Social Media

or, "How I learned to stop worrying and love communication"

An introduction to the power of "Web2.0"

"Markets are conversations.

Markets consist of human beings, not demographic sectors.

Conversations among human beings *sound* human. They are conducted in a human voice.

The internet is enabling conversations among human beings that were simply not possible in the era of mass media."

The Cluetrain Manifesto

"The internet is a powerful tool. But most attention seems to focus on its use as a means of vertical communications: from one to many.

"…But as important as this is — and it's very important indeed — it's probably dwarfed by the much more numerous horizontal communications that the internet, and related technologies like cell phones, text message and the like permit. They allow a kind of horizontal knowledge that is often less obvious, but in many ways at least as powerful, as the vertical kind.

"Horizontal knowledge is communication among individuals, who may or may not know each other, but who are loosely coordinated by their involvement with something, or someone, of mutual interest. And it's extremely powerful, because it makes people much smarter."

Prof. Glenn Reynolds

It's all about disruption and the people taking back control of what they pay attention to

TABLE OF CONTENTS

"Your brand is no stronger than your reputation — and will increasingly depend on what comes up when you are Googled"

Allan Jenkins

Introduction

The traditional means of communicating with audiences — such as employees, customers, investment communities — have relied heavily on print-based documents, email or static internet websites.

Today, these methods are rapidly giving way to a new generation of internet-based tools that allow for far greater levels of two-way interaction, discussion and conversation.

The media no longer owns the audience. Scarcity is no longer the problem. The internet is infinitely scalable. Text, audio and video are available to everyone. The Internet is now the world's most powerful publishing and broadcasting platform. It is growing exponentially.

The new web tools are cheap (often free), easy to use and fast to produce. Communicating can become seamlessly integrated with your 'regular' workload. Everyone can communicate – not just the corporate communications team!

The new immediacy and integration can energise your communications releasing a relationship building power that has been absent from old-style corporate communication tools.

Indeed, so fundamental has been the shift from 'static', 'brochure-ware' websites to the new 'conversational' internet that many pundits are calling the 'old' internet "Web1.0" and this new web world "Web2.0", reflecting dramatic improvement based in large part on in far better software coding and functionality.

A key pointer to this shift towards a 'conversational web' is the book "The Cluetrain Manifesto". As far as the authors of this paper are aware, the 'Cluetrain,' as it is affectionately known by many, was the first website to be made into a book. You can find the original Manifesto at http://www.cluetrain.com; however the hard backed book offers further insights into what the authors meant.
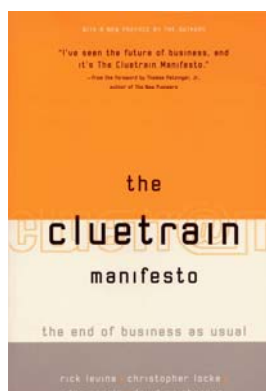
Key to the Manifesto is the concept that markets are now 'conversations' and that unless companies are willing to enter into that 'conversation' they will be left behind. The conversation is happening anyway, the authors contend, so better to 'join in' than risk having lies and distortions go unchallenged in the conversations that are happening every day — around the proverbial 'water cooler', over coffee, in phone calls and emails.

The tools that allow companies to 'join in' the conversations happening in their industries and marketplaces have been called 'social media' tools, because of the new 'social' nature of the internet medium. Whereas mainstream media ("MSM") such as newspapers, TV and radio, and magazines are traditionally one-way media devices ('experts' pontificate and readers have little opportunity to contribute to or start any discussion with the author), social media allows players, protagonists, pundits and publics to interact, engage, and build rapport more easily than ever before.

The two biggest and most widely-used social media tools are blogging and podcasting. There are now more than 60 million blogs, a new blog site is created every second of the day, and 50,000 blogposts (think of a blogpost as an article published by someone on their own website) are published every hour, day and night. The total number of blogs in the world doubles every five months.

There are currently in excess of 50,000 podcasts and the number is growing fast, though not as fast as blogs. But podcasts are a powerful communication tool in any company's communication distribution and public relations toolbox, and more and more companies and organizations are turning to them to engage with jaded audiences who are turning away from traditional mainstream media outlets in ever greater numbers. A good local example is CSIROpod[1].

Add to this the recent boom in online video through Youtube, and the millions of photos uploaded through services like Flickr, and you can see how the Internet is morphing into a broadcasting, as well as a text-based publishing environment.

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[1] http://www.csiro.gov.au

Text services like Twitter and Jaiku are just the latest in a long and never-ending line of improvements in the technical process of communication.

In this updated version of our much-cited and widely circulated white paper we aim to give you a gentle introduction to this new communication world, show you the benefits and offer advice about possible pitfalls.

We hope you find it of value.

Trevor Cook   **Lee Hopkins**
Director   CCTO
Jackson Wells Morris   Better Communication Results
www.JacksonWells.com.au   www.LeeHopkins.net

Web2.0 and collaboration

The days of dial-up are rapidly coming to an end. Half of all internet connections in Australia are broadband and the number of new connections jumped 80 percent in the last 12 months. Both sides of politics are promising a broadband revolution in Australia over the next few years.

Broadband brings with it the reality of an 'always on' web. That is, when your computer is on so too is your internet connection. The 'always on' web is a key part of the emergence of Web 2.0, as is the falling costs of data storage.

This opens the possibility of the integration of offline and online computing activity and with it the scope for much more online collaboration.

In any event, your desktop computer is fast becoming a relic. Laptops are faster and more powerful and lighter then ever before. They are set up for wireless connections, they come with built-in webcams. Your phone is also probably web-connected these days. You may already be using RSS to stream media and blog feeds direct to you mobile screen, you may even be downloading podcasts. Some of your fellow commuters are already watching mobile TV. Just about any device you buy in the future is going to feature this capacity to connect easily to the Internet and to access text, audio and video on the fly.

The introduction of Tivo to Australia next year by Yahoo and Channel 7 will make it much easier for people to watch video from the Internet on their family room televisions.

Google's strategy to challenge Microsoft's market dominance is said to be focused on this online/offline integration.

This is being done firstly through an extension of its search tools to the enterprise[2] and the individual desktop[3]

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[2] http://google.com/enterprise
[3] http://desktop.google.com

Google is also rolling out a series of web-based tools that have traditionally been associated with the individual computer - Gmail[4], Google Calendar[5] and Google spreadsheets[6] (which allows online collaboration around data input).

One of the more interesting of Google's new online collaboration tools was its recent purchase of Writely.com[7] which offers an online word processor and boasts 'real-time collaboration'.

Google also recently purchased personal video-sharing website YouTube[8] for AUD$2.2bn, valuing YouTube's contribution to the online 'conversation' at over USD$1bn.

Writely, like many Web 2.0 services and tools, uses AJAX[9] to give the user a smoother, more responsive feel when they are working directly into web pages.

Microsoft, not wanting to be left behind, is also moving in this direction with the rollout of Windows Live[10], currently in Beta.

Microsoft Office 2007[11], recently released, includes a feature which allows people to blog directly from inside their word processor - something that would have been irrelevant without the rise of the 'always on' web.

Another easy way to collaborate online, 'wikis', are also becoming increasingly popular. Wikis[12] are websites that users can edit directly into the browser. Wikis can be public or private and are ideal for collaborating because they are easy to build and edit. Wikispaces[13] is a popular service which offers free and premium versions.

The NewPR wiki[14] was created as a space for PR bloggers around the world to aggregate and share information and other resources.

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[4] http://mail.google.com/mail/
[5] http://www.google.com/calendar/
[6] http://spreadsheets.google.com/
[7] http://www.writely.com/
[8] http://www.youtube.com/
[9] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AJAX
[10] http://www.live.com/
[11] http://www.microsoft.com/office/preview/beta/download/en/default.mspx
[12] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikis
[13] http://blog.wikispaces.com/
[14] http://www.thenewpr.com/wiki/pmwiki.php

Wikis are popular inside organisations for project management . It is easy to see who added/edited information and when, changes can be reversed if required, but everyone has access to the latest version all the time. That gets over a lot of version control issues, it also means that everyone is responsible for the document and not just one or two unlucky individuals. Each individual's contributions are more transparent as well - you can see more easily who did what.

Some software companies are already pushing the boundaries to see how much further integration can go.

IBM, like Microsoft, is pursuing the idea of software as a service, where users can create little bits of software themselves or download it from a site when they need it - rather than buying the big, heavy, all inclusive, expensive, soon-to-be-outdated shrinkwrap version.

IBM's QEDwiki[15] product, still in trial, aims to allow corporates to mash up data from internal and external sources on their screen using a wiki and software they create themselves to solve business problems in real time, today, rather than waiting months for the formal report on what happened.

Similarly, social bookmarking sites like **del.icio.us**[16] allow peers to share interesting links, snippets of information, articles and resources.

Online collaboration, courtesy of the new Web2.0 tools, doesn't end with just keyboard input.

Software such as Skype[17] allows two or more people to talk with and share files in real time over the internet, using a protocol called 'Voice over IP', or 'VOIP' for short.

There are also 'virtual universes' such as **Second Life**[18] that allow businesses to interact with marketplaces they would normally get little chance to engage with. Originally a text-based communication and

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[15] http://news.com.com/IBM+eyes+programming+for+the+masses/2100-1007_3-6065324.html
[16] http://www.del.icio.us
[17] http://www.skype.com
[18] http://www.secondlife.com

interaction 'universe', **Second Life** is about to offer voice-based interaction as well.

It seems that every week there is some new collaborative tool or website being launched — keeping up to date with them can be a full-time job! The Web2.0 collaborative tools make harnessing the phenomenal marketing and branding power of the internet easier to use than ever before.

Why blog?

As two PR and Communications professionals, let's outline why we believe blogging is good for our respective businesses.

Trevor's blog, **Corporate Engagement**[19], is three years old. It has between 900 and 1000 RSS and email subscribers and between 250 and 400 unique visitors each day. Over half of these visitors find their way to the blog through search engines.

Lee's blog, **Better Communication Results**[20], is two years old, has between 600 and 700 RSS and email subscribers and around 200 unique visitors a day, many of whom come via the search engines.

Basically, blogs are very easy-to-manage websites. They are no harder to set-up and maintain than sending an email or using Microsoft Word. This ease of use allows you to post your ideas and opinions often and without using up too much time. That keeps your blog 'fresh' and is more 'immediate' than the staleness of a 'traditional' brochureware site.

Blogs are very search engine friendly. Every post has a separate URL and the linking behaviour of bloggers also promotes them up the search engine rankings. People (including customers and investors) are more likely to find your blog than your website.

Jackson Wells Morris, the Sydney PR company that Trevor is a Director in, has a feed from the blog on the front page of its site. This drives traffic to their website (and to the blog) and helps keep their corporate website[21] looking fresh.

Lee has both a blog and a more traditional, brochureware, site[22]. By incorporating links between the two sites, plus using free tools that insert the headlines of his latest blog posts onto the front page of his brochureware site, both sites benefit from the different aims of each site. The 'brochureware' site has over 140 articles on the topic of business communication and is very popular in the search engines

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[19] http://trevorcook.typepad.com
[20] http://www.leehopkins.net
[21] http://www.jacksonwells.com.au
[22] http://www.leehopkins.com

amongst students of business communication. The blog provides immediate, more intimate and 'conversational' information.

So what are the key benefits of blogging for professional services firms like ours:

- **building profile.** Blogging is a cheap form of marketing and advertising
- **revealing expertise.** No imaginable brochure could match the richness of the nearly two thousand posts on our blogs, which give people a real insight (hopefully) into what we do
- **networking.** Blogging has allowed us to build professional relationships with PR academics and practitioners, business communicators and students around the world
- **generating business.** Both Lee and Trevor have had businesses approach them to ask for help in understanding and utilising this new way of marketing and conducting business on the internet.
- Additionally, both Lee and Trevor have been asked to speak and present at prestigious conventions – thus influencing scores of key decision-makers in business.

There are other benefits, but we'll talk about them in the next few pages.

Web feeds (RSS and other geeky stuff)

The key to managing the vast flows of information available on the Internet these days lies with the power of RSS feeds and RSS fed aggregators.

Understanding and using feeds can make you far more productive in your daily worklife, just as 'googling' has done over the past few years. Getting your customers and other stakeholders to subscribe to your site will enable you to stay 'in-touch' with them much more effectively than just relying on them to bookmark favourites.

The **BBC** has a very clear definition of what RSS is[23]:

> News feeds allow you to see when websites have added new content. You can get the latest headlines and video in one place, as soon as it's published, without having to visit the websites you have taken the feed from.
>
> Feeds are also known as RSS. There is some discussion as to what RSS stands for, but most people plump for 'Really Simple Syndication'. In essence, the feeds themselves are just web pages, designed to be read by computers rather than people.

Wikipedia[24] also has useful information if you wish to know more about RSS and its uses.

Millions of websites now provide RSS feeds; not only 'blogs' but also most media sites. The Australian Government now provides a feed of all its media releases, as do the main political parties and an increasing number of Federal and State Departments.

Web feeds (RSS or Atom) are typically linked with the word "Subscribe", an orange rectangle, a feed icon, or with the letters XML or RSS. Many news aggregators such as *My Yahoo!* publish subscription buttons for use on Web pages to simplify the process of adding news feeds.

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[23] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/help/3223484.stm
[24] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSS_%28file_format%29

RSS / XML is a very small and simple piece of coding and works quietly in the background of websites to automatically send out new information when it is published.

Research has highlighted that the people who access information through RSS feeds typically stay-in-touch with many more information websites than people who rely on more traditional methods like bookmarking their 'favourites', or reading newspapers or watching tv. The users of RSS feeds typically expose themselves to more information, from more sources, on more subjects.

A huge advantage of using web feeds is that they put the user in charge. The user must 'subscribe' to each feed, thus avoiding the problem of email spam. Using a separate aggregator to read feeds means that this information can be kept out of your already cluttered email inbox. But even then, for those who prefer to get their news in a way that is comfortable to them, most RSS feeds can also be subscribed to via email — you get the latest information from your favourite sources emailed to you on a daily basis.

And just as RSS feeds make it easier for users to keep informed, feeds and aggregators (or readers) make it easier for organisations to stay in-touch with people who are interested in what they are doing but may forget or not find time to visit the website looking for updates. RSS feeds 'push' the information out to the subscribers, saving each subscriber's valuable time because they don't then have to visit each individual website to find the latest information. And let's face it, how often have you visited a website, perhaps infrequently, and have trouble deciding what is 'new' information and what you have read before — RSS readers allow you to mark new items as 'read', so that you won't be presented with them again unless you deliberately go hunting for them.

Web feeds can also be created for individual subjects. For instance, a company could provide internal users with feeds on subjects like sales, marketing, human resources and so on. This allows users to subscribe to the information they want, rather than receiving everything or going to websites to look for updates on subjects that interest them.

Another great use of web feeds is the capacity to subscribe to saved feeds. Google News[25], for instance, allows you to do this through a link in the left-hand column. This replaces Google Alerts[26] and again gets them out of the email inbox.

Aggregators are becoming ubiquitous. New generation browsers are including web feed aggregators, and Microsoft's Internet Explorer to feeds. Email programs, like **google's gmail**, are also offering feed reader capacities. The next version of Microsoft Office, currently in beta testing, allows you to subscribe to feeds in Outlook, putting them into separate folders automatically.

The Yahoo search engine also shows the feed as well as the URL of sites on its results' pages.

Bloglines[27] is one of the most popular web-based aggregators. It is free and is simple to configure and use. Its a good place to start your RSS adventures. **Bloglines** allows you to mark your subscriptions as public or private. You can see Trevor's public subscriptions at http://www.bloglines.com/public/engagement; Lee's are at http://www.bloglines.com/public/leehopkins.

There are plenty of pc and mac-based aggregators available on the web, from 'free to purchase' through to more integrated packages that cost around \$30-35. Lee is a devotee of **GreatNews**[28] and Trevor is a recent convert.

Feeds and aggregators are a great example of the power of Web 2.0 because they allow users to consume information in ways that make sense to them. In the same folder of your aggregator you can have feeds on a topic from media outlets, public and private organisations, relevant bloggers and saved searches.

With your aggregator and subscriptions in place, you are now disaggregating and re-aggregating the global information flow to suit your needs and preferences. That's a very powerful and a very productive thing to do.

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[25] http://news.google.com/
[26] http://www.google.com/alerts
[27] http://www.bloglines.com
[28] http://curiostudio.com

You can read more about web feeds and aggregators on these sites:

Wikipedia web feeds http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSS_%28file_format%29

Wikipedia aggregators
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aggregator

Google News Feeds http://news.google.com/intl/en_us/news_feed_terms.html

News.com.au
http://www.news.com.au/feeds

ABC
http://www.abc.net.au/services/rss.htm

Some corporate blog examples

More and more members of corporate Australia are 'joining the conversation'.

Telstra has the best-known corporate blogs in Australia, called collectively "**Nowwearetalking**."[29] Still less than 2 years old, the Telstra blogs have already attracted more than a million visitors. Telstra's blogs don't attract the traffic its other websites get, but we're told it gets a good quality readership of people from the media and so on. (As an aside, have a look at this post[30] on a virtual classroom at Homebush High in Sydney.)

Lee helped the staff at Dymocks in Adelaide set up a blog called "The Adelaide Bookshelf."[31] The blog is a place where the shop's staff can post their views on new releases. It's more than just a 'come buy this' site — the staff at Dymocks truly love books and this shines through in their reviews. Having a way of sharing your thoughts and ideas with a group of like-minded souls is a good marketing idea.

Again in Adelaide, a local counselling and mediation service has set up two blogs to help them position themselves as a premiere service — it has helped bring in a tremendous amount of business for them and positioned them as a national leader in their industry. See Lee's post on them[32] for more details.

One of Jackson Wells Morris' clients is Findit.com.au, a new online classifieds business which is using many of the tools described in this paper. Findit's owner, Mark Fletcher, has had his own blog called **Australian Newsagency blog**[33] which gives some real first-hand insights into the nature of the newsagency business.

Findit itself also has a blog[34] which is being used to post information about **Findit** and the online classifieds business more generally.

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[29] http://www.nowwearetalking.com.au/Home/
[30] http://www.nowwearetalking.com.au/Home/Page.aspx?mid=128
[31] http://dymade.blogspot.com/
[32] http://leehopkins.net/2006/05/15/blogging-works-for-this-business/
[33] http://www.towersystems.com.au/fhn_blog/
[34] http://blogs.findit.com.au/blogs/findit/default.aspx

In Caringbah, one of Sydney's southern suburbs, real estate agent Bill Noonan runs a blog[35] which brings together local news and helps promote his business

Frank Arrigo works at Microsoft in Australia and is one of our best-known and most active bloggers[36]. He uses blogging to interact with the developer community.

Lee has helped the RSPCA in South Australia start their own blog[37] as a way of creating more visibility and interaction with the community.

Globally, McDonalds is using a blog called **Open for Discussion**[38] to help promote awareness of its corporate social responsibility efforts

In fact blogging comes in all shapes and sizes from big global corporations to small local businesses. Blogging is very flexible.

Here's a corporate blogging survey[39] from late 2005 that you might find interesting for an overview — bear in mind that the growth rate for blogs is roughly double every six months, so there are a lot more companies blogging now than reflected in that survey.

As we mentioned in our introduction, there is a new blog created every second and there are currently over 60 million of them; there will always be a consistent percentage of them that are focused on business.

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[35] http://caringbah.localsblog.com.au/index.php
[36] http://blogs.msdn.com/frankarr/
[37] http://blog1.rspcasa.asn.au
[38] http://csr.blogs.mcdonalds.com/
[39] http://www.backbonemedia.com/blogsurvey/

Podcasting for business

A question that we both get asked a lot is 'what is podcasting?' Podcasting is the automatic delivery of audio media (usually an .mp3 file) via RSS to subscribers. The content of that audio media varies considerably.

The early adopters of this new information distribution channel used it predominantly as their own music radio station; indeed, you could call podcasting 'radio with a rewind button'. But once the costs of production (almost zero) became known to businesses and consultants it was only a matter of time before all sorts of material became available by rss subscription.

Today you can subscribe to

- University lectures
- Comedy shows
- Music shows (focusing on each and every type of music - whatever your taste, you can find a niche specialist who equally shares your passion)
- Industry information (for example, the PR industry has many podcasts, most notably **For Immediate Release**[40]**, Six Pixels of Separation**[41]**, Inside PR**[42] and the **Comms Café**[43].

Anything that can be recorded and distributed as a digital audio file can be podcasted (remembering that the 'podcast' isn't the audio file itself, but how it is delivered and distributed, which is via RSS subscription).

Another question we are also frequently asked is 'when did podcasting begin?

The word seems to have been invented some time in 2004. The first podcast-retrieval program (known also as a 'podcatcher') seems to have been **iPodder**[44], created by Dave Winer and Adam Curry in August 2004.

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[40] http://www.forimmediaterelease.biz
[41] www.twistimage.com/blog
[42] www.insidepr.ca
[43] http://commscafe.com
[44] http://www.ipodder.org/directory/4/ipodderSoftware

Through iPodder, or other programs, audio files (mp3 format) are delivered to the users' computer and mp3 player using the RSS (webfeed) process. The podcast capturing program checks your computer and the supplying site to see if there are new audio files; these are then downloaded into the **iTunes**[45] or a similar program.

The benefit of podcatching programs, as with feeds generally, is that the user is spared the laborious task of finding new updates themselves.

In 2005, a new version of **iTunes** was issued which allows users to subscribe directly (one-click) through **iTunes** itself. This led to an exponential growth in podcasting.

Why is podcasting so popular?

Podcasting allows people to listen to what they want when they want. Its ideal for commuting, exercising, travelling etc.

It also allows you to access material from around the world - for instance, every public broadcaster in the english-speaking world has a significant podcasting presence, including our own ABC[46].

Broadband and bigger hard drives, along with the popularity of Apple's iPod, have also helped. The dissatisfaction with current radio stations , expressed by many ("they play the same old boring songs", "they don't talk about what interests me"), has propelled many to start their own 'radio shows'. The access to high-quality digital sound recording equipment at extremely reasonable prices has also encouraged many thousands of amateurs to start their own programming. Plus, anyone with a modicum of creativity can use a cheap headset microphone, free and freely available recording and mixing software, a few sound effects and put together their own show based around the content that *they* would want to listen to.

Are educational institutions doing podcasts?

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[45] http://itunes.com
[46] http://www.abc.net.au/services/podcasting/

Yes, there are many experiments underway.

The University of California at Berkeley has just conducted a podcast pilot[47]. This Spring 2006 webcast.berkeley is conducting a Podcast Pilot. Podcasting automatically delivers MP3 audio recordings of classroom lectures to computers and portable MP3 players. These recordings are primarily used by students to review key concepts and to study before exams.

The university channel at Princeton[48] is supplying podcasts of guest lectures from a variety of sources.

Georgetown University[49] is providing a podcast of its Forum's weekly radio program which highlights the research and expertise of Georgetown University faculty.

Auburn University is podcasting its PR lectures to its students.

There are many such experiments in education at the moment as people find the best ways to use podcasting in an educational environment.

Are companies using podcasts?

There are quite a few corporate experiments as well, for instance:

General Motors http://fastlane.gmblogs.com/archives/2005/02/cadillac_buick_1.html

McDonalds http://www.mcdonalds.com/corp/podcasts.html

IBM https://www-8.ibm.com/e-business/au/podcast/podcast_john.html

Some interesting Australian examples can be found here:
http://www.breakawaycontent.com/Podcasts.html

Where can I find more podcasts?

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[47] http://webcast.berkeley.edu/
[48] http://uc.princeton.edu/main/
[49] http://explore.georgetown.edu/views/?ViewID=277

As well as iTunes there are a number of comprehensive podcast directories:

iPodder http://www.ipodder.org/directory/4/podcasts

Podcast.net http://www.podcast.net/

Yahoo podcasts http://podcasts.yahoo.com/

Public radio podcasts http://www.publicradiofan.com/podcasts.html

Where I can learn more about podcasting?

From the ABC: http://www.abc.net.au/rn/podcast/help.htm

From Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcasting

The power of content delivery via audio has been known for decades — hence the popularity of audio cassette programs on all manner of self-development topics[50]. Both Lee and Trevor know of companies who have used audio cassettes to deliver sales and service updates to remote, on-the-road sales and service people.

By moving the delivery mechanism from cassette to digital file, and by utilising the automatic distribution mechanism of RSS, companies can now harness the power of the internet to deliver relevant content to those who would most benefit from it — quickly, efficiently and exceedingly cost effectively.

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[50] http://www.nightingale.com/

Twitter and Jaiku

The latest entrants to the 'cool technology' of 2007, Twitter[51] and it's more fully-featured cousin, Jaiku[52], represent a new 'style' of blogging: 'instant blogging'.

"What use is such a technology as 'instant blogging'?" you might ask. The answer is simple — you can keep in touch with your peers instantly, without having to send an email or be near a computer to send an instant message.

You use your mobile phone to send a txt message to a special number (currently the UK for Twitter and Europe for Jaiku, but rumours have it that a dedicated Australian number will be here soon) and that message is sent out to a select group of individuals: those who have 'subscribed' to receive them.

Similarly, you can receive the 'tweets' of your peers in the same way.

Canadian Social Media guru Mitch Joel[53] suggests that there are very sound reasons why young people in particular have taken to Twitter:

> "Are you starting to feel like you need to unplug…
> permanently. That's the point: young people don't see this as an
> intrusion. They're proud and happy to share. This is going to
> have huge ramifications on Marketers as these young people
> mature and run businesses the same way.
>
> We're all Blogging in hopes that transparency and authenticity
> leads to conversations and communities about our brands. Isn't
> what Twitter is doing the highest form of this conversation?"

Journalist Roberto Rocha authored an article in the Montreal Gazette recently, entitled: Twitter Technology Has Raving Fans[54].

> "If you haven't heard of Twitter yet, know this: first you'll hate
> it. Then you'll like it. Then you won't be able to live without it."
> (She's right about that!)

She goes on to provide a clear explanation as to what Twitter is:

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[51] http://www.twitter.com
[52] http://jaiku.com
[53] http://www.twistimage.com/blog/archives/000887.html
[54] http://www.canada.com/montrealgazette/news/business/story.html?id=eb96d66f-00e1-46da-9221-7e67fb9b35a3

> "Twitter is a free Internet service that lets users broadcast mini updates about themselves to their blogs or to their friends' mobile phones. An update, called a 'tweet' by devotees, is then visible to all who subscribe to that user's feed.
>
> Twitter has been called a 'micro-blogging' tool and, though barely a year old, has as many fervent fans as haters, something few novel technologies can brag about."

Fellow Aussie Paull Young is also a devotee of Twitter. Says Paull[55],

> "When I first tried Twitter, I was underwhelmed. I thought (along with most others) 'who is ever going to care about what I am doing?' and likewise, I didn't anticipate caring too much about what my friends were doing and I really didn't think that I would make any new friends with the platform.
>
> "All this has been proven wrong.
>
> "Firstly, all of a sudden the people I care most about *do* care about what I'm doing, and they do value the occasional 140 character update. See, I'm starting out a new life on the other side of the globe - everything is new, everything is different and it is hard to capture all the change when I sit down to write an email. With Twitter, I can update what I am doing, or share my thoughts - in real time. This means my friends and family can keep tabs on me as I adapt to a busy new New York life."

So what of Jaiku, then? Jaiku is the northern European equivalent of Twitter, is more fully-featured, but sadly hasn't enjoyed the take-up that Twitter has. Which is a pity because Lee prefers Jaiku, as do a lot of other geeky communicators.

But there are tools around which let you post to both Twitter and Jaiku at the same time, from the one place (unfortunately only a website at this stage). The best of these (at the moment) is probably Twitku[56]. Using Twitku's web interface you can read and post to both your Twitter and Jaiku accounts.

There are even tools around to allow you to post to Twitter and Jaiku simultaneously from within Second Life – Squawk[57] being the current 'flavour of the month'.

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[55] http://youngie.prblogs.org/2007/05/29/why-im-loving-twitter-despite-those-fken-catz/
[56] http://www.Twitku.com
[57] http://www.squawknest.com

As with all things technology and social media, the landscape changes on an almost daily basis, particularly in terms of 'what's in and what's out'. Currently MySpace[58] is being abandoned as people move across to FaceBook[59]. What was 'cool' suddenly no longer is — but MySpace and Twitter have developed such a huge fanbase of users that I'm sure the owners of both aren't overly concerned.

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[58] http://www.myspace.com
[59] http://www.facebook.com

As to what defines 'cool', Satchmo[60] once allegedly replied

"if you have to ask, you'll never know!"

[60] http://www.satchmo.net/

Facebook

Facebook has come out of nowhere to be the current 'darling' application of the Web2.0 world.

For those of you (including us!) who have been astonished by **Facebook**'s growth and popularity, allow me to give a bit of an insight into what, why and therefore how it can be of value to we business communicators.

Background

Facebook has been around since early 2004[61], but was principally designed for college and university students; only recently has it opened its doors to anyone with an email address.

Facebook is the latest 'big player' in a trend that started with sites like **Friendster** and 'came of age' with **MySpace** — a place for building up online social networks of like-minded individuals. If they subsequently met offline, so be it, but that wasn't the real purpose.

Those who are interested in the different business models of **MySpace** and **Facebook** may be interested to read this report of a 'game' held at the LSE in which students had to analyse the business models of **YouTube**, **MySpace**, **Facebook** and **Second Life**[62].

A brilliant spoof ad of the famous '**Apple** Vs **Microsoft**' series of ads recently surfaced[63] — '**Facebook** Vs **MySpace**' — which for me explains the difference between the two, the age demographics. According to Brandee Barker, a **Facebook** spokeswoman:

> "But I can say that more than 50 per cent of **Facebook** users are outside of college now. As our original demographic gets older, we want to be able to include their social networks.[64]"

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[61] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook
[62] http://news.com.com/Battle+of+the+social-networking+sites/2008-1025_3-6169289.html
[63] http://news.com.com/1606-2_3-6187901.html
[64] http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/news/web/omg-mums-joined-facebook/2007/06/12/1181414467494.html?page=fullpage#contentSwap2

Work Vs Non-work profiles

Which raises the question of 'when does one's private social network(s) interfere with one's work social network'?

As Mark Darby reports[65], his **Facebook** identity is now mentioned at work. At a recent meeting the most senior person ('MSP') present said to him,

> "Ah, Mr Darby - disappointed not to see you in superhero mode."

The meaning of which is that the MSP had visited Mark's **Facebook** page. As Mark laments,

> "But it does beg the question (and apologies if someone else has already discussed this) - is it wrong to not be 'yourself' on what is a social network, because of implications for work.

> "My friends are most disappointed - they feel I have become a faceless corporate monkey."

As Claudia Whitcomb comments on Mark's post, perhaps the best option would be to create a Doppelganger — one profile for personal stuff and one for the work place. Never the two shall meet. Especially as employers routinely scour **Google** for information about prospective employees. Today's first and second jobbers are finding their **MySpace** pages full of photos of drunken debauchery and lament(able) poetry not overly helpful in being taken seriously.

Certainly these days privacy is almost non-existent; one needs to manage one's online presence as carefully as one would manage one's small children around an aged, dowager aunt.

But there is no denying the popularity of **Facebook**.

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[65] http://www.melcrumblog.com/2007/06/the_curse_of_fa.html

Popularity of Facebook

As we type this there are **91,458 Australians** (or at least those who would wish to be known as 'Australians'), which isn't bad and places us fifth in the number of countries who have embraced **Facebook**.

According to Duncan McLeod in an article dated 14th June[66], **Facebook** has 25m members, with more than 100,000 new members joining daily. **Facebook** is the sixth-most trafficked website in the US, with more than 40bn page views a month. It operates the number one photo-sharing application on the Web, with 1.8bn photos stored on its servers. **Facebook** is also one of the world's "stickiest" websites, with people spending an average of 20 minutes on the site daily. More than half of the active users log on every day.

Uses of Facebook

Exactly the same as **MySpace**, **Facebook** allows people to communicate easily with their friends and associates using the Web. Users regularly update their profiles, post photographs, share their thoughts, arrange parties and join interest groups and other social networks. The system shows which users have mutual friends. It can even let others know what music you're listening to, if you add that particular plug-in.

But that is not to say that the whole **MySpace**/**Facebook** genre is without its critics. Steven L. Streight[67] is a very strong opponent of such sites, calling **Facebook** 'just another crummy dating hook up site' in private correspondence to me.

Worrying: Copyright issues

Unlike another Web2.0 'darling', **Second Life**, **Facebook** has restrictive copyright issues. According to its FAQs it lets you keep the copyright ownership of your own material. In answer to the question "Do I retain the copyright and other legal rights to my content?"[68]:

> Yes. You retain the copyright to your content. When you upload your content you grant us a license to use and display your content. For more information please visit our Terms of

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[66] http://mybroadband.co.za/news/Columns/277.html
[67] http://twitter.com/vaspers
[68] http://www.facebook.com/copyright_faq.php

Use[69], which contain a link to our Copyright Policy[70] and other important information about your privileges and responsibilities as a Facebook user.

However, its Terms and Conditions[71] paint a different story:

> When you post User Content to the Site, you authorize and direct us to make such copies thereof as we deem necessary in order to facilitate the posting and storage of the User Content on the Site. By posting User Content to any part of the Site, you automatically grant, and you represent and warrant that you have the right to grant, to the Company an irrevocable, perpetual, non-exclusive, transferable, fully paid, worldwide license (with the right to sublicense) to use, copy, publicly perform, publicly display, reformat, translate, excerpt (in whole or in part) and distribute such User Content for any purpose on or in connection with the Site or the promotion thereof, to prepare derivative works of, or incorporate into other works, such User Content, and to grant and authorize sublicenses of the foregoing.

Key 'scare' phrases for me here are: "you automatically grant", "irrevocable, perpetual, non-exclusive, transferable, fully paid, worldwide license (with the right to sublicense) to use, copy, publicly perform, publicly display, reformat, translate, excerpt (in whole or in part) and distribute such User Content for any purpose".

Something to be mindful of.

How many networks do I need to belong to?

"Crickey, there's a million networking sites already (**LinkedIn**[72], **MyRagan**[73], **Communicators' Network**[74] just for our PR/Business Comms niche industry alone), do I really need to belong to another?"

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[69] http://www.facebook.com/terms.php
[70] http://www.facebook.com/copyright.php
[71] http://www.facebook.com/terms.php
[72] http://www.linkedin.com/in/leehopkins
[73] http://www.myragan.com/profileFamily.php?id=Ragan/leehopkins&familyname=Ragan&flag=
[74] http://www.communicatorsnetwork.com/lee/

Fair question… add in specialist sites like the **IABC**'s[75] and **PRSA**'s[76] and you really could spend your whole time juggling your network updates, let alone doing any actual work (you know, those annoying interruptions to your day that are what you get paid for).

Hopefully sites like the newly-launched **MyLifeBrand**[77] will become the one-stop portal for all of the various networking sites we belong to (or should do if we are to keep abreast of our industry and our profession). According to Daniel Scalisi, EVP of **MyLifeBrand**, it isn't another social network, but rather a social platform which enables people to aggregate and better manage their favorite social networks and services, as well as enabling communities to develop a fully branded relevant community.

But until MyLifeBrand or similar aggregators allow us to 'pick and choose' our own sites, then 'yes' we do have to jump from one site to another. We have found that opening up a whole lot of tabs in Firefox (it also works in IE), visiting each site that we want to keep a close eye on in each tab and then going to 'Tools, Options' and setting the Home Page to be the pages currently displayed is brilliant. Every time we then open up Firefox (and so to IE — we run different uni and gmail email accounts in each and can stay logged in to all of them) weI have all of our preferred sites there for us.

And of course there is **Twitter**[78]: a brilliant way of keeping in touch and as Living Light Bulbs[79] and JJProjects[80] (thanks to Joe Jaffe[81] for the links) point out, comes with a plethora of uses. At least there is a plug-in for **Facebook-Twitter** integration[82].

Conclusion

For the final say on whether **Facebook** is useful or not, we turn to Dan Hill of the *Flying Aqua Badgers* (don't ask! {grin}) and his post 'Facebook is Disturbingly Impressive'[83]:

> "Over the past week I've had a couple of invites to see what **Facebook** is all about. Last night I took it up. I thought **MySpace** had it going on with social connections but this is something

[75] http://www.iabc.com/
[76] http://www.prsa.org/
[77] http://leehopkins.net/2007/06/07/mylifebrand-offers-to-be-the-one-stop-portal/
[78] http://www.twitter.com/
[79] http://ryankarpeles.blogspot.com/2007/06/17-uses-for-twitter-and-counting.html
[80] http://jjprojects.blogspot.com/2007/05/using-twitter-for-marketing-part-4.html
[81] http://www.jaffejuice.com/2007/06/17_marketing_re.html
[82] http://apps.facebook.com/twitter/
[83] http://fabadger.blogspot.com/2007/06/facebook-is-disturbingly-impressive.html

else. Within a few clicks I'm seeing great long lists of the folks I went to school with and details of who is still friends with who.

On top of that I can also see how those relationships bleed in with working life. It is commonly said that Andover is a small town and everyone knows everyone within a couple of degrees of separation. The written proof is there for all to see."

But Facebook is getting more and more cluttered as more and more developers create applications for it. So the 'clear, simple, clean' layout that was so important to its growth is likely to be lost as members add more and more 'bells and whistles'.

Blogs are usually very clean and simple at first, but as the blog's owner/publisher becomes more experienced and proficient at adding tools and plug-ins, so the clean interface becomes lost amidst a mess of shiny bells and whistles. It is a common 'failing' of bloggers who have 'been around for a while' (your humble authors included!)

Facebook faces the same fate as **MySpace**: ugly, over-complex pages that serve to confuse rather than inform. It may also end up a 'spam farm' like **MySpace** and **blogger**.

Until then, our advice would be to join it, see how you get on, but don't expend a lot of effort on it.

Second Life and 3D virtual worlds

Could American Apparel, Adidas, Circuit City, Cisco, Dell, IBM, MovieTickets.com, Reebok, Sears, Sun Microsystems, and Toyota be wrong? Could the 25,000 people making a profit each month from their Second Life presence[84] be wrong?

Second Life is both the most hyped waste of time recently invented and the most creative space recently invented.

It is not a game, as some suggest it is, because there is no defined outcome for it; there is no end point, no winner.

Do you remember how the www, in its early days of grey pages and black-only Times Roman font, was considered 'the most hyped waste of time then invented'? No company in their right mind would consider spending any $$ on it. Companies had their paper-based brochure, their teams of sales people, their Yellow Pages adverts… who could ask for anything more?

Twelve or thirteen years later and it is the foolish company who doesn't also brand themselves on the internet. And not only brand themselves like they do on paper and on the sides of trucks in their real world – companies like Amazon and Dell have transformed our views of what 'business' is and in the process have shown us all how a new type of

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[84] http://secondlife.com/whatis/economy-data.php Accessed 11/3/2007

business could be transacted on the web. The web has proven itself very adept at reducing labour costs, increasing marketing reach and generating real-world revenue – if you have or are able to develop the new mental attitude required for successfully conducting business on the web. But expect to create reap any benefit of the internet whilst continuing to use your existing marketing and relationship management processes and principles and you will fail, of that there is absolutely no doubt.

Second Life is a development of and extension of the current internet, and it contains some elements of a new way of working on the internet that businesses need to figure into the planning of their relationship marketing and management.

Let's investigate those new ways of working and how they have come to be so important.

From one-way to two-way

The 'new' internet works differently from the 'old', reflecting a new generation of internet users.

The new generation, currently leaving school or college and in their first jobs in the corporate world, have a basic distrust of packaged marketing messages. Brought up since birth on a diet of packaged marketing-speak they can spot a 'pitch' a mile away, today's users are used to the MacDonaldisation of their world and expect events to occur as near to simultaneously as possible. As an example, do you ask your site visitors to fill in their name and email address in order to receive a brochure you email them (or perhaps even snail-mail post)? Or do you just give them a free link to a pdf version of the brochure they can download themselves and print off at their expense and let them make their own mind up about you?

Do you capture their details in the hope that you can then bombard them with probably unwanted sales and marketing emails, or do you just let your word 'spread' and let them make an informed decision to contact you if you have something of value to them?

1. Enter the 'Conversational Web'

In this regard the internet has 'moved on' – it is now unacceptable to ask people for their details just to receive some faceless, facile brochure. Either they will fill in your text boxes with gibberish, or else they just ignore your site and move on; usually the latter.

Instead, they will ask their friends and online colleagues about your product, service or even your company. The recommendations (or otherwise) of others carry far more weight than anything you might insert into your sales and marketing material.

2. Enter the 'Engaging Web'

What 3D virtual environments such as Second Life and others are showing us is that a new way of engaging and conversing is now technically possible. What is also becoming apparent is that business can successfully be conducted in these new environments – with one terribly important proviso:

> "It's business, Jim, but not as we know it."

Despite major corporates as diverse as the aforementioned American Apparel, Adidas, Circuit City, Cisco, Dell, IBM, MovieTickets.com, Reebok, Sears, Sun Microsystems, and Toyota moving into Second Life, they have failed to create any major impact within those environments for one very important reason: they have forgotten to ask themselves the basic Marketing 101 question **"What value can we deliver to the marketplace?"**

All of the above companies are experimenting (which is great!) with these new 3D environments, figuring out the rules.

Christian Renaud, senior manager of business development for the Cisco Tech Centre explained[85] why his company was in Second Life. "We're finding it extremely useful for communicating and collaborating in a way that you simply couldn't do over the telephone, or using the web, or through a combination of the two… The risk of not getting in now is much greater than the risk of jumping in too soon. We need to

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[85] http://www.virtual-generations.com/2007/02/24/second-life-opens-for-business/ Accessed 11/3/2007

identify the hurdles as well as the opportunities and start working on them now."

Consider your own situation: which would you prefer?

- You enter a store, select your desired product, pay and await your product's delivery;

- You enter a store, engage in conversation with some of the staff, get their recommendations and ideas based on their own experiences, engage in conversation with other customers also in the store, factor *their* experiences in with those of the shop staff and your own, and make a more richly-informed purchasing decision.

This second example is what the new 3D web allows. The new web allows you to create a 'space' where new and existing users, staff, and prospective users can mingle and share ideas, jokes, experiences and 'do' business.

What your business probably has at the moment is a static, 2D website where you basically have the equivalent of an online brochure. Customers and visitors may be able to interact in a limited way with your database, but actual human contact is very lacking.

3. The 'Human Element'

Yet is exactly this 'human' element that 3D environments promise. As John Moore from Brand Autopsy[86] commented recently[87], "It's amazing how no matter the environment, the success of a something is contingent on making connections at the personal level … not just the technological level."

Rob Cottingham[88] comments "Marketers have to understand the medium they're working in. Second Life has areas of mind-blowing potential and fist-clenching frustration that are unlike, say, television, print or even the web. The key is understanding what those are, and focusing on SL's strengths -- especially the way it allows some very new, very interesting kinds of interaction among users.

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[86] http://brandautopsy.typepad.com/
[87] http://brandautopsy.typepad.com/brandautopsy/2007/02/a_thought_about.html
Accessed 11/3/2007
[88] http://www.socialsignal.com/blog/rob-cottingham Accessed 11/3/2007

That seems to be what keeps bringing people back after they've seen the fabulous builds and outrageous avatars. Whether it's fantasy sexual encounters, war play, business meetings, commerce or just chatting with someone you bump into at high altitude, the human element is what puts the life in Second Life. And any marketer who ignores that is missing out on most of this medium's power."
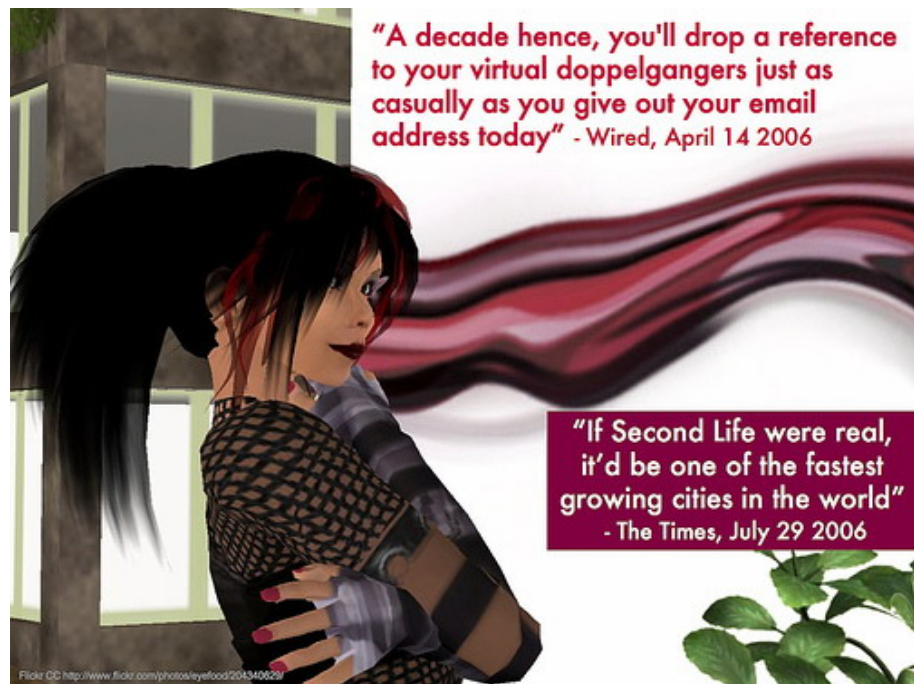
4. The Dollar Is Out There

But is anyone actually making any money in Second Life?

The answer is a resounding 'Yes', but it is not businesses using the traditional marketing/sales methods. Instead, it is solo entrepreneurs ('webpreneurs') who are doing what the best marketers have always done: investigating the new market, figuring out what that new market wants, and then creating and selling it to them.

The table on the next page reflects the growth in US\$ profit being generated each month by Second Life webpreneurs[89].

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[89] http://secondlife.com/whatis/economy-data.php Accessed 11/3/2007

Estimated In-World Business Owners

Unique Users with Positive Monthly Linden Dollar Flow (PMLF) [2]

USD Equivalent PMLF	September 2006	October 2006	November 2006	December 2006	January 2007	February 2007
< $10 USD	5,180	6,285	7,098	9,000	11,396	13,490
$10 to $50 USD	2,770	3,402	3,592	4,535	5,671	6,625
$50 to $100 USD	760	866	1,010	1,239	1,489	1,690
$100 to $200 USD	566	692	797	921	1,119	1,289
$200 to $500 USD	524	563	671	823	1,018	1,165
$500 to $1,000 USD	228	263	289	350	386	496
$1,000 to $2,000 USD	125	160	179	229	263	283
$2,000 to $5,000 USD	77	92	94	140	188	211
> $5,000 USD	37	41	58	90	97	116
Total Unique Users with PMLF	**10,267**	**12,364**	**13,788**	**17,327**	**21,627**	**25,365**

What these webpreneurs are showing us is that money *can* be made, even in the early, developmental, stages of this new web, but that the money is made from creating new products and services that the users want, not just carrying an existing brand into the new space.
It is this notion of brand extension rather than brand continuation that companies need to get their heads around.

Plus the fact that any voyage into this new 'unknown' is resource-intensive. There is absolutely no point in creating a warm, welcome presence in Second Life if there is no one there to interact with the visitors. Companies looking to move into 3D worlds like Second Life need to understand that it is 'human' interaction that differentiates these worlds from the 2D traditional internet, even if these interactions are conducted via blocky, pixellated and jerkily-moving puppets. It is precisely because there are *real* people behind those puppets that the 3D world becomes so exciting a business and communication medium.

5. So should you get involved?

Lee would argue, "absolutely!" Trevor, who is far more sceptical of Second Life's long-term prospects, would argue, "easy, tiger!"

Sure, the dotcom bubble of the late 1990s turned many rich people into paupers. But equally it allowed many smart, savvy and new-thinking companies to prosper, in the same way that the Great Depression saw many companies actually thrive and grow amidst the economic and personal devastation[90].

What separated the 'winners' from the 'losers' in the dotcom boom-bust was not only a willingness to find new ways of creating end-user value and delivering that value in novel, easy to manage ways, but also a fair degree of luck. Nothing changes. Business today, no matter what channel or industry, requires equal measures of luck, adequate resource and good judgement to be a 'winner'.

Whilst Second Life is currently an intriguing and frustrating mix of entrepreneurs, desperate marketers trying to figure it out, cashed-up early adopters, and furry erotica fantasists, plus the standard-issue real-world percentage of wackos and the seriously deranged, who is to say that a 'Second Business Life' will not emerge out of it - a place where businesses can feel more comfortable engaging in conversation — voice, text and video — with end users and suppliers. And their own employees.

Those who 'jump in' now, learn the ropes and play around with the fuzzy rules that are still being worked out are going to be in a much better position to capitalise on the opportunities when they are finally figured out.

Already Second Life has proven itself highly adept at holding trans-global events (rock concerts, employee-focused 'town hall' meetings, product & service launches) and bringing together people from around the world who share a similar interest.

A psychologist allows visitors to his Second Life site to experience what schizophrenia is like[91].

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[90] http://www.mackinac.org/archives/1998/sp1998-01.pdf   Accessed 11/3/2007
[91] http://www.schizophrenia.com/sznews/archives/001509.html   Accessed 11/3/2007

The Harvard Law School conducts one subject, "Law in the Court of Public Opinion" entirely and only in Second Life[92]. Academic institutions[93,94] and libraries[95] are joining Second Life at a pace.

Day after day we find more businesses quietly investing resource into 'figuring out' the new 3D conversational internet; not just the 'big tech companies' but little players too; companies keen to figure out how to engage with and deliver value to a new generation of potential customers and brand evangelists.

According to UK end-to-end consultancy **Kzero**, as at the end of May 2007 there were 85 major brands in Second Life.

Here's a chart taken from Kzero's website[96]:
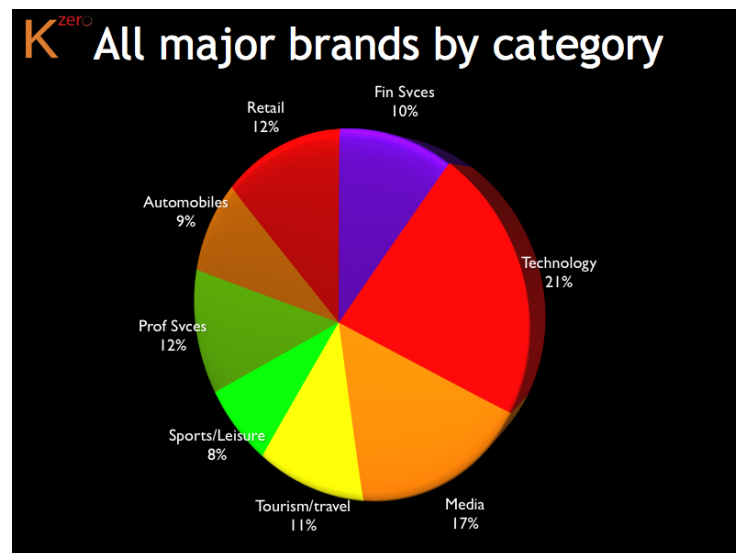
What we find interesting is the sector mix of brands represented — not just technology and media (the 'usual suspects'), but also professional services, tourism and travel, sports and leisure, and financial services. Financial Services is the one that piqued our interest — because of their regulatory restraints, FinSvc companies have traditionally been

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[92] http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/cyberone/2006/09/22/welcome-to-cyberone-law-in-the-court-of-public-opinion/ Accessed 11/3/2007

[93] http://simteach.com/wiki/index.php?title=Institutions_and_Organizations_in_SL Accessed 20/3/2007

[94] http://simteach.com/wiki/index.php?title=Second_Life:_Universities_and_Private_Islands Accessed 20/3/2007

[95] http://librariesinteract.info/2007/02/05/second-life-australian-libraries-building/ Accessed 29/03/2007

[96] http://www.kzero.co.uk/blog/wp-content/uploads/2007/06/bysctor012.jpg

exceptionally conservative in their approach to new technology (probably only beaten in conservatism by the legal profession).

Your next powerful, networked-to-the-hilt brand evangelist may be just a furry avatar away…

If you would like to know more about Second Life, Lee is currently researching Second Life for a Professional Doctorate in Communication through UniSA[97]. You can read his Second Life blog[98] to keep up to date with the latest Second Life news.

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http://snipurl.com/1n5h7
[98] http://www.leehopkins.net/secondlife

Wikis

Originally, both of us had little experience of wikis, and so left any discussion of them out of the first version of our White Paper.

But we conducted research into them and found more than we had originally bargained for.

'Wiki' is Hawaiian for 'quick' and the term was coined by Ward Cunningham in 1994 when he created software that generated websites really quickly. Today, wikis are increasingly adopted in companies as collaborative software. Common uses included project communication, intranets, and documentation, initially for technical users. Today some companies use wikis as their only collaborative software and as a replacement for static intranets. There may well be a greater use of wikis behind firewalls than on the public Internet.

On March 15, 2007, the term 'wiki' entered the Oxford English Dictionary Online.

Examples: Intel

As an example of how quickly wikis can 'take off' within large organizations, consider technology company **Intel** and one of its employees, Josh Bancroft.

In late 2005, Josh Bancroft needed a tool that his colleagues could use to share company information, from historical highlights to progress of internal projects. Inspired by **Wikipedia**[99], the online encyclopedia assembled by users around the world, he devised Intelpedia, an internal Web site that draws on the input of employees companywide.

Although it ruffled feathers—some employees don't like being edited by colleagues, especially those further down the org chart—Intelpedia caught on. In a little more than a year, Intelpedia has amassed 5,000 pages of content and garnered 13.5 million page views. "Employees can be frustrated that somebody else edited their work," says Jeff Moriarty,

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[99] http://en.wikipedia.org

collaboration technical architect of Intel's information technology group. "It's a disruptive capability—it shakes things up."[100]

Andrew McAfee, a Harvard Business School professor specializing in technology and management operations, says "If you did a comprehensive survey of Fortune 1,000 companies, you would probably find some sort of wiki in all of them."

IBM

As we found out during a series of interviews with David Boloker, CTO of Emerging Internet Technology at **IBM**, their own WikiCentral, installed about two and a half years ago, has grown to 125,000 users from 10,000 users just a year ago. Given the rising popularity of that tool, it seemed natural to use a wiki last year when IBM wanted to focus on intellectual-property issues.

The company assembled a worldwide community of 50 IBM experts in the fields of law, academia, economics, government, and technology to collaborate on the wiki. The result of that project is a collaboratively written intellectual-property manifesto that also serves as the foundation of IBM's new patent policy.

IBM are developing a new 'breed' of wiki—QEDWiki—using newly-developed technology called 'pipes'. Powered by Ajax, a type of internet-friendly code, pipes are collectors and aggregators of data streams. Confused? Don't be; here's how it works.

The idea behind QEDwiki, which stands for quick and easily done wiki, is that businesspeople can create their own Web pages by dragging and dropping components onto a pallet.

For example, a businessperson could build a "dashboard" to see how weather is affecting sales at retail outlets. By aggregating information from public Web sites, such as mapping and weather services, he or she could assemble a very useful, if simple, content-driven application.

QEDwiki is targeted at people who want to make Web applications without the aid of professional programmers. It uses Ajax scripting and

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[100] http://www.businessweek.com/technology/content/mar2007/tc20070312_740461.htm

a wiki on a server to collect and share information, such as RSS and Atom feeds.

You can view a video on how powerful this new technology is on YouTube[101], and IBM have a mini-site dedicated to it[102] (but be aware: it's full of very 'tech-geek' language!).

eBay

Last June, eBay (EBAY) began its own community wiki project, eBay Wiki, a place where buyers and sellers can share knowledge about all things eBay. "There are lots of online communities, but only ours can boast such a huge diversity of passions, interests, and expertise from antique fans to digital photography, from Spielberg movies to Ford Mustangs," Bill Cobb, president of eBay North America, said in a speech at the eBay Live conference in Las Vegas in June. The site boasts useful articles on topics such as how sellers can get the best shipping rates and how buyers can guard against fraud.

Nokia

In late 2004, when wikis were more buzz than proven tech tool, two small groups within Nokia's Research Center in Helsinki created their own wikis—one to collaborate on solving specific product-design problems, the other to explore alternatives to e-mail and collaborative software.

Nokia estimates at least 20% of its 68,000 employees use wiki pages to update schedules and project status, trade ideas, edit files, and so on. "It's a reversal of the normal way things are done," says Stephen Johnston, senior manager for corporate strategy at Nokia, who helped pioneer the technology. Where Nokia once bought outside software to help foster collaboration, now "some of the most interesting stuff is emerging from within the company itself," says Johnston.

Dresdner Kleinwort

It's a similar tale at Dresdner Kleinwort. A few pioneers in the IT department at its London office sent a program called *Socialtext* to several groups to see how it might be used to facilitate different IT tasks. The wiki program spread so quickly that Dresdner Kleinwort decided to launch its own corporate wiki. By October, 2006, the bank's

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[101] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckGfhlZW0BY
[102] http://services.alphaworks.ibm.com/qedwiki/

5,000 employees had created more than 6,000 individual pages and logged about 100,000 hits on the company's official wiki.

So where can I get wiki software and try it out?

Wikipedia has a fantastic list of wiki software[103] – some WYSIWYG, some not – and we would certainly recommend you also visit Wikipedia's comparison chart of wiki software[104].

Wiki's aren't for every organization – to set one up can be very easy from a technical perspective but very time-consuming from a training-the-end-user perspective. Blogs can function as a very simple wiki – Lee calls them 'WikiLite' and he has a useful example of how they can be used on his own server[105].

But for sheer power and versatility, nothing beats a true wiki.

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[103] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wiki_software
[104] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_wiki_software
[105] http://www.leehopkins.net/testblog/

Blog writing tips

Although blogging is a new medium, it is already old enough to be able to make some observations about what works and what doesn't.

As Donna Papacosta[106] said in her first podcast, before doing anything in life you should consider what you are setting out to achieve. In other words, what is it that you want to communicate and why? Are you a business that wants to show its expertise to its market? Are you a practitioner in a particular field that wants to contribute to and develop further your understanding of your craft?

Lurk, or 'loiter with intent' as a police officer might say. Read others' blogs and get a feel for how they put their blog together. Do they stick to the topic, or do they wander around? If it is a business-focused blog do they only talk about their particular field or do they include personal stuff as well? If so, how does that sit with you? Does it bother you or do you like to read the personal stuff to get a 'feel' for the person you are highly unlikely ever to meet face-to-face?

How do you find blogs to loiter around? Follow the links from blogs you already know about. Thus, from us you could follow links off to people such as superb business communicators such as Shel Holtz[107], Neville Hobson[108], or Allan Jenkins[109], and for an example of the always-interesting and challenging writing of Kathy Sierra[110].

There's Seth Godin[111] who is arguably the smartest thinker in marketing at the moment, and has been for quite a few years, and there's Doug Johnson[112] and his fantastic daily planner site.

There's also Paul Graham[113] who doesn't post often but when he does it is always controversial, headshaking and mind-expanding. There's Jack Vinson[114] who is a guru of knowledge management, which blogs are a

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[106] http://trafcom.typepad.com/podcast/2005/09/show_1_sept_12_.html
[107] http://blog.holtz.com
[108] http://www.nevon.net
[109] http://allanjenkins.typepad.com
[110] http://headrush.typepad.com/creating_passionate_users/
[111] http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog
[112] http://www.diyplanner.com
[113] http://www.paulgraham.com
[114] http://blog.jackvinson.com

useful tool within. And there's Nova Spivack's[115] off-the-wall look at the world which is equally mind-expanding and life-affirming.

These are just some of the writers/conversationalists that we eagerly await each day as we power up our feed aggregators/readers (more on which later). Look at the lists of those mentioned above and you will find others with whom to connect.

Each of the writers/conversationalists mentioned above link to other conversationalists; follow the links and pretty soon you will have a hundred or more RSS feeds in your aggregator and you will have to start painfully weeding them out, categorising them into groups that you 'must' read, 'like to read' and 'will get around to reading when I get the time'.

Pick a platform on which to create your own blog. You could go for a paid hosted service such as **typepad**[116] (like Trevor's blog) or if you have your own server set up your own blog service, using, for example, **Wordpress**[117] (like Lee's blog). Conduct a search in **google** for blogging software and you will know doubt find 'plenty' of material to consider. Or you could consider a free service such as **blogger**[118] or any of the other free blogging services (again, google for 'free blogs'). Lee's first **Better Communication Results** blog[119] was on **blogger** and it was a fantastic way of getting his feet wet.

After a while the limitations of free services can begin to frustrate; Lee moved to hosting his own blog (courtesy of the very kind Ben Hamilton[120] and his company **DynamicWebHosting**[121]) so he could take advantage of some of the more intricate parts of blogging, such as trackbacks. But such intricacies don't need to bother you if you are just getting started - better to start and get going than to stress what platform you are going to blog on. You can always change it later on.

Contribute to the conversation. Go to any blogs you find of interest and add a comment. It doesn't matter whether what you say is earth-shatteringly profound or just agreeing with what someone said (or,

[115] http://novaspivack.typepad.com/nova_spivacks_weblog/
[116] http://www.typepad.com/
[117] http://wordpress.org
[118] http://blogger.com
[119] http://bettercomms.blogspot.com
[120] http://ben.hamilton.id.au/
[121] http://dynamicwebhosting.com.au

indeed, disagreeing). Just remember the golden rules of online communication:

- don't SHOUT AT PEOPLE (type in all caps);
- don't swear at people;
- don't call people names;
- don't hide behind 'anonymous' - use your name and a link to your own blog.

You will notice that, by having links off to many wonderful writers on our blogs, we are contributing to the global conversation. We don't have to comment individually on their blogs, we can instead publish a post on our own blog and link to theirs. Eventually, because we are nearly all of us egotists {smile} and search the main search engines — **technorati**[122], **blogpulse**[123], **talkdigger**[124] and **google**[125] amongst many — for links to us, these writers will find that you have talked about them and will quite possibly come and find you. If they like what they see they may even link back to you in one of their posts.

Measure your conversational ability. This is not very hard to do at all. Wander over to **Feedburner**[126] and set yourself up with an account. Use the Feedburner feed you create (they walk you through the process) as your subscription link for your webfeed/RSS feed and you will be able to track how many people subscribe to your blog. It's free.

If you want to take it a little further, wander over to **StatCounter**[127] and set up a free account with them. Make some simple decisions and copy the code into your template. That way you can see how many visit each day, and from where. The more you enter into the global conversation, the more people will come to converse with and learn from you.

Never stop learning. The universe of blogging, podcasting and RSS is a rapidly-evolving one. New technologies and tools come by at the speed of light, so you need to stay connected. Sure, you can go on holiday, take a month off and pick up where you left off, but be aware that any longer break will mean a bit of extra homework to play 'catch up'.

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[122] http://www.technorati.com
[123] http://www.blogpulse.com/
[124] http://www.talkdigger.com/
[125] http://www.google.com.au/blogsearch?hl=en
[126] http://www.feedburner.com/
[127] http://www.statcounter.com/

Read this fantastic paper by Stephen Downes[128] which says all we have just said but better. James Torio has written an outstanding paper for people who have a basic understanding of blogs, but hunger to know more. It's called *Blogs: A Global Conversation*[129] (pdf). In particular, Torio looks at how blogs have impacted business and communication. He includes some proprietary research as well. And for the creative use of podcasts, might we suggest Kevin Dugan's post[130].

So, to sum up:

1. **Share your expertise** – People see blogs as a way of getting depth on a particular subject (often the narrower the better). Whereas traditional media tend to dumb down to maximize audience size, great blogs do the reverse. Specialisation won't leave you with a mass audience but it will build your standing as an authority, and a loyal following of readers with a similar interest.

2. **Share your opinion** – Blogs should be factual and you should link to your sources wherever possible; but blogging is not objective — people read bloggers because they value their perspectives. An interesting, thought-provoking point-of-view can be a real value-add on a blog.

3. **Post regularly** – People won't read a blog that looks neglected. It is better to put up a series of shorter posts rather than write infrequent lengthier essays.

4. **Keep it brief** – People do not read large slabs of text on screen. The shorter your post the better, avoid anything longer than 250 words. If you want to provide papers and essays allow people to download and print them.

5. **Make it scannable** – Break up your text with sub-headings and lists, keep sentences and paragraphs short.

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128 http://www.downes.ca/cgi-bin/website/view.cgi?dbs=Article&key=1122588384&format=full
129 http://www.everyhuman.com/work/theses8.12.low.pdf
130 http://prblog.typepad.com/strategic_public_relation/2005/09/20_creative_use.html

6. **Use a consistent style** – Your blog will grow on people if it is consistent in tone and style. Generally a less formal, more conversational tone is better on a blog.

7. **Provide many links** – Blogs provide access to a rich vein of information and viewpoints but only if you link to them. The more you link to other relevant sources the more valuable your blog is to your readers. Bloggers tend to link to people who link to them. Linking to lots of sites will generate more links to you which will be reflected in a higher *google* ranking for your blog.

8. **Use explanatory headings** – People will choose to read your post based on the heading. If the heading doesn't provoke their interest they will move on. Headings and first paragraphs are particularly important because many people will find access your blog through search engines and feed readers. Headings and first paragraphs should tell the whole story, just as they do in newspapers.

9. **Respond to comments** – Responding encourages people to believe that you value their participation and that encourages them to keep reading, and to promote your efforts to other people.

10. **Edit your post.** Good writing is good editing. Readers are more tolerant of errors in blogs than in other media, but not much. Frequent spelling and grammatical errors will just make you look stupid and careless.

Where to go to get started

Of course, now that you've read this paper, you'll be itching to get started yourself. All of the following tools are either free or available at a low cost.

Getting a blog

Edublogs[131]: the largest educational blogging community on the web, provides free blogs and wikispaces for teachers, researchers, librarians, other educational professionals and students.

Edublogs was created by James Farmer. James has worked as a lecturer in research and education design at Deakin University and is currently the Online Community Editor at The Age.

Google's **blogger**[132]: a basic, free service.

Typepad[133]: A global company operating out of California. Its prices range from $US49.50 per year for the basic service to $US149.50 per year for the Pro version. Prices are all up – software, hosting and bandwidth. They also offer a 30 day free trial.

Wordpress[134]: another way to get a free blog. WordPress is an Open Source project, which means there are hundreds of people all over the world working on it. (More than most commercial platforms.) It also means you are free to use it for anything from your cat's home page to a Fortune 500 intranet site without paying anyone a license fee

Providing a feed

Feedburner[135]: Blogs usually come with the capacity to create feeds built in. Feedburner, with both free and premium services, allows you to do more with your feed, including promoting your blog. This service is the

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[131] http://edublogs.org/
[132] http://www.blogger.com/
[133] http://www.sixapart.com/typepad/
[134] http://wordpress.com/
[135] http://www.feedburner.com/fb/a/home

most popular of its type on the internet and Lee and Trevor's first stop after helping clients create their own blog.

Choosing an aggregator (feed reader)

Bloglines[136]: is one of the most popular ways to subscribe to feeds. Its easy to use and its free.
Some others to look at are:

Newsgator[137]

GreatNews[138]

Rojo[139]

Feed Demon[140]

Monitoring your stats

Blogging tools often provide an inbuilt capacity to see how many visits your blog is getting and which posts are most popular. The aforementioned **Feedburner** offers free statistical tools, as does **Statcounter**[141].

If you want additional information there are add-on services which can provide you with a very rich stream of data at a low-cost. For example, **Blogbeat**[142].

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[136] http://www.bloglines.com/
[137] http://www.newsgator.com/home.aspx
[138] http://curiostudio.com/
[139] http://www.rojo.com/today/
[140] http://www.newsgator.com/NGOLProduct.aspx?ProdId=FeedDemon
[141] http://www.statcounter.com
[142] http://www.blogbeat.net/

Monitoring the blogosphere

Traditional search engines list results in some sort of order of importance, a new generation of blog search engines list posts in chronological order with the most recent at the top.

Technorati[143]

Ice Rocket[144]

Feedster[145]

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[143] http://www.technorati.com/
[144] http://www.icerocket.com/
[145] http://www.feedster.com/

Want more help?

Please don't hesitate to contact the authors, who will be very happy to discuss how their expertise in this new Social Media may benefit your own organization.

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