Web 2.0

Principles and Best Practices

Today the business world is undergoing a significant transformation thanks to a set of technologies collectively known as "Web 2.0." Web 2.0 describes a set of next-generation Internet technologies. These protocols and tools make it easier to create online applications that behave dynamically, much like traditional PC-based software.

Like all emerging technologies, Web 2.0 is difficult to define with any degree of accuracy. But Web 2.0 clearly represents a marked shift in the way information is created, shared, stored, distributed, and manipulated. Web 2.0 pushes computing power off the desktop and onto the Internet, which means less time and money spent on PC software administration.

Web 2.0 is not a new technology or a new set of rules. Web 2.0 is an idea. At the heart of Web 2.0 is the idea that the Web is a platform. Not an advertising platform, but a platform where users control their own data and from which scalable services are offered. Web 2.0 is about services rather than packaged software and it is about offerings compatible with many devices (mobile phones, portable gaming consoles, different internet browsers, etc).

As a general rule, Web 2.0 services are cheaper, easier to deploy, and more flexible than other software equivalents. But the advantages don't stop there. Because many Web 2.0 applications are built around open standards and social-media tools such as tagging, bookmarking, and user-generated content, they also enable new forms of collaboration that can have a powerful impact upon the way you operate.

Some of the most powerful examples of Web 2.0 technology include Salesforce.com's CRM tools, the YouTube video-sharing site, and Google spreadsheets.

Features

- Web-based applications can be accessed from anywhere
- Simple applications solve specific problems
- Value lies in content, not the software used to display content
- Data can be readily shared
- Distribution is bottom-up, not top-down
- Employees and customers can access and use tools on their own
- Social tools encourage people to create, collaborate, edit, categorize, exchange, and promote information
- Network effects are encouraged; the more people who contribute, the better the content gets

Web 2.0 creates ways for large groups of people to collaborate and exchange information, reducing the importance of the PC itself as an information-delivery platform. When both the applications and the data that feed into them reside online, a variety of devices can function as information terminals: your smart phone, your music player, the computer you use today, and whatever computer you'll use next year. Web 2.0 not only makes all this possible, it also makes it inexpensive and easy to deploy.

Web 2.0 not only places the Internet user squarely in the middle of things, but it gives that user the means and power to create and manipulate data. Web 2.0 dramatically changes how we view and use the web. It actually creates a whole new Internet in many ways.

Strengths

- Shifts computing from stand-alone computers reduces software deployment and administrative costs.

- Fosters the free exchange of information between different tools and groups of users Encourages large-scale collaboration

- Facilitates new forms of problem-solving that can provide valuable ideas and insights.

Weaknesses

- The hype surrounding Web 2.0 can be confusing.

- The fuzzy nature of the term means that some people will use the term Web 2.0 just to get attention regardless of the extent to which their offering really is dynamic, interactive, or built around accepted Web 2.0 protocols.

- As more and more Web 2.0 startups enter the marketplace, not all of them will survive. It is thus advisable to exercise due caution before making any substantial investment in a Web 2.0-based tool.

Apart from the concept itself, some specific Web 2.0 technologies that are important to understand include:

AJAX:
An acronym derived from "Asynchronous JavaScript and XML." AJAX is an important underlying technology used to create interactive Web applications. Ajax is what enables Web 2.0 sites to behave dynamically, so that they feel more like computer programs than static web pages.

Atom:
A format for the syndication of online content, atom functions as a newer alternative to RSS.

Blog:
Originally derived from the word "weblog," a blog is a simple content website created with inexpensive self-publishing tools.

Mashups:
Websites or applications that combine content from one or more sources.

RSS:
Shorthand for "Real Simple Syndication," RSS is a protocol that makes it easy for computer users to receive content from their favorite providers whenever the content is updated. Instead of having to remember to visit a website to read a favorite column, watch a video, or listen to an audio program, RSS lets a user subscribe to the content so it's delivered automatically. The flow of content the user receives is called an "RSS feed."

Social media:
A generic term used to describe Web-based tools that harness the power of collaboration and group interaction.

Tags:
User-generated keywords used to describe online content. Tags make it easier for both humans and search engines to find relevant and related information.

Wikis:
A dynamic Web document that allows users to add, change, or edit the content displayed on the page. The user-created Wikipedia online encyclopedia is the most famous example.

XML:
An abbreviation for "Extensible Markup Language," XML is a programming code for online data that preserves the structure and formatting of a digital document regardless of whatever application is used to read it. XML is an important enabling technology for RSS feeds.

The basic ideas of Web 2.0 can be applied by almost anyone. Some of the basic requirements are:

□ **Hardware:**
Computers running Windows 98 or Mac OS 9 won't work well with Web 2.0 apps. Newer operating systems are recommended. Desktops or laptops should be able to run the latest Internet browsers, and they should have broadband Internet connections via DSL, T-1 lines, or WiFi.

□ **Internet browsers:**
No matter what browser your employees prefer Explorer, Firefox, or Safarieveryone on your team should use the most up-to-date version available. Make sure they also have the latest multimedia plugins installed.

□ **Project leader:**
A risk-tolerant team member who is not an IT staffer to lead an effort to assess, deploy, and evaluate a Web 2.0 technology.

□ **An open mind:**
Web 2.0 buzzwords can be complex. They also make it hard to understand what Web 2.0 services can really do until you try them.

The Softweb Solutions team has acquired vast expertise in designing & implementing business solutions based on Web 2.0 technologies. We offer the most comprehensive & complete Web 2.0 based solutions that will help your organization to capitalize on the advances of computing technology and put it to optimal use. Our approach involves extensive interactions with cross-functional & inter-departmental resources in your organization right from conceptualization to delivering the final solution.

Call us now to find out how our Web 2.0 solutions can transform your business.

Softweb Solutions

www.softwebsolutions.com