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## Web 2.0 Cured My Cancer and Made Me Taller -- and Rich!

Is There Anything It Can't Do?  
Posted by [Ken Wheaton](#) on [12.08.08 @ 10:16 AM](#)

Just four short years ago, I was a wee troll of a man. At 75 years old, 345 pounds and 4'6", I hobbled through the streets of New York cursing at others as I commuted from the storage shed where I lived to the utility closet at Advertising Age, where they put my desk. Also, I had cancer -- of the body. Yes, my entire body was one big tumor.

Then Web 2.0 came into my life. Until then, I'd just been coasting along with Web 1.0. To think I never would have embraced Web 2.0 if it hadn't been for a handful of dedicated bloggers and boosters. I resisted at first. Why get bogged down in another distraction, something that adds another layer of work to everyday life yet provides no tangible monetary or social benefits? But they showed me I was wrong, that my response was simply fear and a lack of understanding. So what if they were trying to make a quick buck convincing others that Web 2.0 was the answer to all their problems?

You know what? Web 2.0 is the answer to all your problems. It certainly answered all of mine. I wasn't on MySpace two minutes before I felt this tingling in my spine, a ringing in my ears. And no, it wasn't because my cousin had personalized his profile with a flashing purple-and-gold strobe and a blaring soundtrack courtesy of Korn. It was because my spine was realigning!

Thanks to a steady diet of Lolcat building and YouTube commenting, 95% of my cancer has been eradicated. An active Twitter life -- Ken is watching "House"; Ken is watching "Fringe"; Ken is watching "The Girl With Giant Legs" -- also added a full six inches to my stature.

Then came Facebook. Thanks to Facebook, I can now check my e-mail to find out that I've received a message, then go to Facebook to read that message and reply to it there. Before I had to communicate via e-mail (or, worse, the phone). Thanks to Facebook, I overcame the cancer, shed the extra pounds and grew another six inches.

And sure, my wife and I found one another via an online dating site. But does that count as Web 2.0? Or Web 1.0? I don't know.

But I do know this. Until we both embraced the power of search, ours was a shadow of a marriage -- maybe one of those civil union things that politicians allow gays to participate in. After applying a little SEO to the marriage, it's been fireworks ever since. Remember that "Bob" guy from those Enzyte commercials? My smile is twice as big as his! (I'd tell you what widgets have done for us, but I'm trying to keep this PG-13.)

Now, I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, "Sure, Ken, we all know the healing powers of Web 2.0. But how did you get rich? Not even Zuckerberg has figured out how to monetize this thing. No one's cracked the Twitter code."

I've got two words for you: Second. Life.

I'd love to say I took to Second Life like a duck to water, but a codger like me needs some practice in these brave new worlds. After two months of getting a hang of the controls, I was able to walk and sit and talk in Second Life almost as well as I do in dull real life. But Second Life allowed me to do so much more than the real world -- and I'm not just talking about mid-air hookups with hot virtua-chicks with feathers. In Second Life, I was an entrepreneur. I opened up a high-class fashion outlet and am now a virtual millionaire.

Sure, my USAA checking account still approaches zero at least once a month, but I'm sure it won't be long before those predictions of 80% of adults having a Second Life come true. And then the banks will have no choice but to realize my Linden currency is just as good as real cash.

You naysayers can laugh all you want. You're just troglodytes caught up in old-word illusions like "ROI" and "profit" and "sales." You probably scoffed at pioneering technologies such as Betamax, CueCat and Friendster, too, didn't you? You talk trash about Web 2.0 and we'll use the power of social media to bankrupt you just like we did Pepsi and Motrin!

Now, if you'll excuse me, I have a search engine that needs optimizing -- if you catch my meaning.

Ken can be reached at Ad Age, 711 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017 (or via [twitter.com/kenwheaton](#) ... or Facebook ... or [kwheaton@adage.com](#)).

### 5 Comments

Web 2.0 gave birth to me. Literally.  
Before the onset of the Internet's industrial age I was just a lowly web designer, a cut and paster who duped unknowing, innocent people in believing that the web was the next big thing.

I was a traveling salesman pawning off unfounded promises to those willing and desperate enough to listen. My dusty fedora spoke of my many journeys and adventures trying to evangelize this great new world.

I remained loyal amidst the doubt, I never faltered in my steadfast allegiance to this new promising landscape. I was hooked from day one. No one would sway my dedication and I would live or die here.

They were on to us, all the promises unraveled and we were all left to run for our lives. They pulled out, no more funding, no more experimentation and exploration of ideas with new names.

We were busted!  
I remained, never thinking for an instant that I could be so devoted to anything else. Never once entertaining the thought of finance or academia, medicine or law, it was deemed at birth that I was to stick this out.

We've been through so much, the technologies, services, searching and exploring and growing. I was Siddhartha and the web was my Govinda.

Here we are today.  
Thriving yet still on a bumpy road. We have so much more to prove. Still trying to sell the hope and the dream that will one day be. Still promising a new world of change that will lead us into tomorrow.

The web has so much promise and that it why its so hard to navigate, its depths are so intricate and infinite that its worth cant even begin to be explored. Like day two of the biblical creation, it will drive you mad to even try and decipher.

Oh web 2.0, my companion, you are both the journey and the destination all wrapped up in one giant click. -- Craig Elmeliah | New York, NY

Rodney writes "Barack Obama's campaign team harnessed Web 2.0 and changed history by getting youth to actually vote. I don't recall any Second Life in the mix."

Actually the data shows that there was no substantial increase in youth voting this year. Unmarried white women made the difference in the 2008 election. One might surmise this is the populous most likely to be concerned about their economic state and therefore most interested in any redistribution of wealth. -- deb pasquale | nashville, TN

Thanks for saying what so many must be thinking, Ken. It's time to stop hyping every single boring little improvement to the web as the coming of the messiah. Sure, some things really will have a massive impact (facebook) but most will be exposed for the unnecessary twitter... ahem, time-wasters they are and swallowed up by more useful and interesting tools, just like what happened to Web 1.0. In a world where everyone has a flashy site with gigabytes of streaming boredom we can all go back to ignoring all the marketers and bloggers, recognizing it for the ceaseless (and mostly worthless) noise it is. Oh hey, my phone is telling me that someone wrote on my wall that the video comment I posted on YouTube is "LOL WTF!!! lol!"  
I can already feel my hairline un-receding. -- Roman Tsukerman | New York, NY

Old World Perspectives on New Technology is What Ails You.  
Old world perspectives on new technology is why some marketers are having a problem with Web 2.0.

Web 2.0 isn't portal based. It lives with or without Klickable.tv, Youtube, Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, etc.

Barrack Obama's campaign team harnessed Web 2.0 and changed history by getting youth to actually vote. I don't recall any Second Life in the mix.

The consumer is in control. They are the media.  
If you provide the comparison or demonstration tools to simplify their decision making process and enable them to quickly share with their trusted friends and family, for both affirmation and to provide an opinion reference when asked, and your product or service is actually good and has a good reputation in the Web 2.0 landscape, then, as Barrack Obama did, you, the Web 2.0 marketer will win.

A recent study concluded that a brand's web site is the most powerful tool a marketer has to impact retail sales. The study found that shoppers make lists. They search, which leads to brand web sites, where they are comfortable checking things out, and often forward information from the sites to their friends and trusted advisers for opinions on what they've read or compared.

Other times, they take the information at face-value and will make a purchase with no trusted opinions. Further yet, some people just walk into a store and sample buy, because the product looks good for their need that day.

But if the product falls them, no matter how they found it, they let everyone know. Want proof, look no further than on any blog forum, youtube, Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, check your e-mail, or better yet Google - "I hate (company name here)" and you'll find all kinds of websites and and blogs on the subject.

Search and awareness are important. But both are manipulated and are not trusted or believed at face value.  
All the awareness in the world won't fix an inferior product or experience, which is what the consumer cares most about.

The consumer now knows the "truth" about products and experiences based on their networks of friends. That's what Web 2.0 really is, social networking.

Apps, Widgets, Portals, Search, Awareness and In-Game enhancers are some of the tools that can be used in a Web 2.0 strategy. But before you choose your tools, you have to understand what you're building.

Rodney Mason  
CMO, Moosylvania  
The Great State Of Design  
[www.moosylvania.com](#) -- RODNEY MASON | FRISCO, TX

"Web 2.0 Cured My Cancer and Made Me Taller -- and Rich!  
Is There Anything It Can't Do?"  
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[http://admaven.blogspot.com](#) -- Nicholas Kinports | Chicago, IL

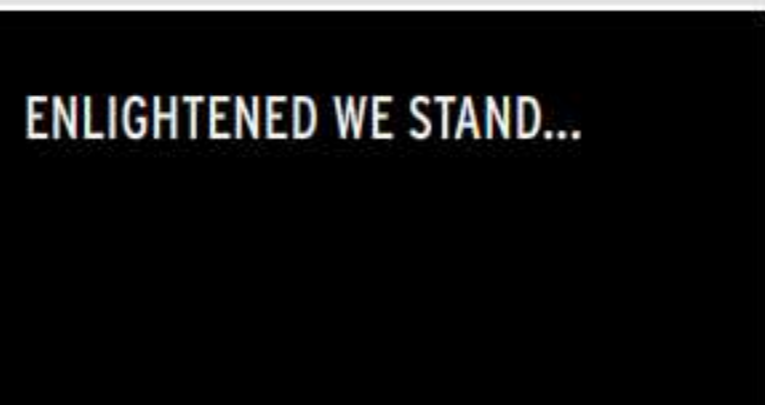
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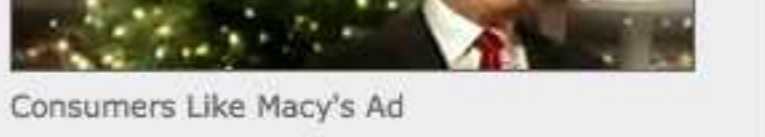
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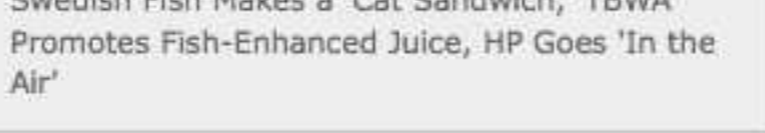
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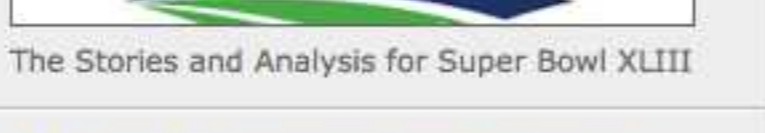
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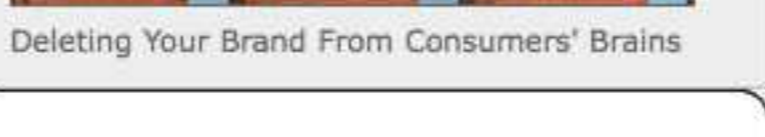
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