportunity to work together to address enterprise communications in support of your customers. Anyone who has been promoting, studying, or pondering "Unified Communications" had better pay attention as well. Web 2.0 may be just the catalyst UC needs to get other parts of the enterprise to provide subject matter experts to support customer interactions through the center and with customers directly.

Tune into NACC for more input on this topic as we look at Web 2.0 strategy in the contact center and across the enterprise. I promise I'll write soon. We may not have time to wait!