

# THE SaaS EDGE

How Companies  
can Leverage  
SaaS  
for Competitive  
Advantage



# THE SaaS EDGE

How Companies  
can Leverage  
SaaS  
for Competitive  
Advantage

Sahil Parikh

*Founder & CEO*

*Synage Software Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai*



**Tata McGraw Hill Education Private Limited**

NEW DELHI

---

*McGraw-Hill Offices*

**New Delhi** New York St Louis San Francisco Auckland Bogotá Caracas

Kuala Lumpur Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City Milan Montreal

San Juan Santiago Singapore Sydney Tokyo Toronto



**Tata McGraw Hill**

Published by Tata McGraw Hill Education Private Limited,  
7 West Patel Nagar, New Delhi 110 008

Copyright © 2011, by Tata McGraw Hill Education Private Limited

No part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise or stored in a database or retrieval system without the prior written permission of the publishers. The program listings (if any) may be entered, stored and executed in a computer system, but they may not be reproduced for publication.

This edition can be exported from India only by the publishers,  
Tata McGraw Hill Education Private Limited.

ISBN (13): 978-0-07-068074-6

ISBN (10): 0-07-068074-4

Vice President and Managing Director—Asia Pacific Region: *Ajay Shukla*

Executive Publisher—Professional: *R Chandra Sekhar*

Production Executive: *Rita Sarkar*

Manager—Sales and Marketing: *S Girish*

Asst. Product Manager—BGR: *Priyanka Goel*

General Manager—Production: *Rajender P Ghansela*

Asst. General Manager—Production: *B L Dogra*

Information contained in this work has been obtained by Tata McGraw Hill, from sources believed to be reliable. However, neither Tata McGraw Hill nor its authors guarantee the accuracy or completeness of any information published herein, and neither Tata McGraw Hill nor its authors shall be responsible for any errors, omissions, or damages arising out of use of this information. This work is published with the understanding that Tata McGraw Hill and its authors are supplying information but are not attempting to render engineering or other professional services. If such services are required, the assistance of an appropriate professional should be sought.

Typeset at Text-o-Graphics, B1/56 Arawali Apartment, Sector 34, Noida 201301 and printed at Gopsons, A-2 & 3, Sector 64, Noida, UP 201301

Cover Design: Kapil Gupta

RZZLCDDZRCBAX

To

*My newborn baby – who will possibly know no other world than the one  
powered by the web.*

*Lucky you!*

*My wife, Sitanshi – who keeps me focused, inspired and true to my  
vision for however long it takes; and*

*My parents, Parag and Gita – who, since the beginning, have given me  
the freedom to dream and find my own path.*



## Praise for *THE SaaS EDGE*

“A lucidly written book with innovative diagrams, *The SaaS Edge* neatly summarizes the virtual transformation that individuals and businesses are going through. Web tools, applications, blogs or wikis... your business can’t afford to be left out of the cloud, and Sahil Parikh ensures just that.”

Sudhir Syal, Associate Producer/Editorial Head,  
Starting Up, ET NOW, Times Television Network

“There is no question about the transformational change cloud computing and software-as-a-service are bringing to IT deployment in business of any scale. The time has arrived for any entrepreneur driving for efficiency, mobility, accountability in his/her business to grasp the essentials of cloud to transform the company’s IT deployment, data storage and protection, and most importantly, reduce CAPEX and OPEX.

Sahil Parikh has been able to present opportunities, complexities and challenges in a simple manner to enable a quick and thorough understanding to the reader, preparing them to plan their IT strategy.”

Saurabh Dhoot, Director,  
Videocon Group

“In this book, Sahil Parikh has found a way to simplify SaaS and Web 2.0 for the non-techie—includes lots of case studies and staves off technical jargons.”

Kapil Hetamsaria, Director: Server & Tools,  
Microsoft Corporation

“An interesting guide to help traverse through Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 (Social Media + SaaS). Full of practical tips, which can be put to use straight away. Excellent takeaways!”

Abhishek Rungta, Founder/CEO,  
Indus Net Technologies



## Preface

*The SaaS Edge: How Companies can Leverage SaaS for Competitive Advantage* is not a how-to guide or a tutorial on using social networks or online applications. You may not find some of the latest tools and technologies mentioned in this book even though people use them to their advantage. The book describes the power of online technology in the context of business. SaaS is an acronym given to what is called software-as-a-service—it is the way software is delivered over the Internet.

I may not have tried and tested all the online tools and applications which are listed. I have not chosen favorites, rather suggested a few common options based on online popular votes or personal recommendations from users I have interacted with.

### ***Objective of the Book***

The primary idea behind this book is to highlight how everything is slowly shifting towards the Web—your emails, thoughts, ideas and friends, to all your business software. The beauty of this shift is that there are no entry barriers—any person or business (of any size whatsoever) can participate and prosper.

### ***The Rise of Consumer Technologies***

Only the smartest survive on the Web, so every business should encourage blogs, wikis, micro-blogging and other Web 2.0 trends within their organizations. This book provides answers to questions like: what do these tools do and why; and how are businesses using them to build their brand; share their message and market their products or services.

We then make a transition into how businesses can subscribe to online software to become more productive, save costs and increase revenue.

### ***From Consumer to Businesses—Rise of SaaS and Enterprise 2.0***

People love the way their Web 2.0 tools work (fast, simple, collaborative and good looking) and now want them within their businesses. Business software has always been boring. This book will spice things up a bit.

Obviously, with new technologies comes resistance...

### ***Top SaaS Myths***

What are people uncomfortable with and what will change? What SaaS can and cannot do—perceptions, myths, advantages and limitations.

The book explains ways in which you can put online software to productive use to leverage your business.

### ***SaaS Enablement***

Figuring out how to zero-in on a service that your team feels comfortable working with, is secure, reliable, and the right choice for your organization.

### ***What's Next?***

Looking into the future: where technology and computing will be ubiquitous and a part of everything we do.

It is going to be necessary for every business to adopt Web 2.0 tools and SaaS applications if it wants to compete in a global world.

### ***Target Audience***

This book has been written keeping in mind non-tech savvy people, with simplified concepts and ideas. The journey begins with Web 2.0—the countless sites that let you share photos, videos, blogs, links, post updates and form your social network.

Not all case studies and examples pertain to popular brands and companies. Some of the examples are from my company's experience of growing and scaling DeskAway.

---

I have used Google's applications as examples in many places because people are familiar with Google and its services.

This is the beginning of what is possible, and it heralds the future of computing!

Believe it or not, you already use SaaS—find out how!

I wish you all the best and happy reading!

Sahil Parikh

[www.sahilparikh.com](http://www.sahilparikh.com)



## Acknowledgments

The idea of a book like this came about one November evening in 2008, when I first met Chandra. We initiated the discussion of the SaaS concept that day, and after a few months of ideation, we were able to fine-tune the focus of this book. I am thankful to Chandra and his team at Tata McGraw-Hill, including Sindhu Ullas (She provided all the administrative help) for believing in my idea and seeing it through to print.

I would also like to thank my wife, Sitanshi, who was on this journey with me right from the very beginning—from ideating at odd hours of the day and night, editing the manuscript along the way and finally giving me the green signal before I sent it out. We did it!

Additionally, a big thanks to my family: dad—Parag; mom—Gita; grandmother—‘Ma’; brother—Neil; father- and mother-in-law—Siddharth and Sucheta; and best buddy, Sid Makkar, for inquiring about how the book was shaping up from time to time. You guys kept me on my toes.

A special thanks to the team at DeskAway, who accepted my time away from work and guarded the fort while I worked on the manuscript. We now know that we can run this company from anywhere! Thank you Komal, Nilesh, Swati, Priyanka, Vijay, Dhanil and Vinay.

Thanks to Vinay Teli for assisting with the illustrations and Priyanka Dalal, Rehan Mehta, Divraj Jain, for helping me find examples and correlate statistics.

Thanks to Rajeev Thakkar (PPFAS) for sharing his thoughts on the book-writing process and going web-based. Thanks to Hiroo

Thadani of PPFAS for her administrative help in corresponding with the publishers.

Thanks to my friends: Manish Jain and Pratik Vyas, who listened to my ideas, ready with feedback, and Kiran Desai for helping me to understand the legalities of the agreement.

Thanks to the Morpheus gang for being so responsive to the questions I asked. With you all the best for your startups!

I would like to thank all the entrepreneurs, 'techies', SaaS gurus, venture capitalists and consumers who shared their valuable time answering my questions and providing their feedback. In alphabetical order: Abheek Bose (Robots Alive), Abhishek Rungta (IndusNet), Aditi Sheth-Kejriwal (Parksons Games and Sports) Alok Mittal (Cannon Partners), Amit Ranjan (SlideShare), Amy D. Wohl (Wohl Associates), Anand Mahindra (Mahindra and Mahindra), Andrea Krause (FYSE), Ankit Maheshwari (InstaBlogs), Anusha Pinto (Directi), Balaka Baruah Aggarwal (Springboard Research), Bellamy Budiman (Neuro-Designs), Bhavin Turakhia (Directi), Byron Deeter (Bessemer Venture Partners), Chris Brogan (New Marketing Labs), Christine Egger (Social Actions), David Skok (Matrix Partners), Dharmesh Shah (HubSpot), Harshil Karia (FoxyMoron), Indus Khaitan (The Morpheus), Jeff Kaplan (Think Strategies), Justin Brooke (SiteFling), Karthik Anand (Zinnov Management Consulting), Matthew Philogene (Raramuridesigns), Namit Nangia (LifeMojo), Nandini Hirianniah (The Morpheus), Parul Gupta (NGO Post), Ryan Alias (iContact), Sachin Aggarwal (Posterous), Sameer Guglani (The Morpheus), Sanjay Mehta (Social Wavelength), Steve Apfelberg (Yammer), Steve Rubel (Edelman Digital), Subraya Mallya (PrudentCloud), Sunir Shah (FreshBooks), Thor Muller (GetSatisfaction) and Treb Ryan (OpSource).

I would like to thank all the tweeples who responded to my tweets about stuff that I was writing about on Twitter. Twitter rocks!

I apologize if I have forgotten to acknowledge anyone. Thank you for your support and help! This book wouldn't have been possible without you.

SAHIL PARIKH

# Contents

<i>Praise for The SaaS Edge</i>	vii
<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. Web 2.0 and the Sudden Surge of Consumer Technologies</b>	<b>3</b>
The Itch: Feeling Left Out	3
Web 1.0: Static and Blah!	5
Web 2.0: Lushness of User-generated Content	6
Web 2.0: What's Cool About It?	8
It's Social!	8
Web-based	8
Open	9
Level Playing Field	9
Fresh, Like a Morning Muffin	10
It's about You, Silly!	10
Onto the Quest	11
Powered by Web 2.0: Tools and Techniques	12
Blogging	12
Wikis	22
Social Networks	30
LinkedIn: Business Networking and Recruiting	38
Humanizing your Business	46

---

Host Your Own Talk/Radio Show	47
Visually, Promote Your Business	47
Videos that Make You Go Viral	48
Power of Presentations	50
See What the World is Reading Right Now	51
Being Remarkable Online is What Matters	53
Case Studies	54
References	61
 <b>2. WEB 2.0 to Enterprise 2.0</b>	 <b>65</b>
Web 2.0: Irresistible to the Enterprise	65
Wowed by Web 2.0	66
Falling Cost of Infrastructure	66
I Want These Tools at My Workplace, Not Just at Home	66
Easy to Build	68
From Web 2.0 to Enterprise 2.0	68
Software as a Service (SaaS)	69
Small Businesses, Big Engines	70
Top 11 Reasons to Fall in Love with SaaS	71
References	83
 <b>3. Using Online Software and Services: Mindsets and Myths</b>	 <b>85</b>
Myth #1: New, Unproven and Hyped	86
Myth #2: Loss of Control	90
Myth #3: Threat to the Techies	91
Myth #4: SaaS is Expensive	93
Myth #5: SaaS is Difficult to Customize and Integrate	95
Myth #6: SaaS is Not Feature-rich	95
Myth #7: SaaS Requires a Steep Learning Curve	96
Myth #8: SaaS is not Secure	97
Case Studies	102
References	103



<b>4. Enabling SaaS at Your Workplace</b>	<b>105</b>
Buckle-up for SaaS	105
What to Look for in a SaaS Application	107
Adoption and Adaptability	107
Features	108
Performance	108
Mobile	108
Friend or Foe?	108
References and Buzz	109
Evaluating the SaaS Company/Vendor	110
#1 Can I Get My Data from You?	110
#2 Where do You Host Your SaaS Application?	110
#3 What Kind of Reliability can the Vendor Guarantee?	110
#4 Customer Reference Check	111
#5 Customer Service	111
#6 How do You Protect My Data?	112
#7 What Kind of Pricing Options do They Have?	113
So, Should You Use Free Software?	114
The Chief Gatekeeper	115
Getting SaaSy: Building the Virtual Office	116
Junk Your Office Mail Servers	117
Share and Edit Documents Online	118
Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	119
Project Collaboration	120
HelpDesk/Support/Customer Service	122
Online Storage and Backup	124
Online Invoicing	126
Using SaaS to Build, Market and Measure	
Your Online Presence	126
Set up Your Online Presence	127
Build and Share Content	128
Listen	130

Measure Everything	131
References	132
<b>5. What Next?</b>	<b>133</b>
Web-based: Apps for Your Daily Life	135
The Mobile Web	135
Operating Systems (OS)	135
Recommendation Engines	136
Smarter Search Engines	136
Going Green	136
Location-based Services	136
Videos	137
Real-time Web and Information Overload	137
Sixth Sense	137
Being Remarkable	138
References	138
<b>Epilogue</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Index</b>	<b>141</b>

## Author's Profile



Sahil is a tech-enthusiast and a web entrepreneur who founded his first successful web company in the U.S. at the age of 23. He returned to India in 2005 after eight years and started Synage Software ([www.synage.com](http://www.synage.com)), a technology company that successfully pioneered one of India's first home-grown SaaS (software-as-a-service) product through DeskAway ([www.deskaway.com](http://www.deskaway.com)) in 2007.

Sahil has been named a Paragon 100 Fellow (Asia's Most Inspiring Young Entrepreneurs and Social Change Makers), shortlisted in *Business World's* Top 30 Young Entrepreneurs in India, featured on the cover and leading story of *India Today Aspire*, showcased on CNBC's prestigious TV show, Young Turk Innovators, and interviewed by many prominent entrepreneurship/technology blogs and news sites worldwide.

Sahil's interests are reading, writing, playing golf and tennis. Also, he loves traveling to places in India and outside with his wife.

Sahil blogs at [www.sahilparikh.com](http://www.sahilparikh.com) and is active on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/sahilparikh](http://www.twitter.com/sahilparikh).



## INTRODUCTION

The Web is becoming ubiquitous.

I spent a while writing this book at a small coffee shop in one of the by-lanes of South Mumbai. On every occasion, I couldn't help but overhear people talk about websites, blogs, Twitter, iPhone applications, software as a service (SaaS) and the Web. In fact, as I write this, two folks are talking about creating a Twitter application for their business.

Lunch conversations at Parag Parikh Financial Advisory Services (PPFAS), our family's financial company, often end up with discussions on opt-in email marketing, how to increase page conversions on their website and automating many more functions of their company, rather than conversations on the stock market.

My non-tech friends want to get into "technology." They talk about "status updates," Google, BlackBerry phones, online marketing and the latest applications on the iPhone.

Start-up entrepreneurs whom I have known have stopped installing software. They run their company using online tools. Some of them don't even have an office and choose to work virtually across states.

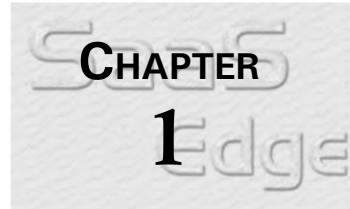
There are numerous people (business owners, entrepreneurs, aspiring entrepreneurs, top management/decision makers, technical teams and students) I meet daily who do not understand how

Web 2.0 and SaaS can benefit their organizations. This book is for them.

You don't have to be technologically savvy to participate online or use web-based software for your business. All you need is a change in the way you think about technology and software. For example, today, CEOs should be involved in spreading their brand message and signing up on social networks. Earlier, it used to be the job of the marketing team. Today, anyone in your company can try out a new tool for customer relationship management. Earlier, this was the job of the technical team. Today, you can use online software. Earlier, you used to install software on your computers.

The shift to the Web has already taken place and this is merely the beginning of what is possible, as it heralds the future of computing.

It is important that you start thinking about changing the lifestyle of your business, about 'turning your business on: with the SaaS edge!



## WEB 2.0 AND THE SUDDEN SURGE OF CONSUMER TECHNOLOGIES

### THE ITCH: FEELING LEFT OUT

It all started where most Indian stories tend to begin – at a big Indian wedding. I was taking a people-break on one of the plush sofas in the corner and cranked up my iPhone. I loved the tool; it came to my rescue when I needed it the most. A few emails and messages later, a friend's dad (popularly known as Shaw) came by and took a seat next to me. At first, I thought that he was getting a breather too, but he thumped my shoulder (as a friendly gesture) and asked me how things were and what I was doing lately. He too was considering buying an iPhone, and particularly wanted to check his stock portfolio online while he was traveling. He knew I was in a business that had something to do with computers (even stuff that has to do with the Web is considered being in the 'computer business'). So he started talking about how his kids were glued to the computer (rather than playing cricket); the younger kid was a Facebook fanatic (a popular social networking website that lets one socialize with one's friends) and the older one was addicted to something called Twitter (another popular microblogging site where you can connect with people and send 140-character messages to

anyone in the world). Both of them would discuss things that were incomprehensible to him.

“It’s amazing how kids these days are connected to right about everything except the family,” he remarked. As the conversation proceeded, I got to know Shaw a little better. He had just started a consulting company after having sold off his family-owned business a year ago. He was more of the paper-and-pen (think brick-and-mortar) guy hailing from the era when computers didn’t exist. The Internet for him was still a scary space where he would limit his activity to only checking emails (often being guilty of printing emails to read on-the-go) and surfing a handful of websites that were emailed to him. As my conversation about these latest technology tools and toys rolled on, I sensed that Shaw felt left out. Articles in newspapers, conversations with buddies and multiple unopened Facebook and LinkedIn invitations pointed towards a new trend, which Shaw was not a part of. This made him uncomfortable. Something magical was brewing, and Shaw’s entrepreneurial instinct itched to be a part of it. I guess he wanted to know how Dell raked in \$3 million through Twitter,<sup>1</sup> why more than a million blog posts were created daily, how businesses were creating profitable brands on Facebook and how people were using online tools to manage their business, find new customers and even communicate and collaborate with them seamlessly. Could he use these virtual Aladdin lamps to transform his consulting outfit and make it more popular, efficient and profitable? What did he need to know and how would he get started?

To understand where we are right now, we need to know where we have come from.

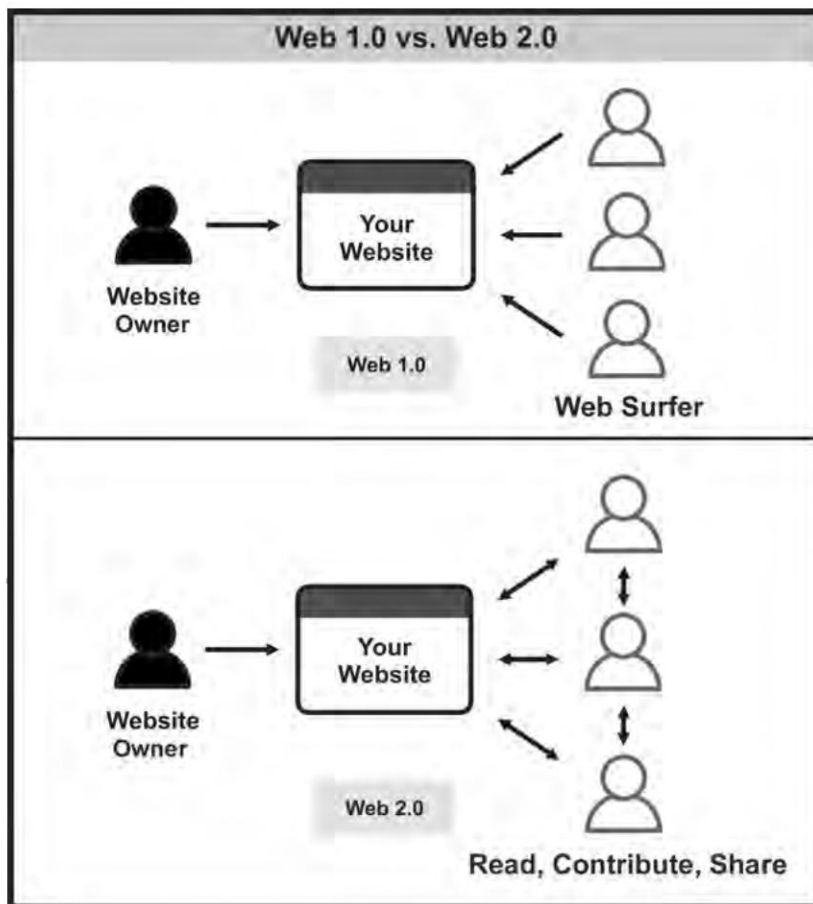


Fig. 1

## WEB 1.0: STATIC AND BLAH!

*"Web 1.0 was commerce. Web 2.0 is People."*

– Ross Mayfield, CEO, Social Text

In the mid-to-late 1990s, the Internet featured static website pages and links. A typical company website would have a few pages with text and information that would seldom change. A visitor would go to the site and find the information he/she was looking for. There was no compelling reason to return to the site later as there



was no interaction between the visitor and the website. This was Web 1.0: static, read-only content – a barren landscape (Fig. 1).

## WEB 2.0: LUSHNESS OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT

*“Web 1.0 was a more publisher-oriented model. Web 2.0 is about the consumer and how they can richly interact with the content or service converting the Internet into a two-way medium.”*

– Alok Mittal, MD, Canaan Partners, India and Founding Member, Indian Angel Network

Following the bursting of the dot-com bubble in mid-2000, a new Web was emerging out of the rubble. As if re-incarnated, web technology was maturing, computers were getting cheaper, broadband penetration was increasing and a new breed of applications and sites were becoming incredibly popular. As more people participated, developers and entrepreneurs created tools that allowed people to easily start their own websites, connect with others, collaborate more effectively and find things faster, thereby unlocking great human potential and giving rise to a plethora of tools and applications.

These sites were free to use, simple, intuitive, dynamic and collaborative and would let users generate their own content, i.e. user-generated content. Popularly called Web 2.0, these platforms encourage participation, sharing, collaboration, openness, and a sense of community. The more people shared, the more useful the site became to everyone and therefore, a valuable resource to the entire community.

*“Web 2.0 is the network effect that kicks in once people are on a common platform.”*

– Amit Ranjan, Co-founder, SlideShare

*Flickr*, a photo-sharing site (owned by Yahoo!) allows anyone to put up pictures and share them with everyone else in the world. The more pictures that are uploaded, the better it is for everyone – users have more pictures to check out and share, therefore staying on the site for longer, building its ‘stickiness’.

Similarly, *YouTube*, a million-channel video-sharing site with hundreds of millions of video views lets anyone in the world create and share videos depicting anything from stupid incidents, funny stories to professional interviews.

*Wikipedia*, the free human-updated online encyclopedia lets anyone contribute and share knowledge.

*Facebook*, with more than 500 million active users, is one of the most popular social networking sites, which lets people connect with friends, families and university buddies across the world at any time of the day. According to their statistics, people spend over 700 billion minutes per month on Facebook.<sup>2</sup>

*Twitter*, a popular 140-character messaging service attracting more than 190 million visitors per month and 65 million messages per day, lets you know what others are thinking, reading and experiencing within their daily lives.<sup>3</sup>

*LinkedIn*, a social networking tool for business professionals with over 80 million members,<sup>4</sup> lets you build your online resume, find new opportunities, answers to business questions and makes it easy to get introduced to other smart people.

*“It’s a tool for bringing together the small contributions of millions of people and making them matter. Silicon Valley consultants call it Web 2.0, as if it were a new version of some old software. But it’s really a revolution.”*<sup>5</sup>

– Time Magazine

Shaw looked amazed. I continued.

## WEB 2.0: WHAT'S COOL ABOUT IT?

### It's Social!

*"Web 2.0 is the two-way Web, and to me, that means that we've gone from billboards to telephones. The new Web is interactive and allows us to talk back and forth, to organize our own ways, to make it our own. Social media is just one branch of Web 2.0, the ability to make media of all kinds and share it ubiquitously."*

– Chris Brogan, President, New Marketing Labs

When you give people a platform (just like this wedding we were at) to come together, they socialize, build relationships, talk business, and have fun. This is exactly what Web 2.0 is about – a platform for people to connect and be social by putting up pictures, videos, comments, links, content etc. People are creating what is known as "social media." The tools that power these conversations are called social media tools – they help people share, participate, distribute and interact through this media.

We could see many different types of people at the wedding – some were joking around, a few looked bored, some were intensely talking business, and others just there for the heck of it.

Similarly, social media allows people to build their image online and a company to build its brand. It is a way to raise awareness for your campaign, to share ideas, information, breaking news, to get feedback from various types of people or to build a community that believes in what you do. At the heart of social media lie conversations. You don't talk down to people, you talk to them. You don't hard sell, you communicate.

### Web-based

Web 2.0 sites do not require you to download and install anything on your computer. All you need is an Internet connection and a Web browser to access the site.

## Open

*"I am because we are. We are because I am."*

– African proverb

Similarly, there were people of all ages at the wedding. Anyone can participate on a Web 2.0 site. It is an open platform where people from different cultures participate and generate content. Why not read a story from an actual customer who is sharing his travel experience rather than from the agency that would embellish the story to make it sound interesting?

The Web breaks down filters and makes for a transparent dissemination of information.

### **CASE STUDY Threadless – User Participation on Web 2.0**

Threadless is an online apparel business that was started in 2000 by two guys with only \$1000 in seed money. Unlike a traditional apparel company, Threadless runs because of user participation – anyone can design a t-shirt and submit the design to a weekly contest on the Threadless site. The community of over 500,000 people then vote on the designs. Every week, the winning designs get a monetary award and are put into production. Today, Threadless generates a multimillion dollar revenue and is one of the most popular online apparel companies.

## Level Playing Field

When you can publish anything, be your own media company and market your product without the help of a traditional marketing agency, you are your own boss. If you are small, you can compete with the bigger boys. The platform is ready for you to play on. The boldest and the smartest (not the strongest) win!

## Fresh, Like a Morning Muffin

Just like the conversations and the social buzz in this room, Web 2.0 sites are in a state of constant flux.

Facebook is constantly changing with friends posting updates about their travel plans and what they are up to right now. LinkedIn displays a list of all your business contacts and what they are working on. Twitter updates you with what everyone else in your Twitter stream is doing. Your favorite blogs have new content on them every week with reviews from people around the world. It is like someone left the tap running; content and information is just about everywhere: always fresh, up-to-date and ready for your consumption.

## It's about You, Silly!

Web 2.0 is about you and your story. It's about staking a claim on your ideas, thoughts and anything that you create online. Some people call it the "The Daily Me," personalized nonstop updates of their lives, amusements, and obsessions.<sup>6</sup> *Time's* Person of the Year 2006 was You! (Fig. 2). It celebrated the million minds that would contribute after a long day's work to upload a picture, update a profile, review a book on Amazon, and even update their life blog.<sup>7</sup>

The Web has become a powerful, rich and a democratic platform controlled by people like you and me. The consumer is in charge. Your opinion of a book that you read last week could greatly influence that of the next visitor (and that could be a person half-way across the world!) who might be looking to purchase the same book online at this very moment.



Fig. 2

## ONTO THE QUEST

I bumped into Shaw again at the coffee shop later, on a crisp fall evening. He looked excited and a little confused. Excited, because he had managed to find a few overseas friends and family on Facebook, and confused, because he did not know how to transfer this experience to his business. It's natural for people to use social media tools for their personal use first, before they harness it for their business. It comes with observing what others are doing, participating online, and then monitoring things out there.

I asked him how his kids were doing – if they were still spending all their time online. Suddenly, it dawned on him. He thought of his kids who were glued to the computer. This is the future. Everyone and everything will be moving online soon, especially the younger generation who are growing up on the Internet today. It is a lifestyle change. The sooner one integrated it with one's current life, the smoother the transition would be.

His confusion turned into sheer excitement. He had to learn how his business could leverage these online tools and be a part of the future.

## POWERED BY WEB 2.0: TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

### Blogging

*“It is every man’s obligation to put back into the world at least the equivalent of what he takes out of it.”*

– Albert Einstein

There are at least 200 million blogs in the world and according to Technorati.com, a blog search engine, around one million blog posts are created every 24 hours.

Isn’t this bringing out the writer in all of us (Fig. 3)?

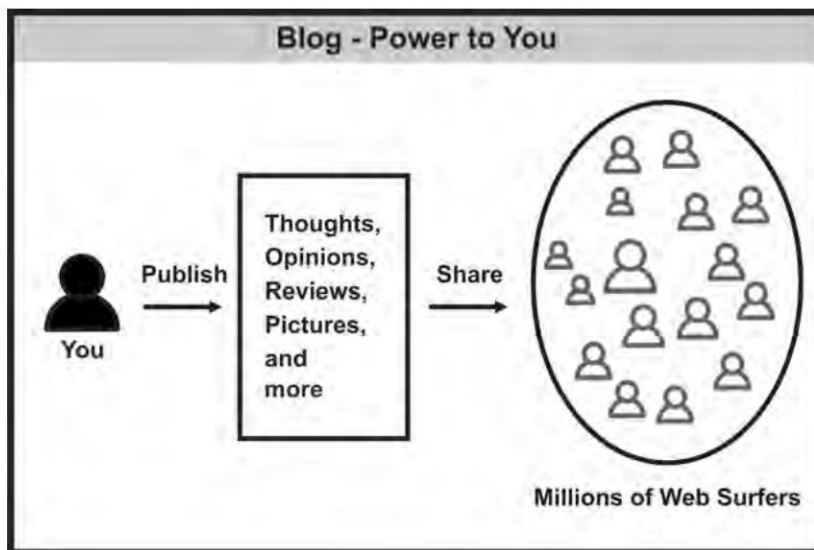


Fig. 3

### *Self-publishing: Being your own master*

Suddenly, everyone is turning into a writer, with an opinion of his/her own. Be it the latest restaurant that they visited or the gizmo that they tried out the other day. Or, for that matter the argument they had with the airline ground staff or the amazing

holiday getaway on the beaches of South-East Asia. Personal experiences are no longer personal. They are out there for everybody. A new form of self-publishing has arrived and everyone, of any age group, has taken blogging by storm.

*“I believe the term ‘blog’ means more than an online journal. I believe a blog is a conversation. People go to blogs to read AND write, not just consume.”*

– Michael Arrington, Founder and Co-editor, TechCrunch

A blog is a short form of the word “web log.” It’s like a diary or journal that you can keep online, chronicling your ideas, experiences, thoughts, rants, and anything that you see fit to share with the world. Technorati or Google Blog Search (<http://blogsearch.google.com/>) are great places to explore the different kinds of blogs that exist – from politics, entertainment, sports, housewives sharing custom-made recipes to companies talking about their products and internal culture. Today, most of the content produced on the Web is on a blog.

Blogs became popular because of the tools that made self-publishing a piece of cake. Earlier, not many people owned sites because designing and developing them was a technological hurdle. Once blogger.com, wordpress.com, typepad.com came into existence, anyone could create their own blog and start publishing their content literally within a few minutes. Since this process is web-based, people did not have to maintain their own web servers or have designers do the web updates for them. This self-service, self-publishing simple framework gave birth to a million blogging websites and everyone scrambled to get online to present their thoughts and ideas.

### *A special kind of website*

Blogs are transparent, spontaneous, genuine, and thought-provoking as opposed to well-crafted, pompous press releases. The tone of most blogs is informal and they speak directly to their audience. Blogs are more like impromptu plans than well-rehearsed dramas. An opinion that could be shared with one person earlier



can now be transported to a million people at the same instant. A complaint that only those around you would hear can now be heard by millions. New companies and startups that were once oblivious to the world are now getting showcased on the world's most popular blogs. The power balance has shifted from a few media companies to every individual in the world. Consumers have become producers. The popularity of blogging is mainly due to this open and democratic nature of publishing where the power rests with every individual to speak his/her mind and has the ability to influence other people.

Popular international technology blogs like *TechCrunch* and *Mashable* (run by group of technology enthusiasts) command a phenomenal clout amongst early adopters and like-minded folks. Every day, they profile companies, review startups, and talk about new trends on technology and the Web. Their reviews on new companies sometimes determine the initial early-adopter success of those startups. They open up the space for a conversation to happen between the startup founders and the audience. For the startups, this is a dream come true – getting reviewed, gathering comments from early adopters, and even the potential for getting leads that would convert into actual clients in the early days of the company. All this, through a blog.

Shaw was listening intently, absorbing everything I was saying. “But, I still don’t understand why I should join or even start writing. I mean, what would I write about that is not already covered?”

I thought it would be a good idea to explain him what kind of blogs exist before convincing him to participate.

### ***CEO blogs***

As the name suggests, these are written by CEOs. They are often management- and experience-oriented with some fun stuff thrown in from time to time. Some examples of CEO blogs are Jonathan Schwartz (<http://blogs.sun.com/jonathan/>) of Sun Microsystems, Benjamin Yoskovitz (<http://www.instigatorblog.com/>) of Standout Jobs, and Rajesh Jain (<http://emergic.org/>) of Netcore Solutions.

### *Expert blogs*

These blogs are more industry-centric and talk about an industry as a whole. A pharmaceutical company will talk about new breakthroughs in medicine, a HR consulting company will talk about issues around human resources, a financial services company might talk about preservation of capital and a web software company can talk new technologies and ideas around the Internet. TechCrunch (<http://www.techcrunch.com>), Mashable (<http://www.mashable.com>), and GigaOm (<http://www.gigaom.com>) are expert blogs on the technology and the web industry. Pluggd.in is a blog that is focused on news about the startup scene in India. Smashing Magazine (<http://www.smashingmagazine.com>) is a blog focused on design for web designers, developers and freelancers around the world.

### *Personal blogs*

Individual thoughts, experiences, anecdotes go on a personal blog.

### *Company, product, or service blogs*

These blogs revolve around a particular product or service and are started by companies. The blog discusses the company culture, news, product releases, customer stories, or anything that is related to the company in a way that is easy to read, informal, and fun.

I could see Shaw's mind working. "Hmm... that might explain this. My gadget-loving friend actually gets all his BlackBerry news from BlackBerry's official blog (<http://blogs.blackberry.com>). I think you can call that a product blog, right?" Shaw asked.

"That's correct. Blogs like these generate conversations through comments and lead to eventually better products since the company can get direct feedback from its readers in a way that was not possible a few years back.

*"The blog is the pulse of any business. Having a blog that can be updated quickly, easily, with rich media, by many contributors, is very important for a business. It shows that the company is still alive."*

– Sachin Agarwal, Co-founder and CEO, Posterous.com

## *RSS to the rescue*

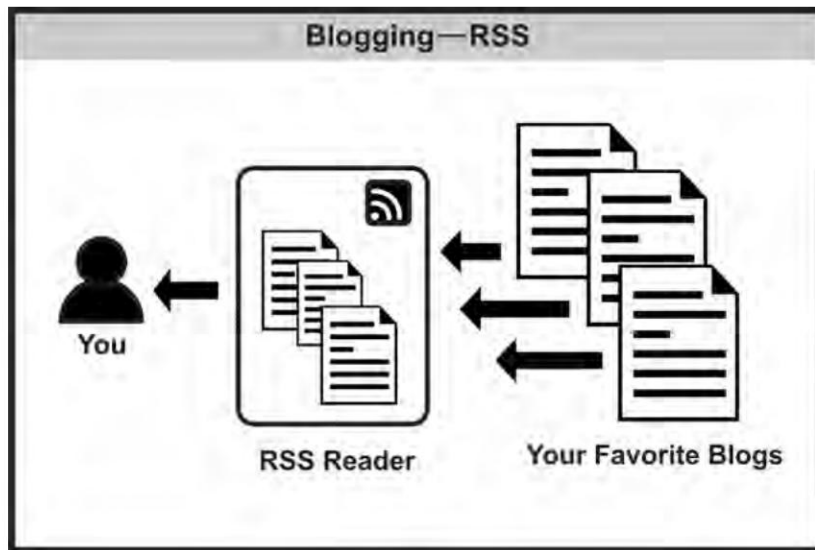


Fig. 4

Your favorite blogs can be read by going to their website but there is an easier way to stay on top of them using *RSS* or *Real Syndication System* (Fig. 4). Here, all you do is take the blog website address (the address starts with `http://...`) and place it in your RSS Reader. RSS Readers are special kind of software that keep track of all your RSS feeds (the website address that you have input into them) from various blogs. As the blogs get new content, your RSS Reader will automatically fetch new articles for you and store it in one place for you to check out.

Think of the RSS Reader as your personal newspaper. The daily newspaper gets content the editors want you to read, or what they think is relevant. Your RSS Reader is personalized and customized according to your taste and business interest.



## Google Reader

Google Reader (<http://google.com/reader>) is a popular and a free RSS reader. Simply log into your Gmail account and from the top left corner choose the Reader link. As you surf the Web, you can click on the RSS icon on any website to subscribe that website's content to your Google Reader. Every day, all you need to do is to open up Google Reader to read your favorite blogs.

If you are traveling, Google Reader also has an option to read your blogs in offline mode. Your very own customized digital newspaper when in the air or in transit!

"So all I need to do is to wake up in the morning, open up the RSS reader and sift through the blog posts that are new – pretty simple. It's more like the content and information is coming to me as opposed to me going to it. Push vs. pull, right?"

Absolutely. Shaw was getting a hang of this pretty fast. This was the beauty of the Web 2.0 movement – easy to understand, simple to use, and made for the average user. Before Shaw could start a blog on his own, I advised him to subscribe to a few blogs and start reading them for a few days. This would help him understand their tone and writing style.

Shaw promised that he would call me once he was done.

A week had gone by since I had heard from Shaw. I wondered if he had lost interest. After talking to him later in the afternoon I discovered that he was so engrossed in reading about what we had discussed that he had completely forgotten to call me. We set up a meeting at his office and I dropped in that evening.

Shaw was completely fascinated by how it was so easy to get so much information so quickly. He was amazed by the fact that companies and people were sharing so much interesting information. Just like TV, he was so glued to his RSS Reader that updated itself with new content as and when it was published.

"So, besides publishing information, what other value does a blog have? I have been trying to understand if we should have a blog but I still want to know more about it."

Business blogs are more than just information dispensers. They are closely tied to the culture of the company. Every blog is unique in its own way. When you write from the standpoint of your company or industry, you are representing your brand and building authority within your industry. When people read your blog they might comment (blogs also have a place where people can post comments) on your thoughts, thereby bridging a relationship and opening one more channel of communication with a prospect, customer, or just a passerby online. They have now become a medium to expose your brand, values and philosophy to the outside world. In fact, I have also seen blogs that expose mistakes that take place within a company. When Sony did a voluntary recall of their 2.15Ah lithium ion battery cells, they posted the information on their blog (after issuing a press release) with an explanation of what went wrong, the computers that were affected and what consumers should do.<sup>8</sup> *Cleartrip*, a travel website, posted an explanation on their blog titled “The Kiruba Incident” that explained what went wrong when a consumer complained on Twitter (creating a flurry of other users demanding an explanation) when his ticket was not booked even though he had paid for it online.<sup>9</sup>

A blog helps in customer communication as it opens up a two-way channel between your customers and your company. A blog gives your brand a face and a personality. As more people read your blog, you eventually form a community of like-minded people. This is helpful when you have to launch a new product, service, or a feature (Fig. 5).

Shaw: “Ok, so I think we should first set up a company blog and start writing about what we do. Will this add value?”

“Let me see if I can give you examples of some interesting company blogs that I have encountered.”

1. Social media company *2020Social* blogs about research, case studies, breakthroughs, and even introduces people they are hiring on their blog: <http://2020social.com/category/blog>.
2. *Infosys*, one of the largest software companies in India has a network of blogs <http://www.infosysblogs.com/>, covering business and technology.

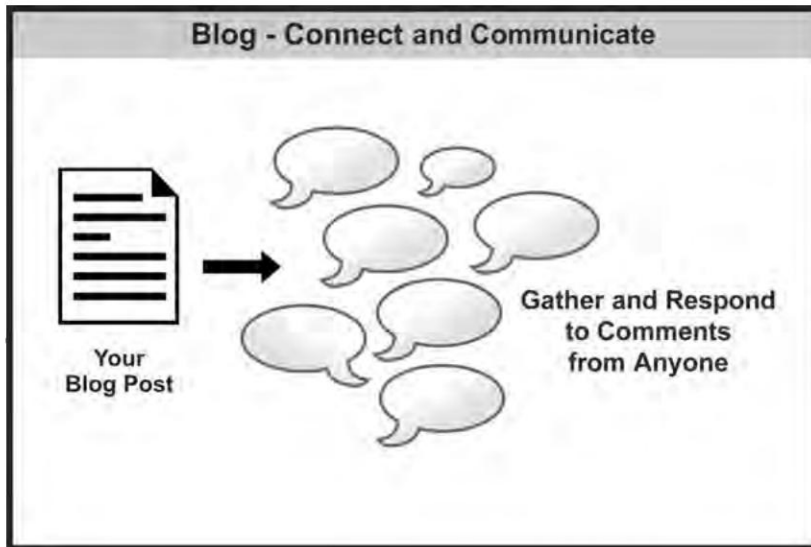


Fig. 5

3. *Whole Foods Market* is a chain of organic food supermarkets in the U.S. They blog about food, recipes, nutrition, engaging food lovers on <http://blog.wholefoodsmarket.com/>
4. *Cleartrip*, an online travel site, blogs (<http://blog.cleartrip.com/>) about everything travel, including hotels and even reviews and research about the travel industry in India.
5. *Seth Godin's blog* (<http://sethgodin.typepad.com/>) on Internet marketing is hugely popular amongst startups and entrepreneurs. He blogs almost every day, with simple and meaningful ideas.
6. *VentureWoods* (<http://www.venturewoods.org>) is a blog started by venture capitalists that discusses startups, entrepreneurship, dotcoms, dot-busts in India.
7. *Autoblog* (<http://www.autoblog.com>) obsessively covers the auto industry.
8. For the business savvy, *DailyFinance* (<http://www.dailyfinance.com>) is updated daily with financial news and analysis.

Every industry has a blog; in fact, there are sites devoted to most aspects of a person's life. You just need to choose what you are interested in.

### *Traffic generation*

Shaw was already envisioning his company blog and how they would use it – writing about the stuff they love and commanding a large readership. They had so much to say about themselves, their vision, their purpose and their industry, that this would be the perfect channel to not only publish but also to let their customers participate in the making of their company and products.

“But, besides me, who should be writing within our company? We obviously cannot open it up to everyone, right? What if something that gets posted is false or plain profane?”

There are several things to keep in mind when starting a blog. Firstly, you would need to know your topic. If you are writing about your company and what you are doing every week, then you need to stick to that. Second, set basic editorial guidelines and initially choose a couple of people who are good at expressing their thoughts and have good language skills. Having one person start blogging and then slowly involving the team is a good idea. Simple guidelines like what goes online and what doesn't, the style of writing and how to reference other blogs will help set the standard. Anything that you post on your blog is public information so your team needs to be careful to not to include anything confidential. Never hire someone to write the blog for your company. The blog is a reflection of your company, and who better to write it than you or your team? A blog post is essentially a conversation coming from the heart of your company.

“Ok, and how frequently should we blog?”

There is no set rule about updating your blog but it is advised to keep it fresh. Personally I like reading blogs that are updated a couple of times a week with fresh content. Updating your blog too frequently (once a day) might get your readers overwhelmed with information and not updating it enough might make them feel that you have nothing to say. Ideally, putting up two to three new posts every week is a good start.

A week later, I got an email from Shaw. He had managed to set up their company blog and written his first post. It was about taking a step toward leveraging technology to improve their business. A lot of people that I had spoken to were either not willing to change or were simply just stuck in their comfort zone. Shaw cared about his business, employees and wanted to build a forward-thinking, agile business.

Over time, their blog would shape up well – a chronicle of who they were and what they stood for. Even before they met Shaw and his company, prospects or potential employees would have a clear understanding of their culture, vision and philosophy. I also saw a few images of their annual company trip and funky pictures of their team having fun and doing team-building exercises. In a sense, they were inviting the outside world into their company culture and brand.

“I feel great about writing our thoughts and what we stand for. It is almost like climbing the Everest and hoisting our company flag. But, how do we have this flag seen by other people? How would we get more people to read and comment on our thoughts?”

“Well, you can’t expect people to come to your site overnight. It takes a little bit of patience to get people to your blog considering there are millions of blogs out there.”

There are no tricks – just a honest-to-goodness approach. First, you need to put out content that people like and will want to share with others. It is something similar to the SMS jokes that go around. The funnier the joke, the more it gets forwarded to people. Similarly, the better your content the more it will get passed around, linked to other websites/blogs (which will take care of ongoing traffic) and hence more people will pit-stop at your blog to check it out.

Secondly, just like you would promote a new website, you would need to promote your blog. Pushiness does not work on the Web. Introduce your blog to your contacts and clients, link it up from your website, edit your email signature file to also contain your blog URL, put the blog URL in your marketing material, presentation slides, and most importantly, start talking about your blog at meetings and business events. Let everyone who you get in touch with know about your blog and what it stands for.





### *How do you get traffic to your blog?*

In a nutshell:

1. Write good content that people will want to share with others.
2. Good content will get linked to other sites and blogs. The more your blog is linked the better chances that it will be found in search engines.
3. Update your content regularly. Keep it fresh. Think of newspapers or weeklies.
4. Talk about your content on social media sites. You will see how in the following chapters.

Seth Godin, a famous marketer, has a no-nonsense approach to get traffic to your blog.

[http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths\\_blog/2006/06/how\\_to\\_get\\_traf.html](http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2006/06/how_to_get_traf.html)

Gradually, you will see more and more people visiting your blog, reading and commenting on what you have written.

And just like that, Shaw's non-technical company had embraced their first online tool and taken the first step to open up and join the other millions who were already building brands and participating online.

## **Wikis**

*“Collective intelligence emerges when groups of people work together effectively. Collective intelligence can be additive (each adds his or her part which together form the whole) or it can be synergetic, where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”*

– Trudy and Peter Johnson-Lenz, Founders,  
Awakening Technologies<sup>10</sup>

You must have heard of *Wikipedia*, the world's first humanly-edited encyclopedia and an important source of knowledge today.

Search for anything on Google and the first few results are likely to be from Wikipedia. Launched in January 2001 by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger, it is currently the largest and most popular general reference work on the Internet, attracting around 65 million visitors monthly and 10 million registered users as of 2009. There are more than 75,000 active contributors working on more than 13,000,000 articles in more than 260 languages. In 2009, Wikipedia crossed 3 million articles in English.<sup>11</sup>

Anyone can create or edit an article on Wikipedia, hence epitomizing the human power of collaboration and contribution.

### *Edit this page*

Derived from the Hawaiian word for “quick,” a wiki is a simple, lightweight online collaboration tool where multiple people can edit and make changes to a webpage from anywhere. Think of it as a digital filing cabinet capturing the collective knowledge of your coworkers and your customers in one central place.<sup>12</sup> Like blogs, all you need is a browser and an Internet connection to create wiki pages (just like web pages except that you can update them easily online without having any technical know-how).

I had an example that Shaw would relate to (Fig. 6).

### *Document editing: The old way*

Proposal writing can be a painful task. Even more so is gathering input from the entire team before something fresh goes out to the client. The proposal, just like a virus gone crazy, has been to every mailbox before it is transported to the client. This is so common in offices that it amazes me if anyone has even stopped and wondered if there can be a better way of working on things.

Here is what happens – the person in charge of creating the proposal sends the proposal to multiple people in the team (marketing folks, the boss etc.) to gather feedback, changes and new ideas. Some people download the attachment, make their changes and send it back. Others reply to the email and send in their comments. By the time all the feedback is compiled, you have a bloated email as long as a thesis and the sender probably does not know which is the latest version of the original proposal document.

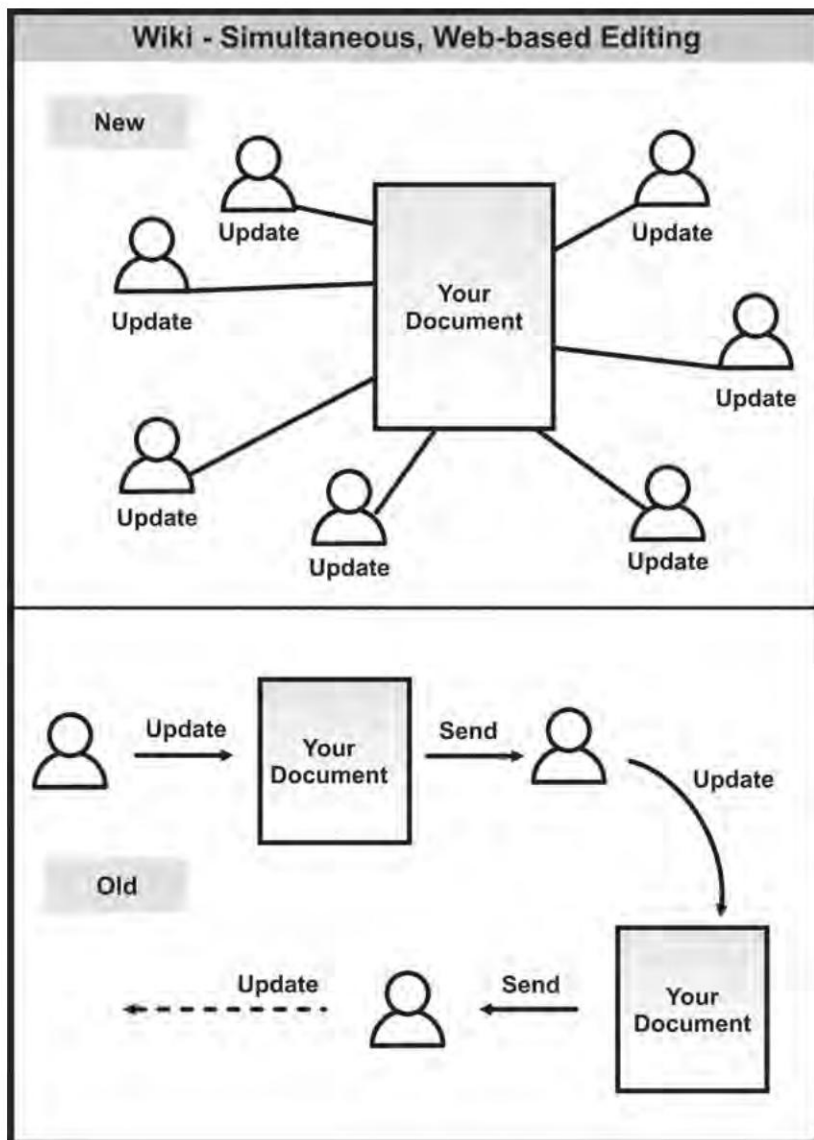


Fig. 6

What is to come is even more painful – going through those multiple emails and updating the original version of the document. This is not only uninteresting, but a huge waste of time for anyone gathering feedback and updating documents from multiple sources using email as a means to collaborate. Can you imagine the severe

inefficiencies and time wasted if we magnify this experience to larger groups and bigger time-sensitive projects? In our fast-paced digital knowledge world and with easy-to-use technological tools at our fingertips, being disorganized is not something that is an option for any business anymore.

### *Document editing: The wiki way*

The proposal writer creates a new proposal on the wiki software. When he is ready to get feedback, instead of sending multiple emails manually and attaching the document (old way), he gives each person in his team permission to edit the master document (this is a feature of the wiki tool/software). After receiving the invitation via email, team members are provided a link to the wiki page so that they can start editing the document. Sam, who is working out of the Bangalore office, and Maya, who is working out of the London office, can simultaneously update the same version of the document at any given time. If a paragraph is unclear, comments can be inserted so that when the proposal writer comes back for a review, he can not only see all the comments, but also, since his team co-created the document in real time, he does not need to dig through his emails copying and then pasting the feedback within the document. Once the proposal is ready, it is exported as a PDF document and shipped out to the client. This kind of a group effort is simple, intuitive, fast and hassle-free.

### *Wikis in Web publishing*

Consider updating content on your site: a two-step process.

1. You would write up the content and email it to your technical guy to publish it.
2. He will update the content and upload the file to overwrite the existing published file.

If your site is powered by wiki software, you can be self-sufficient. Simply log into your wiki page, update content, and save the document. The changes are reflected to your published page in real-time.

### *For the people, by the people*

Wikis are used by individual groups and as well as businesses to give feedback, shape products, provide employees with a voice, keep the team updated with the latest technologies, reduce email clutter, and even run presidential campaigns.

#### *Example of wikis*

##### *Within Pixar*

Pixar, the popular animation studio founded by Steve Jobs, uses wikis for group collaboration to manage film production.<sup>13</sup>

##### *Harry Potter*

The Harry Potter wiki ([http://harrypotter.wikia.com/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://harrypotter.wikia.com/wiki/Main_Page)) is a database of everything related to Harry Potter fans and is open for anyone to edit and update.

##### *WikiAnswers and Wikibooks<sup>14</sup>*

WikiAnswers is a Q&A platform powered by the collaborative efforts of the global knowledge community. Wikibooks aims to create a free library of educational textbooks that any volunteer can edit.

##### *Beer Suggest (<http://beersuggest.com/>)*

As the name puts it, Beer Suggest is a niche wiki community for beer lovers where anyone can add and edit beers and even rate and review beers and beer events from all around the world.

##### *Amazon Product Wiki (<http://amapedia.amazon.com/>)*

Run by Amazon.com, world's largest e-tailer, the Amazon Product wiki is an open platform for sharing information about the products that you like the most. Anyone with an Amazon account can edit pages on the site and update information about the products they like. If you think about it, the product information and specifications are coming straight from the person using it, i.e. the customer!

##### *HP Printing*

HP partnered with a popular wiki software called WetPaint to create two wiki sites for its customers – one for the home and home office printing and the other one for small and medium business printing.<sup>15</sup> The goal is to have users of these wiki sites collaborate on printing projects, share ideas, and give tips on printing. When

you open the doors of collaboration and communication, you not only benefit from the feedback but you build better relationships with your potential users that will take you a long way in your business. Best of all, HP is getting feedback free of cost – the stuff that they called market research is happening automatically by just opening a few doors and letting people voice their concerns.

*Medpedia* (<http://www.medpedia.com>)

Imagine what happens when medical professionals around the world collect their knowledge and put it in a central location! Medpedia is a wiki project to share advanced knowledge about health, science, and medicine.

*Within IBM*

IBM's My DeveloperWorks wikis help people within the company located in different offices around the world to share technical information and expertise.

(<http://www.ibm.com/developerworks/wikis/dashboard.action>)

*From Barack Obama to Barcamp*

Event organizers from President Barack Obama's campaign used wikis to update their schedules so that people knew which city he would speak at next. The wiki not only provided them with a central location to update their campaign information but also allowed them to set calendar schedules, reminders and tasks.

Barcamp ([www.barcamp.org](http://www.barcamp.org)), is an "unconference" event popular in most tech cities and is run by technology enthusiasts using wiki pages to update people on speakers, timings, venue etc. To participate, one can simply update the wiki page with one's name and topic and just show up at the event, and talk when it is their turn.

*Public Policy*

Even governments have started seeing the benefits of using a wiki and have been including citizens to input their decision. The City of Melbourne has a wiki (<http://www.futuremelbourne.com.au/wiki/view/FMPlan>) to discuss the future of the city. The Dharavi Redevelopment Project (<http://www.dharavi.org/>) uses a wiki to gather resources in planning the redevelopment of the poverty-stricken areas in India.



### ***Key wiki features***

Wiki tools are web-based and are generally free.

Wikis can be accessed from anywhere, anytime. Private wikis are used within companies.

Public wikis, like Wikipedia, are open to anyone on the Internet.

Wikis are edited in real-time so there is always only one copy people work off.

Wikis are permission-based so you can select who should access the wiki page.

Wikis include version-control to compare different versions of the same page.

Alerts and notifications can be set if changes are made to any wiki page.

Wiki pages can be tagged with specific keywords so you can find them easily.

One thing that Shaw's office lacked was a process for collaboration of documents, procedures, manuals, proposals, etc. Everything was saved in Word documents scattered throughout the workplace. If someone wanted to find the latest HR Manual, the HR staff would need to dig it up and then email the entire team or put it on a shared network drive. That was painful too, because no one could guarantee that was the latest version of the manual.

The best way to get started was for them to take a look at Google Docs, Spreadsheets, and Google Sites.



### ***Other wiki software (web-based as well as on-premise) choices***

MediaWiki - <http://www.mediawiki.org>

PbWorks - <http://pbworks.com/>

Twiki - <http://twiki.org/>

Wikispaces - <http://www.wikispaces.com/>

Wetpaint - <http://www.wetpaint.com/>

“But how easy is it to set it up and use? Do we need a consultant to do this?”

“Web-based wiki sites like Google Docs, Google Sites, Wikispaces, and Pbworks are very easy to sign up and use. You probably will require technical help if you plan to install the wiki software at your workplace.”

Shaw was excited with the prospect of having a digitized workplace where multiple people in his team were editing documents. It just felt so cutting-edge. He wanted to know more about the other uses of a wiki.

Basically, anything that required collaboration could use a wiki:

- Brainstorming ideas.
- Building documentation about a subject or research material.
- Building a HR manual for new and current employees.
- Maintaining FAQs and help guides.
- Maintaining a glossary of industry nuances.
- Sharing knowledge-base across your teams.
- Managing those ever-painful meeting minutes.
- Tracking projects.
- Event planning.
- Checking reviews and feedback from customers.
- Sharing notes.
- Keeping track of business policies.
- Writing a book.
- Sharing team achievements and accolades.

and more... .

“This is neat. So, do most people use it for internal use rather than client use?”


“As I mentioned earlier, anything that requires collaboration can use a wiki. So, yes, people do use it for client projects to share project information, update project progress, share ideas, or even gather feedback from the client. It provides clarity and transparency to the clients when they see their project evolve. In fact, they might just get impressed with your company if they know how organized



you guys are and one step ahead in embracing new tools within your workplace!”

“Sure, I get it. Well, then I think it is time that our small company gets on the wiki wagon. I am sure, this is going to make collaboration a whole lot easier.”

It absolutely will. In fact, it will put you one step closer to a paperless office.



### *More information*

30+ solutions to start your own wiki:

<http://mashable.com/2008/07/29/wiki-solutions/>

100+ more wiki tools and resources:

<http://mashable.com/2008/12/31/wiki-resources/>

List of wiki software:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_wiki\\_software](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wiki_software)

## Social Networks

*“The way of the world is meeting people through other people.”*

– Robert Kerrigan, Lawyer

The Web is always on, connecting millions of people at any time of the day. As humans, we tend to connect, form our groups, and social networks – a group of friends, trusted people to whom we turn to for socializing, sharing, getting feedback, complaining, and just being ourselves. Social networks are communities that are built online around common interest between users. The social network would then build tools to facilitate and promote those interests. More importantly, social networks connect people for free or for very little cost. There are many social networks that have emerged in the last few years, each having a different set of techniques and rules. The most popular ones accordingly to me that have taken the world by storm (in the sheer number of users) are Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

I met Shaw at the Breakfast Club in Hong Kong the other day. He was traveling for work and I happened to be visiting some friends there. He and his team were pretty comfortable blogging and even setting up a wiki for their business. Though, he admitted that blogging was a lot more fun. In fact, recently he even bought an iPhone and was publishing his thoughts on his blog while on the move. Considering that he was excited about real-time experiences, I asked him if he was a part of any social networks online.

He had first heard about Twitter and Facebook from his kids. He reminded me that we had discussed this at the wedding when we first met. Lately, he had heard a lot about Twitter in the news and about Facebook from the movie 'The Social Network'. He did have an account on Twitter but had never used it because he still hadn't grasped why he should be sending out tweets to people he didn't know. How was this relevant to him and his company? Why would he need to tell people where he was and what he was doing? Wasn't that a bit too personal?

To him, Facebook was a fun place and less of a business tool though it was a marketer's dream come true, with more than 500 million active user profiles up for grabs. A couple of his colleagues described LinkedIn as a tool for business professionals.

This was the perfect time to shed some light on these services. Before I started, I told him something that was very important. In order to participate in social networks, there was an important rule of thumb – always remember to be genuine and personal.

## *Twitter*

*"It's one of the fastest-growing phenomena on the Internet."*

*– The New York Times<sup>16</sup>*

Those who marveled over the speed of email were dumb-struck by the advent of Twitter in 2008. Leveraging the time spent by millions of people online, Twitter is a simple messaging service on a website where you can send and receive (public or private) messages (called "tweets") to and from your friends, family, customers, colleagues, partners, liked-minded strangers, and anyone whom you care about or are a fan of (obviously, they would also need to be on Twitter). Think of it as the digital telegram (Fig. 7).

One year later, Twitter was ranked the third most used social network attracting 6 million unique visitors and 55 million monthly visits. In March 2009, Twitter was ranked as the fastest growing site on the Internet and was almost nominated for the Nobel Prize.<sup>17</sup>

Twitter is a tool focused on one simple question: what are you and everyone around you doing?

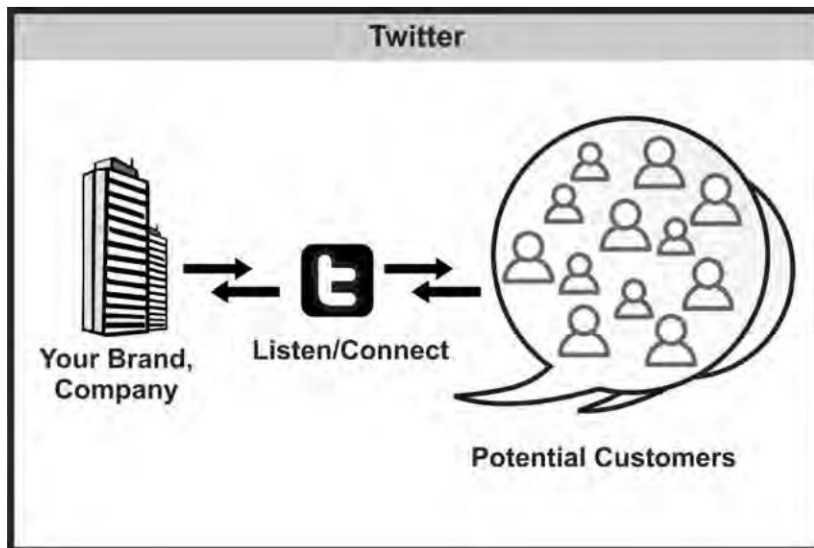


Fig. 7

### *2010: A household phenomenon*

With more than 190 million visitors per month and 65 million messages per day, Twitter is becoming a verb and a household name, just like Google did a few years ago. Unlike a blog where you write a long post, with Twitter, you send a 140-character message commonly termed a “tweet” on your Twitter page (every person on Twitter has their own page). Tweets are public (unless you choose to keep them private) and people who are “following” (a Twitter term for people who are interested in what you write) you can read and reply to your tweets. You can, in turn, follow anyone and read their tweets. Tweets are a compilation of trivial updates, thoughts,

links, comments, meaningless rants, complaints, feedback, and praise. When a lot of these small updates are gathered from people around the world and looked at, a lot can be learnt about the person's likes, dislikes, culture, traits, trends, and expertise.

### *Intimacy*

*"Twitter lets me hear from a lot of people in a very short period of time."*

— Robert Scoble, Blogger, Technical Evangelist and Author

Imagine going into room full of people and brands that you admire and just listening and participating with them. You can follow whomever you want – from CEOs, authors, rock stars, actors, role models to brands and companies that you love. Tune-in and tune-out whenever you like. Subraya Mallya, an entrepreneur, uses his Twitter account, @prudentcloud as a distribution and outreach channel for his blog. It provides him with a great podium and allows him share his thoughts and ideas around SaaS, Sustainability and Government Risk and Compliance (GRC). Over time, he has established a large number of relationships through discussions that originated through Twitter conversations.

Twitter's power lies in its ability to bring you closer to the people, businesses and conversations that you care about. When was this ever possible?

### *Follow brands*

Engage with the companies and brands behind your favorite drinks, products you use, and the services you consume. They talk about things that you don't otherwise read on their website.

@Starbucks, @Cleartrip, @MarriottIntl, @Rackspace, @kodakCB, @bookmyshow, @FlyKingfisher @infosys @National\_Geo

@Starbucks means sending a tweet to <http://twitter.com/Starbucks>

***40 of the best Twitter brands and the people behind them:***

[www.mashable.com/2009/01/21/best-twitter-brands/](http://www.mashable.com/2009/01/21/best-twitter-brands/)

*Follow news, magazines and newspapers*

Get to know up-to-the-minute news stories, stock alerts, and sneak previews of articles before even they get published in print.

@cnnbrk, @wsj, @nytimes, @forbes\_India, @vervemagazine, @IncMagazine, @ndtv @GQ\_India

*Follow friends, interesting and famous people*

Trivial though it may seem, there is something cool in discovering the small details about what someone is doing right at this very moment.

@tomfriedman, @Astro\_Mike @tferriss, @timoreilly, @Dalailama

Famous people on Twitter can be looked up here:

International – [www.twitterholic.com](http://www.twitterholic.com)

Indian//[www.tweeple.in](http://www.tweeple.in)

*Follow celebrities: From being private to everywhere*

Track what your favorite movie stars are doing and what they are feeling at this very moment. Ashton Kutcher and Ellen Degeneres (combined) have more Twitter followers than the population of Ireland, Norway, or Panama.<sup>18</sup>

@aplusk, @iamsrk, @britneyspears, @KevinSpacey

*Follow business personalities*

Keep up with the wisdom of people you look up to while growing your business.

@BillGates, @guykawasaki, @richardbranson, @anandmahindra

*Follow politicians*

Get a glimpse of what politicians have to say about current affairs and how they are going to change the world.

@barackobama, @algore, @Schwarzenegger, @shashitharoor, @senjohnmccain

*Follow sports*

@lancearmstrong, @andy\_murray, @ChargersHome, @Cricinfo\_news

*Follow nonprofit organizations*

@fledgling, @redcross, @CRYINDIA

*Follow industry organizations, events, and universities*

@Ted\_Talks, @NASSCOM\_EMERGE, @protodotin,  
@UNC\_Chapel\_Hill

Besides, if you are in the mood for some freaky stories, people have posted them on Twitter. Earthquakes had been reported before news stations got a wind of it, the Mars Phoenix Lander reported ice on mars through a tweet, over \$250,000 was raised by a charity for clean water across the globe, and jobs have been offered and accepted on Twitter.<sup>19</sup>

Better, you can even do things for your community, city, or country. Started by Bellamy Budiman, an Indonesian designer, infolalulintas.com is a community-powered website for cities in Indonesia, where people report live traffic updates using Twitter. In a way, they help each other by giving traffic information during rush hours.

“Wow, I never knew that I could come so close to listening to what my favorite artists, celebrities and business personalities are doing at this very moment. It just makes the world a smaller place and people very intimate and accessible. But how can this be beneficial to my business?” Shaw wondered.

*Two degrees of separation*

Signing up and getting on Twitter is free and is a breeze. Once you have created your account, all you need to do is to find people who you want to follow, and start following them. Whenever they tweet something, it will also show up on your Twitter page. You can update your status (with the 140-character limit, you are forced to be to the point, concise and clear). You can even reply to their comment or if they are following you, you can send them a direct message that is seen only by both of you.

With Twitter, communication and participation is so open that you actually feel that you know these people. It really makes the world a much smaller place.

Shaw's query was valid: "But isn't this a lot of information overload when everyone is posting, replying and tweeting at the same time?"

When you follow fifty, hundred, or even sometimes thousand people it does become unmanageable to read what everyone is writing. "Social conversations" are like all conversations. They can be needless and make people while away time without a clear agenda. Though the key is to sift through the information, pick what really interests you, and over time learn which of your followers is putting relevant and interesting information out there. Every now and then, you need to prune your list of followers so you only listen to the people that matter, or give you relevant information.

### *Research and find customers*

Twitter's search is very powerful ([search.twitter.com](http://search.twitter.com)). It lets you keep track of trends and shows you what people are talking about. When researching a topic, Twitter search will show you real-time fresh tweets with the latest links.

Unlike Google Search that might show you web pages from 2001, Twitter's search shows you fresh information, sometimes pointing you to articles that are just a couple of minutes old. Twitter's homepage shows you topics that are currently trending: what the million people on Twitter are talking about currently. Since tweets could also be opinions, it makes a lot of sense to search reviews on Twitter before making a purchasing decision. Very importantly, you can also see who is talking about your brand.

This gives you the foundation to connect with them.

## **Facebook**

*“Social media offers new opportunities to activate...brand enthusiasm.”*

– Stacy DeBroff, Founder and CEO, Mom Central

It took radio 38 years to reach 50 million users. TV took 13 years. The Internet took 4 years. Apple’s revolutionary music device iPod took 3 years. Facebook added 100 millions users in less than 9 months!<sup>20</sup>

According to Bloomberg, Facebook is valued at \$9.5 billion, and this is a free service!

Are you surprised it is huge? After all, what would you trust more than your friend’s recommendations?

Like Twitter, Facebook lets you connect with your friends, family, partners and colleagues. But unlike Twitter, this is within a closed network. You need to approve a friend request before they can join your network. You can easily sign up, register, and invite friends, partners, and customers to become your friend. Complete your profile and establish your brand by creating a Facebook fan page that lets your customers and fans communicate directly with your company or brand (Fig. 8). Release a new product or service, and you have a ready community to engage with and get feedback from.

### *Like sitting ducks*

As a business, wouldn’t you want to go where your prospects and customers are? Facebook has got more than 500 million active users. According to a survey done by AskMen.com (a lifestyle website), out of 50,000 men, 75% men between the ages 18 to 34 say they spend most of their time in front of a computer screen vs. 18% in front of a TV screen. It is getting imperative for every business to tap into the power of social networks.



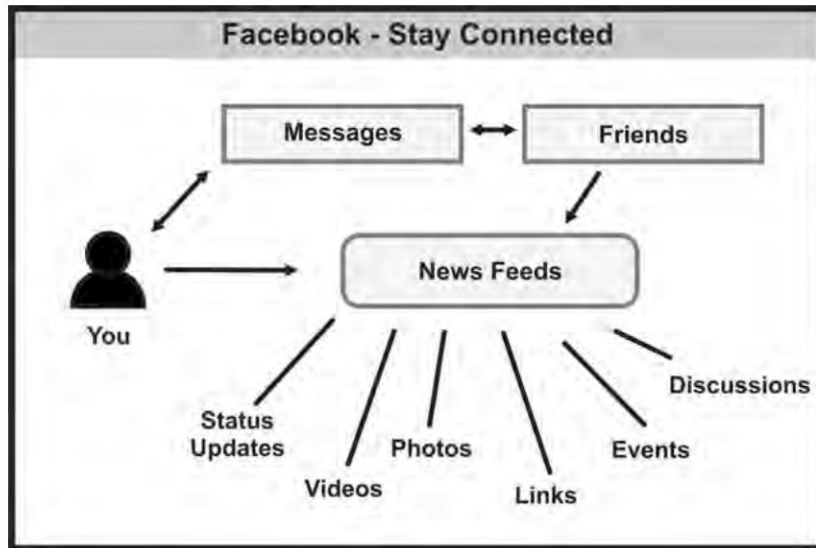


Fig. 8

## LinkedIn: Business Networking and Recruiting

*"Every person is his or her own brand."*

– Reid Hoffman, Founder, LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social network for business professionals. LinkedIn has 80 million professionals seeking jobs, employees, or basic business or networking opportunities.

A new member joins LinkedIn approximately every second. Executives from all Fortune 500 companies are LinkedIn members.<sup>4</sup>

### *Referrals and Introductions*

Want to connect with the serial entrepreneur who is working on some path-breaking stuff on green energy? As long as he is on LinkedIn, you can find out who from your network knows him and request an introduction. Or you can try to add yourself to his network with a note that you had met him at a conference last month. They say that there are six degrees of separation in our world – any two people would be connected with a maximum of six people between them. With LinkedIn it is probably less.

*Answers (<http://answers.linkedin.com>)*

LinkedIn Answers is a great way to demonstrate your expertise by answering questions that other people are asking from a wide range of categories – from accounting to web development.



### ***Social network recruiting***

I have become skeptical of resumes. It shows a person's experience and what they may have done but cannot tell me if the person is a team player, intellectual thinker, or a problem solver. Hence, we should check if that person has a social footprint – if he is active on social networks. Does he have a blog? Is he active on Twitter and does he have a public LinkedIn profile? Do you have any common connections on LinkedIn that you can tap into?

You can also update your status on any one of your social networks with “My company is looking for....”. All your friends and contacts would see this and may suggest relevant resources that they maybe aware of.

### ***Social networks and your business***

*“New marketing is about the relationships, not the medium.”*

– Ben Grossman, Founder and Chief Strategist, BiGMarK

More than half of the *Fortune* 100 companies are using Twitter for customer service, recruiting employees, blasting news, and announcing promotions, according to the study by public relations firm Burson-Marsteller and its digital-media unit, Proof.<sup>21</sup>

Getting intimate with customers has never been so easy. There are thousands of businesses listening for comments, feedback, and complaints about their product/service on Twitter and Facebook at this very moment. From small mom-and-pop stores to large brands, it provides a direct channel to get in touch with their prospects and customers that eventually leads to satisfaction and a better product.

### *Product previews and updates*

Send news about your product: new feature releases, sneak previews, tips, tricks, problems and issues that people might encounter.

Check out how @Zendesk, @Freshbooks and @DeskAway communicate with their followers on Twitter whenever they release an update to their software.

### *Customer service and support*

Twitter helps cater to customer needs instantly.

Dell noticed that users were complaining about the apostrophe and return keys being too close together on the Dell Mini 9 laptops. They fixed it on the Dell Mini 10.<sup>22</sup>

Earlier in Starbucks, people would leave suggestions and complaints in a suggestion box. Today, Starbucks customers can post their complaints on their Twitter page (@StarBucks) that is tracked by employees of Starbucks.<sup>23</sup>

JetBlue (@jetBlue) answers traveler queries about flight times, delays and weather updates.

Lenovo has as seen a 20% reduction in call-center activity in the U.S. over six months because nearly 50,000 customers go to its community website (including Facebook) for information about laptops.

Shaw seemed excited. “That is so cool. For our business, we could reach out to people whom we have never met! Plus, we could follow companies whose products we use. Not only would we get to know about what they are working on but we could also get the chance to get in touch if we had a problem with their product or service.”

Absolutely. And as a matter of fact, whenever you reply to someone on Twitter, that message is seen by anyone following the company. Imagine what that means for bad customer experiences?

### *Take care of a crisis*

Twitter makes it very easy to reach out to your customers when bad things happen. When Gmail has a problem with its service, one of

the first things they do is to post an update on Twitter. Not only is this method really quick, but it also helps the users to know that Gmail is aware of this problem and is working on a fix.

When Innovative Beverage Group Holdings Inc.'s site crashed, they tweeted notifying their customers that they were working on the problem. With clear communication, even during their 12-hour site crash, they did not lose a single customer or neither did they see a dip in sales.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Monitor trends***

It's easy to spot trends on Twitter because you know what people are talking about at any given moment. Looking for the latest fashion trends? Get on the search.twitter.com and search for "fashion" and see what people are talking about.

Trendsmapi.com is a real-time mapping of Twitter trends across the world. See what people are discussing right now.

### ***Brand building***

*"The power of blogging and Twitter is for a small or a big brand to go beyond the constraints of column-inches or television seconds, and make their points through a potentially far-reaching medium, with a potential viral force, thereby generating excellent opportunities."*

– Sanjay Mehta, CEO, Social Wavelength

With the large number of products and services vying for customer attention, it is important for any business to build a brand at an early stage. Twitter forms a great channel that could take your business purpose to the people interested in your product or service (your followers). Remind them what you stand for. If you have motto or a tagline, you can creatively tie it in with your tweets.

Zappos.com (@zappos), a shoe retailer, has an impressive 1,746,066 and counting followers on Twitter. The company talks about its products and values to this audience daily.

Businesses can set up their profiles (pages on Facebook) and share their expertise on their profile pages. It's the same as having a web page except that the profile page is highly interactive.

Besides, businesses can also set up groups and add their company to LinkedIn. You can then add people to your group.

### *CEOs reaching out*

How many times do you see CEOs of companies reaching out to people? As a business owner, you can take the lead and directly get in touch with your customers on Twitter. Twitter has become a popular channel amongst CEOs because unlike blogs that require time to write, Twitter is quick with its 140-character limit – perfect for busy executives. CEOs can post thoughts about their business or give some insight into their busy lives. Check out what Richard Branson @richardbranson, Guy Kawasaki @guykawasaki, Jonathan Schwartz @SunCEOBlog, and Anand Mahindra @AnandMahindra are thinking right now!

@anandmahindra

Head of the \$4 billion Mahindra group, Mr. Anand Mahindra is one of the few Indian CEOs who is active on Twitter with a staggering 153,701 followers as of October 2010. He talks about his life, new movies that he has watched, politics, social issues, and communicates with a wide variety of stakeholders.

Mr. Mahindra was kind enough to tell me how Twitter provides value to him:

1. Providing a real-time general information network.
2. Providing instantaneous customer feedback on all our group products and services.
3. Spotting new trends.
4. Helping to build personal and corporate branding through communication of the Mahindra philosophy and management style.
5. Affording an opportunity for virtual, skip-level interaction with company associates.

## *Getting feedback*

Wouldn't you love getting instant feedback when you really need it? Let's say you are thinking of a new idea but are not sure how it might work. By throwing it out to your followers, you can tap into the existing experience of people who might shed some light on what you are trying to figure out. With Twitter, you already have a community that is very easy to reach out to.

When U.S. pizza chain Dominos (@dominos) decided to change its pizza recipe, they launched a site called "turnaround" that featured their employees telling a story of how Dominos is listening and changing its recipes for the better. These stories are videos that are stored on YouTube. The site (<http://www.pizzaturnaround.com/>) also shows a live Twitter stream that shows people's reaction to the new recipes. Dominos is boldly opening up and getting feedback from the consumers through various social media channels.<sup>25</sup> When we were developing a mobile version to our software, DeskAway, we asked our followers on Twitter if anyone using an Android phone would want to take our software for a test drive. Within minutes, an entrepreneur in North India replied. We sent him login details to our testing site. After a few hours, he emailed our development team screenshots of how the application looked on his phone. It is as simple and easy as that to get direct responses from your customer base.

## *Sales and promotion*

You don't sell through a social network. You connect and engage with people. Over time, as people start getting comfortable with your brand, they will automatically connect and buy from you.

Dell Outlet (@DellOutlet) uses Twitter to sell its refurbished equipment and inventory. They use Twitter to increase brand awareness and they often post offers and coupon codes that are Twitter-exclusive. Dell says it has sold more than \$2 million worth of PCs through its @DellOutlet account (over 1.5 million followers) on Twitter since 2007.

U.S. pizza chain Papa John's added 148,000 fans through a guerrilla marketing campaign. It offered a free medium pizza to

anyone who signed up to be their fan on Facebook. Through the promotion, they gained thousands of customers and drove their web traffic up 253%.

Sony Vaio's Twitter account has generated over £1 million in sales.<sup>26</sup>

Smaller companies like Spyre Studios and Design by Reeses have expanded their network, built relationships with the right audience, and landed gigs and referrals on Twitter.<sup>27</sup>



### *The profile*

Social networks are all about the profile! When you sign up on Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn, you set up a profile of who you are and what you are interested in. This is your online identity and this sets the stage for building relationships with people who share the same interests in your network.

As a word of caution, it is a good idea to check your privacy settings on social networks to control who can see your profile, pictures, etc.

“Wow, this is just fantastic. I didn’t know that a business could do so many things with social networks. I thought it was more of a place to hang out and just talk. To me it was like entering a room full of people where everyone is talking to everybody – more noise-to-signal ratio. Now, come to think of it, Twitter seems more like different channels that I can tune in to for things that I am interested in. For our business, we could start by following people in our industry, start to connect with them, and share notes.” Shaw looked thoughtful, raising a concern. “But, isn’t it dangerous to speak your mind online? I mean, are there rules on how to tweet, what to tweet and whom to follow?” Shaw asked.

“Well, it’s just like how we behave in our daily lives. If you don’t want someone to know about something then you don’t say it. Similarly, in the online world, you only share things that you are comfortable disseminating. There have been cases where employees have been fired from companies because they were tweeting stuff

that was against their company policy. Before tweeting or sending out any message online just ask yourself – ‘Am I willing to part with this information and I am ok with anyone reading it?’”

“Ok I get it. The same principles of our offline world apply here.”

### *Something magical*

Twitter is one technology that intrigues me. The beauty is in its simplicity, and its value lies in the viral nature of the Web – the more people who participate, the more valuable the service gets. With Twitter being available on mobile phones and now on the iPad, it is becoming easy for everyone to update their status. Plus, people are integrating their various online networks so that one update works across all platforms.

#### *Find something?*

I had forgotten the name of a time-tracking tool I had tried last year so I decided to ask my Twitter followers. Within minutes, someone following my tweets pointed out the name of tool.

@sahilparikh: What’s the name of a tool that you install on your computer and see where you spend your time? They have a logo with a plus sign in red.

@shashanknd: @sahilparikh Could be RescueTime.com

@sahilparikh: @shashanknd yes! RescueTime.com it is. Thank you!

Before parting, I took hold of Shaw’s iPhone, downloaded Twitter for iPhone (one of many Twitter iPhone applications), and asked him to log on and start following people and brands that he felt close to. Once he starts “listening” to their conversations, he will automatically get involved. Just like blogging, he will need to give it some time to get used to.

We left the Brunch Club and headed in opposite directions. I was hoping to catch Shaw tweeting later that day. There was something magical, addictive and surreal about Twitter that you only get once you embrace it fully.



### More information

Twitter 101:

<http://business.twitter.com/twitter101/>

32 ways to use Facebook for business:

<http://webworkerdaily.com/2009/07/21/32-ways-to-use-facebook-for-business/>

33 ways to use LinkedIn for business:

<http://webworkerdaily.com/2009/07/13/33-ways-to-use-linkedin-for-business/>

## HUMANIZING YOUR BUSINESS

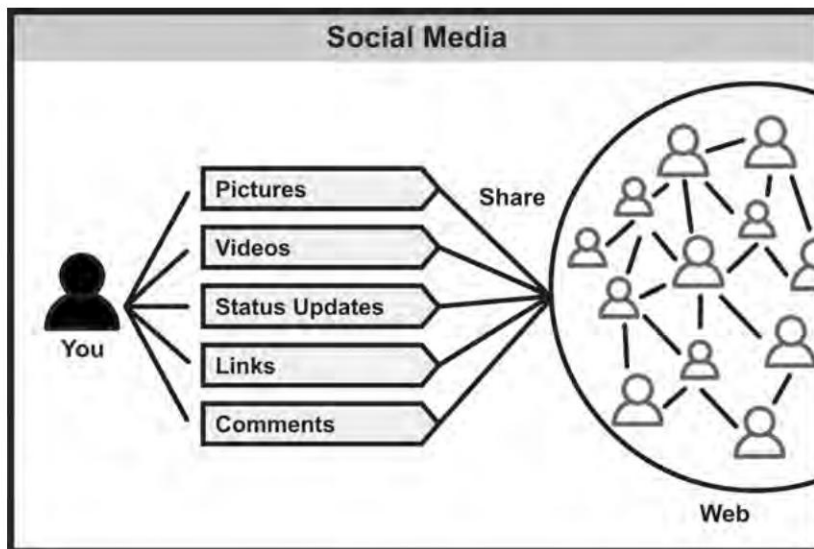


Fig. 9

## Host Your Own Talk/Radio Show

Imagine an audio version of your blog.

With podcasting, you can easily host your own weekly or monthly talk show where you talk about things that interest you and your business. Podcasts are audio or video files that are automatically delivered to your audience's computer (after they subscribe to the Podcast) and can also be transferred to their portable MP3 players, e.g. Apple iPod. You don't need to wait for a TV opportunity or hosting a local seminar.

Podcasting can get you in front of your audience. As more people listen to your Podcast and share it with their friends, you have a better chance of becoming a thought leader and expert in your field. Think of it as an open communication channel between your company and the audience.

Harvard Business IdeaCast is Harvard Business Review's weekly audio Podcast on analysis and advice of the leading minds in management.<sup>28</sup>

Fidelity Investments has three topics related to investment guidance.<sup>29</sup>

Even a rural company called Wiggly Wigglers specializing in garden equipment and worm composters has made their not-so-cool products into something that is cool and engaging. On their site, they also offer a weekly podcast that they call "our weekly dose of Wiggly Life."<sup>30</sup>

## Visually, Promote Your Business

At 4:50 pm, Friday, October 15, 2010, here is what is shown on Flickr's website: 3,018 uploads in the last minute. 558,832 things tagged with "urban."

Flickr ([www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)) is one of the most popular photo-sharing communities. You can upload and tag photos related to your business (or your personal life) and share them with the entire Flickr community. An amateur artist can get his or her work recognized, a real estate agent can use Flickr to showcase properties, and a graphic designer can showcase his designs and possibly land a few

projects. You can even use Flickr to store your images while displaying them on your website or blog.

BMI, an airline, uses Flickr photographs on their website and magazine giving due credit to the person who uploaded the picture. In their press release, BMI's marketing director Katherine Gershon said: "...wanted to break away from traditional airline website design and recreate the feeling of flying on the website itself. The usage of Flickr photography does just that and enables us to engage with online communities and we are really excited by the social networking opportunities of this relationship."<sup>31</sup>

Companies are opening up their brand history and relating their "behind-the-scenes" story to the outside world:

Doolally, a microbrewery in India lets people experience their "boulders-to-barrels" story on their Flickr page (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/31266795@N08/>).

Delta Airlines showcases their Sky Clubs in various parts of the world ([http://www.flickr.com/photos/delta\\_airlines/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/delta_airlines/)).

Today, you can take pictures of how you work, your team's participation at events, moving into a new office, daily life at your company, your workplace etc. and share it with those interested, even if they are not geographically in the same location.

*Brands on Flickr*

<http://geoffnorthcott.com/blog/2008/07/brands-on-flickr/>

## Videos that Make You Go Viral

A study by comScore revealed that in October 2009, more than 167 million viewers in the U.S. watched an average of 167 videos each, while YouTube (Google-owned video sharing platform) reached 1 billion views per day – or 41 million views per hour – in the same month.<sup>32</sup>

## *Are they watching your video?*

Creating, marketing and hosting a video has always been an expensive affair catering to larger businesses that hire expensive media agencies. Thanks to the Internet, creating, publishing and distributing videos is now feasible for everyone. So, why not tell a story about your business, where images speak louder than words?

With YouTube, you can easily upload a video (taken on your camera) and have it potentially reach millions of ready-to-watch users. You can use videos to sell your service, showcase happy customers, product demos, or a day in the life of your company. The more creative your content, the more number of people will watch it and share it with their friends and contacts.

There is nothing better for a business than a video gone viral.

Genentech (<http://www.youtube.com/user/genentechvideo>), a pharmaceutical company showcases its employees and how making a difference for patients inspires them at work.

Another pharmaceutical company Johnson & Johnson (<http://www.youtube.com/user/JNJhealth>) promotes better understanding of health through videos.

Absolut Vodka's AbsoluteWorld channel (<http://www.youtube.com/absolutworld>) shows videos as visions of a new world that is as inspired and ideal as their vodka. The channel has been viewed 1,287,396 times and has 2,520 subscribers as of October 15, 2010.

The Dove Evolution video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYhCn0jf46U>) has generated over 10 million views.

FrontPoint Security, in order to compete with the larger vendors in its business of home security systems, posted video tutorials of their home security systems and increased monthly sales leads by 250% from their website. Today, their employees shoot the videos and upload them to YouTube several times a month. (<http://www.inc.com/magazine/20100201/using-viral-video-to-boost-sales.html>).

The Harley-Davidson branded channel (<http://www.youtube.com/harleydavidson>) includes 8,456 subscribers and videos related to new bike models and what living freely really means.

## Power of Presentations

*“SlideShare is a platform to spread your ideas. People are marketing themselves or their businesses through this platform.”*

—Amit Ranjan, Co-founder, SlideShare

SlideShare.com is a place where the world’s knowledge meets. Like other social networks, SlideShare is a business media-sharing site and the also largest community for sharing presentations (the ones you create on Microsoft PowerPoint). With SlideShare, you can share your presentations with the world, find thousands of interesting presentations, make professional contacts, join groups with interesting topics, and check out talks from events you missed.<sup>33</sup> There are approximately 25 to 26 million people exposed to SlideShare every month, total of 3 to 4 million presentations and about 10,000 people uploading content every single day on topics ranging from automobiles, fashion and beauty to real estate, travel, and more.

When you upload and tag your presentation, SlideShare shares it with the entire community (if you haven’t chosen to make your presentation private) and as people search and find your presentation they can “favorite” it for later use, share it on popular social networks, or even embed it on their blogs. By sharing knowledge, you market yourself, build brand awareness, and drive business to your site. Besides this, you enjoy the happy side-effect of people considering you to be an expert in your field.

German automobile company Daimler AG has a SlideShare page (<http://www.slideshare.net/daimlerblog>) dedicated to presentations on cars, careers, and happenings around Stuttgart, Germany.

On October 15, 2010, the Sequoia Capital RIP presentation on startups and the economic downturn had got 5,03,996 views and been “favorited” 440 times.<sup>34</sup>

HCL Technologies, one of India’s leading global IT Services companies, used SlideShare as their multichannel outreach program for their Employee First, Customer Second (EFCS) campaign. On October 15, 2010, the campaign had already got 46,454 views and 124 favorites!

Netflix, a U.S.-based online video rental company got tremendous buzz and press (546,374 views) out of a not-so-jazzy presentation that they put out about their corporate culture and the seven things the company stands by and looks for in incoming employees. (<http://www.slideshare.net/reed2001/culture-1798664>)

In less than a day, a presentation shared by Core Industries on “Social Media For Social Good” had got 180 views.

## See What the World Is Reading Right Now

*“Social bookmarking is significant because it’s an extension of the ongoing human curation of the web. During the Web’s first era, much of the Web was organized using technology. However, as more people began to connect via broadband, the Web opened up and all of us began to play a role in curating. Social bookmarking is one such way we do so.”*

—Steve Rubel, SVP, Director of Insights, Edelman Digital

Social bookmarking is a way to share your bookmarks with the world.

Instead of storing bookmarks on your local computer, you now store them on a website that you can access from anywhere using tools like [delicious.com](http://delicious.com), [reddit.com](http://reddit.com), [stumbleupon.com](http://stumbleupon.com), or [digg.com](http://digg.com). Think of it as a social network for just bookmarks and an automated recommendation engine where people classify what they like as they browse the Web. A photographer will have bookmarks related to photography or the latest cameras, a web developer might bookmark articles on cool programming methods, and a startup founder might bookmark sites on raising capital for a small business.

For virtual teams working across continents, social bookmarking helps consolidate and group research in one central, easy-to-find location.


Sometimes, social bookmarking can become like a focus group. As people bookmark, tag and categorize your content, the words and phrases that they associate with your content could be very valuable in determining the brand associations they make with your content, service, product, or company.



### ***Bookmarks across the world in real-time***

Since people categorize each bookmark, you can search Delicious.com (e.g., hiring best practices) and see what other people have bookmarked. Just like Twitter, where people share interesting links, social bookmarking opens up the possibility of your finding other people with common interests and similar reading patterns.

Hop onto delicious.com and see what the world is currently reading and sharing with regards to travel (<http://delicious.com/tag/travel>), health (<http://delicious.com/tag/health>), marketing (<http://delicious.com/tag/marketing>) and more.



### ***Search has been redefined***

With billions of web pages out there and new ones being added on a daily basis, what is the best way to find relevant information? You can either use Google search using Google's proprietary and automated search algorithm or you can use Delicious search using human-powered categorizing and recommendation.

Mr. X uses Google to search for websites that would help him with his research. He normally gets hundreds of results that he mows through daily. Some sites are as old as 2001, which are immediately ignored.

On the other hand, Mr. Y uses Delicious and finds it even better than Google. Since social bookmarking is done by humans, he can easily search for a topic and see how many people bookmarked the website (including comments if any). He normally gets fewer results than Google but when he sees that more than 100 people have actually bookmarked a particular site he is certain that the site will be relevant to what he is searching for. In addition, he can see what "tags" people have applied to the site further letting him know if the site is actually related to what he is looking for.

## Being Remarkable Online is What Matters

*“By creating compelling content, you can become a celebrity.”*

– Paul Gillin, Speaker, Writer and  
Social Media Marketing Strategist

Today, you have the power. You are in control of what you want to publish, share, and say to the world. The tools and networks are there to use for free. Your audience is hanging out on social networks. You can personalize your content/message and build your authority, expertise and thought leadership. You can share, learn from others, and see what others find interesting. Like a magnet, you have the power to attract and connect with like-minded people, prospects and customers.

You need to not only have fun but also to go where your customers are. What you take with you is an idea that is worth spreading (Fig. 10).

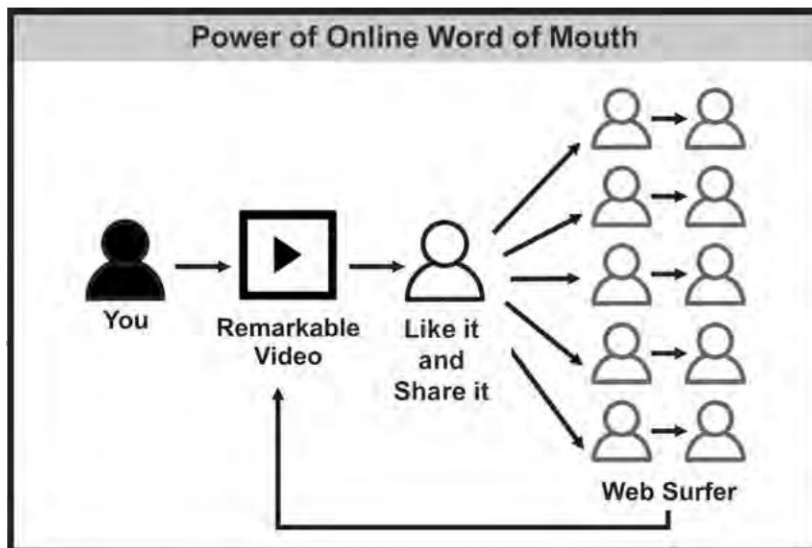


Fig. 10



## Case Studies

### ***Directi: Active on social media***

Company: Directi

What they do: Internet Software Products

Where can you find them?

Website: [www.directi.com](http://www.directi.com)

Blog: [blog.directi.com](http://blog.directi.com)

Twitter: @directi

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/directi](http://www.facebook.com/directi)

Who's talking: Bhavin Turakhia, CEO

What have they experienced?

“With the advent of the Internet, the possibilities that opened up with the ability to transmit information at a zero cost fascinated us. Since our audience was global, the Internet helped us to reach them, hear them and deliver the best to them.

We use a combination of online tools to get our message across: Blogs, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr, and SlideShare. We have separate Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook accounts for business units that have a high level of interaction with the community.

Besides, internally, we use online software within the company to get user feedback, run surveys and manage customer relations.”

What worked?

By using social media tools, they have managed to reach out to users, clients, well wishers and people who are interested in knowing more about their company, services and business units. These tools have acted as a relationship-building platform and a means to communicate with others while representing their brand.

### ***Yammer: Putting Web 2.0 to work in the enterprise***

Company: Yammer Inc.

What they do: Real-time Communications Software

Where can you find them?

Website: [www.yammer.com](http://www.yammer.com)

Blog: [blog.yammer.com](http://blog.yammer.com)

Twitter: @yammer

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/pages/Yammer/29990386077](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Yammer/29990386077)

Who's talking: Steve Apfelberg (@Sapfelbe), VP Marketing

*What have they experienced?*

"Yammer is like Twitter, but for companies to use within their teams and employees. Being an Internet company we rely on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and blogs to spread our message. We judiciously monitor mentions of Yammer and related terms on the Web and actively participate on blogs that discuss Yammer and related technologies. These tools have had a very positive impact on generating awareness about our startup and in just over a year of existence, more than 50,000 companies and organizations have signed up with our service.

We have experienced Twitter to be a very effective tool for spreading the word because of the tendency for Twitter users to re-tweet Yammer mentions to their followers."

*What worked?*

They successfully used online tools to virally spread information about their brand and service. This potentially would lead to a lower customer acquisition cost compared to some of the older forms of marketing.

### ***FYSE: Virtually everywhere***

Organization: Foundation for Youth Social Entrepreneurship (FYSE)

What they do: Building an entrepreneurial environment for young people in Asia.

Where can you find them?

Website: [www.fyse.org](http://www.fyse.org)

Blog: [www.fyse.org/blog](http://www.fyse.org/blog)

Twitter: @fyse

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/pages/Foundation-for-Youth-Social-Entrepreneurship-FYSE/73901133947](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Foundation-for-Youth-Social-Entrepreneurship-FYSE/73901133947)

*Who's talking:* Andrea Krause, Executive Director

*What have they experienced?*

“Our program, the Paragon fellowship, as a regional youth entrepreneurship campaign, aims to raise awareness of entrepreneurship among young people in the region and to inspire them to follow suit on an entrepreneurial venture. 100 young entrepreneurs and social change-makers under the age of 30 years (from different Asia/Pacific countries) are selected for a one-year fellowship and their stories serve as an inspiration to foster an entrepreneurial culture among our youth in the region.

We use three Twitter accounts to provide targeted information to our fellows:

@fyse – general information on social entrepreneurship and events/ opportunities.

@paragon100 – information about the fellows.

@paragon2010 – about the Paragon conference.

We are also active on online groups such as Facebook, Ammado, Squidoo that helps us communicate with fans and friends of FYSE on opportunities, course dates, fellow profiling etc.

Through our blog we communicate key information on social entrepreneurship, youth entrepreneurship and social innovation in Asia.

Online sharing sites such as Izzuu and Scribd allow us to publicize our internal documents in a high quality format, as well as to access information of other organizations.

These platforms and tools allow us to communicate in real-time with a large number of people who are specifically interested in our organization and what we do. It allows us to follow key information about our competitors/ partners/ fellows in real-time and without searching through their websites, press releases, etc.”

*What worked?*

By regularly providing interesting and news-worthy information via multiple channels FYSE is not only creating value for their fellows and their fans but also ensuring that their fans will stay online and continuously read their messages.

### ***NGO Post: Applying technology to solve social problems***

Organization: NGO Post

What they do: Platform for people interested in social welfare and development issues.

Where can you find them?

Website: [www.ngopost.org](http://www.ngopost.org)

Blog: [ngopostblog.wordpress.com](http://ngopostblog.wordpress.com)

Twitter: @ngopost

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=10139988532](http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=10139988532)

Who's talking: Parul Gupta, Co-founder

What have they experienced?

"NGO Post (<http://ngopost.org>) is a Web 2.0 platform and an open community of people interested in social issues. Just like social networks, anyone can sign up and contribute. It is an effort to aid sharing of expertise and best practices, to help solve the needs of the community from *within* the community, in addition to building a rich information resource."

What worked?

Using the power of social networks to build a community and having user-generated content power that community. Run by a virtual team from different locations, it shows that to solve social problems, technology can be applied from anywhere in the world.

### ***LifeMojo: Startup competes with big boys***

Organization: LifeMojo

What they do: Wellness startup helping people live a healthier life

Where can you find them?

Website: [www.lifemojo.com](http://www.lifemojo.com)

Blog: [blog.lifemojo.com](http://blog.lifemojo.com)

Twitter: @lifemojo

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/lifemojocom](http://www.facebook.com/lifemojocom)

Who's talking: Namit Nangia, CEO

*What have they experienced?*

“When we started the business, we were aware that most of the known brands for wellness in India were larger companies that used the old and expensive forms of marketing, e.g., putting up newspaper advertisements. As a bootstrapping startup we didn’t have this kind of a budget. Hence, from the very beginning we looked at Web 2.0 tools to help build our business.

When we started, the online medium was the only scalable way for us to get in touch with initial users who gave us quick feedback that led to shaping up of our initial offering.

As we launched our services and products we used a combination of tools to attract people who were interested in what we were offering. We tweet about special offers and daily health tips, post content that has been published on our website to the Facebook fan page and even update our blog with information related to our products and services. Creating and sharing content with the leading websites has been great for us. We create enough quality content around wellness in the Indian context that people online start linking to our content on various social media sites. This helps us attract quality traffic to our website and a part of which converts into sales.”

*What worked?*

As a self-funded/bootstrapping startup, they found online channels to be of great help to build the initial buzz, experiment with early adopters, listen to their customers, compete with the larger companies and build a space for themselves.

### ***PVR Pictures: Connecting with movie fans***

*Organization:* PVR Pictures

*What they do:* Film distribution company

*Where can you find this project?*

*Blog:* [www.ilovetwilight.in](http://www.ilovetwilight.in)

*Facebook:* [www.facebook.com/twilightssagaindia](http://www.facebook.com/twilightssagaindia)

*Facebook Events:* [www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=175042186837&ref=share](http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=175042186837&ref=share)

*Who's talking:* Harshil Karia, Co-founder, FoxyMoron (the agency that undertook this project)

*What have they experienced?*

“With PVR Pictures we’ve effectively been able to scale up the interaction with fans and movie franchises. The recent example being the Twilight Saga which PVR Pictures brought to India. We leveraged social media to:

**Listen:** to fans across Orkut, Facebook, Twitter and blogs, and create fleeting conversations with them to give PVR the confidence to bring the movie to India. Before the movie was down we already knew that we had an audience of a 100,000-strong who were eagerly awaiting the movie. These were audiences we could energize and leverage just before the release of the film.

**Speak:** Once we knew the movie was supposed to be released in India we started speaking with these enthusiasts. We started by speaking with the ones with the most authority (administrators/moderators/ officers/ those with generally respected opinions) and began to thank them for giving us the opportunity to bring the film to India. This sparked off a mutual admiration society.

**Energize:** We began to energize the biggest fans by providing them incentives to help us build India’s official Twilight community. This included books, posters, T-shirts. We then also felt the need to meet those who had helped us on an offline platform. We then coined the idea of organizing India’s Biggest Twihard Party before the premier. Twihards are diehard fans of Twilight. The Twihards who were invited to the event were those who had proactively helped us build the Twilight brand in India.

**Support:** As the community began to scale, our team had to only support conversations, clear doubts, find information and facilitate Twihards to get to know each other better. The beauty of the exercise was that so many girls (Twilight has a largely female following) who had never seen each other became such good friends online. They connected over a single cause.

**Embrace:** We utilized the collective intelligence of the girls via the Twihard community. Everything from the decor to the games, passes that we designed, prizes given out, the food to the costumes of the support staff was suggested by the community. The

community was leveraged for the DVD release of Twilight in late December 2009 – the DVD was at the top spot for English DVD sales for 10 weeks.”

*What worked?*

The Twilight Saga was a benchmark for PVR in terms of learning to tap the right levers while building a community. Their message reached over 300,000 people and thanks to the enthusiasm of the fans they were able to build an official community, which is 10,000-strong and growing. This community will prove extremely useful for the other movies in the Twilight Saga.

For a list how companies of all sizes use social media for marketing and brand awareness, check out:

<http://www.beingpeterkim.com/2008/09/ive-been-thinki.html>

*“The Internet is becoming the town square for the global village of tomorrow.”*

– Bill Gates, Chairman, Microsoft

It was exciting to revisit this journey with Shaw and his company. They were about to embrace a new way of life for their business – a new way to spread their message, build their brand and reach out to people. What really fascinated me (and Shaw as well) is that with Web 2.0 and social media, the power structure has been changing. Every person has a voice and is digitally connected to a plethora of other web consumers. Social media is giving startups and smaller companies the power to compete with large organizations – in the online world, it doesn’t matter how big or small you are. What really matters is if you have the boldness to open up and the smartness to embrace new ways of working.

### ***How would you increase the “word of mouth” potential of your organization?***

Every business and organization should venture into social media and online conversations. The question is not “if” but “how.”

Start a blog and a Twitter stream for your business today. Share insights.

Signup for LinkedIn and build your connections. Join a few groups and check out LinkedIn Answers.

Observe and listen.

Find something useful that you have to share. Something that you think others will also find useful. Present your message well (use images, videos etc. to make it creative).

Reply to people and always think of building a two-way connection.

Refrain from sharing meaningless conversations. Focus on your message.

Never hard sell.

Once there is a critical mass of people listening to you, take the initiative to cultivate the relationships offline.

Everyone in the company should be encouraged to participate.

## References

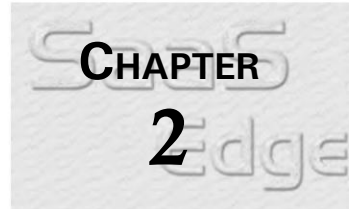
1. Clare Baldwin, "Twitter helps Dell rake in sales", Reuters.com, Fri, Jun 12, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/technologyNews/idUSTRE55B0NU20090612>
2. Facebook Press Room, "Statistics", <http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>
3. Erick Schonfeld, "Costolo: Twitter Now Has 190 Million Users Tweeting 65 Million Times A Day" Techcrunch.com, Tue June 8, 2010, <http://techcrunch.com/2010/06/08/twitter-190-million-users/>
4. LinkedIn Public Relations, "About Us, Public Relations", <http://press.LinkedIn.com>
5. Lev Grossman, "Time's Person of the Year: You", TIME.com, Wed Dec 13, 2006, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1569514,00.html>
6. Web 2+ helps surfers put together their versions of "The Daily Me"; personalized non-stop updates of their lives, amusements and obsessions



7. Lev Grossman, "Time's Person of the Year: You", TIME.com, Wed Dec 13, 2006, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1569514,00.html>
8. Rick Clancy, "More on Batteries", electronicsblog.sel.sony.com, October 30th 2008, [http://electronicsblog.sel.sony.com/sony/blog\\_post/?contentid=9223157316544538909](http://electronicsblog.sel.sony.com/sony/blog_post/?contentid=9223157316544538909)
9. Hrush Bhatt, "The Kiruba Incident", blog.cleartrip.com, June 16, 2009, <http://blog.cleartrip.com/journal/2009/6/16/the-kiruba-incident.html>
10. Anonymous, "Co-Intelligence Quotes", Co-Intelligence.org, <http://www.co-intelligence.org/CIQuotes.html>
11. Stan Schroeder, "English Wikipedia Reaches 3 Million Articles", Mashable.com, Mon Aug 17, 2009, <http://mashable.com/2009/08/17/wikipedia-3-million-articles/>
12. David Ian Miller, "Collaborating through wikis", Cnet.com, Thu Jan 12, 2006, [http://www.cnet.com/4520-10192\\_1-6415671-1.html](http://www.cnet.com/4520-10192_1-6415671-1.html)
13. Thomas Wailgum, CIO Magazine, "7 effective wiki uses and the companies that benefit from them", Future Changes (ikiw.org), Tue Jan 8, 2008, <http://www.ikiw.org/2008/01/08/7-effective-wiki-uses-and-the-companies-that-benefit-from-them/>
14. <http://wiki.answers.com> and [http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Main_Page)
15. Kristen Nicole, "Wikis for Market Research? Wetpaint & HP Launch Branded Wikis", Mashable.com, Mon Oct 29, 2007, <http://mashable.com/2007/10/29/wetpaint-hp/>
16. Jason Pontin, "From Many Tweets, One Loud Voice on the Internet", NYTimes.com, Sun Apr 22, 2007, [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/22/business/yourmoney/22stream.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/22/business/yourmoney/22stream.html?_r=1)
17. MG Siegler, "Bush Advisor: Twitter Founders Should Get Nobel Peace Prize", TechCrunch.com, Mon Jun 22, 2009, <http://techcrunch.com/2009/06/22/former-deputy-national-security-advisor-twitter-founders-should-get-nobel-peace-prize/>
18. Erik Qualman, "Statistics Show Social Media Is Bigger Than You Think", Socialnomics.net, Tue Aug 11, 2009, <http://socialnomics.net/2009/08/11/statistics-show-social-media-is-bigger-than-you-think/>

19. Ben Parr, "10 Most Extraordinary Twitter Updates", Mashable.com, Fri Apr 10, 2009, <http://mashable.com/2009/04/10/extraordinary-twitter-updates/>
20. Erik Qualman, "Statistics Show Social Media Is Bigger Than You Think", Socialnomics.net, Tue Aug 11, 2009, <http://socialnomics.net/2009/08/11/statistics-show-social-media-is-bigger-than-you-think/>
21. Jon Swartz, "Social media like Twitter change customer service", USAToday.com, Nov 18, 2009, [http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2009-11-18-twitterserve18\\_ST\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2009-11-18-twitterserve18_ST_N.htm)
22. Claire Laire Cain Miller, "Putting Twitter's World to Use", NYTimes.com, Apr 13, 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/14/technology/internet/14twitter.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/14/technology/internet/14twitter.html?_r=1)
23. Claire Laire Cain Miller, "Putting Twitter's World to Use", NYTimes.com, Apr 13, 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/14/technology/internet/14twitter.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/14/technology/internet/14twitter.html?_r=1)
24. Sarah E. Needleman, "Entrepreneurs 'Tweet' Their Way Through Crises", WSJ.com, Sep 15, 2009, [http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125297893340910637.html#mod=WSJ\\_hpp\\_sections\\_smallbusiness](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125297893340910637.html#mod=WSJ_hpp_sections_smallbusiness)
25. Pamela Seiple, "How Dominos is Using Customer Feedback and Social Media Outreach to Reinvent Its Brand", HubSpot.com, Dec 28, 2009, <http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/5426/How-Dominos-is-Using-Customer-Feedback-and-Social-Media-Outreach-to-Reinvent-Its-Brand.aspx>
26. Charlotte McEleny, "Sony generates over £1m in sales through Twitter", nma.co.uk, Feb 26, 2010, <http://www.nma.co.uk/news/sony-generates-over-%C2%A31m-in-sales-through-twitter/3010491.article>
27. Meryl K Evans, "Real-life Twitter Business Success Stories", WebWorkerDaily.com, Jun 16, 2009, <http://webworkerdaily.com/2009/06/16/real-life-twitter-business-success-stories/>
28. "Harvard Business IdeaCast", hbr.org, <http://blogs.hbr.org/ideacast/>
29. "Fidelity Investment Insight Podcast", Fidelity.com, <http://podcasting.fidelitylabs.com/retail/programs.php>
30. wigglywiggles.co.uk, <http://www.wigglywiggles.co.uk/podcasts/index.html>

31. “bmi announces website redesign program”, flybmi.com, Sep 22, 2008, <https://www.flybmi.com/bmi/en-us/about-us/information-centre/press-releases/september-22-2008.aspx>
32. Patrick Moran, “5 Tips for Using Video to Grow Your Business in 2010”, Mashable.com, Dec 9, 2009, <http://mashable.com/2009/12/09/business-video-tips/>
33. “What is SlideShare?”, slideshare.net, <http://www.slideshare.net/about>
34. Eric Eldon, “Sequoia Capital on startups and the economic downturn”, slideshare.net, <http://www.slideshare.net/eldon/sequoia-capital-on-startups-and-the-economic-downturn-presentation>



## WEB 2.0 TO ENTERPRISE 2.0

*“A hundred years ago, companies stopped generating their own power with steam engines and dynamos and plugged into the newly built electric grid. Today, a similar revolution is under way. This time, it’s computing that’s turning into a utility.”*

– Nicholas Carr, author of *The Big Switch*

### WEB 2.0: IRRESISTIBLE TO THE ENTERPRISE

My travel plans are not complete without checking out other people’s comments on TripAdvisor.com or on Facebook. I visit Wikipedia for anything I want to know about. I have even got the Wikipedia app on my iPhone.

When Apple launched the iPad in early 2010, I immediately checked Twitter to see what others were thinking about it and if they preferred iPad to the other tablet computers.

I sometimes find an urge to share interesting things I find while surfing.

Or when I have a free moment, I pen my thoughts on business, technology and startups on my blog, that is read by people with similar interests. I read and learn from other blogs written by people around the world.

We listen, read, share and collaborate together.

The biggest success of Web 2.0 is that it has given an open, democratic platform to people (not barring any race, religion, social status) to share, collaborate, connect, listen, observe and communicate without any geographical boundaries. It brings people with similar interests together, making the world a much smaller and interconnected place to live in.

## WOWED BY WEB 2.0

Business owners, employees and laymen are able to participate and express themselves online. Using software is no longer difficult, scary, or a privilege reserved for only the technologically savvy. People are embracing software not only on their computers but also on their mobile phones. Today's ready-to-join-the-workforce twenty-somethings have more social networking, instant messaging, and collaboration apps on their mobile phone than money in their wallet.

## FALLING COST OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Over the year, the cost of hardware and computers is falling and the Internet is getting faster, better and ubiquitous, especially in the urban areas. Laptops are slowly replacing desktop PCs. The usage of netbooks and ultraportable laptops are on the rise among travelers. Always-connected "smart phones" like the iPhone and BlackBerry are becoming pocket computers with anywhere-access to emails, social networking, and business applications. Literally, things are getting faster, smaller, lighter, and a lot cheaper.

## I WANT THESE TOOLS AT MY WORKPLACE, NOT JUST AT HOME

Gmail was released for personal use in mid-2004. Google then released Google Apps in 2006. People can now host their company email accounts on Google's servers, with the same user interface, reliability and experience they got from Gmail. Yammer, a web startup that started in 2008, offers a service similar to Twitter, but for the enterprise.

By seeing how people easily took to Web 2.0 tools, a new wave of enterprise software companies emerged to provide us open, simple,

good-looking, collaborative applications that were web-based, inexpensive, simple-to-use and built with the average knowledge worker in mind.



### **Broadband Internet and Mobile Growth in India**

*“For developing countries to grow, it is important for their small businesses to become globally competitive. IT can help small businesses do that. Power of Software as a Service (SaaS) for small business lies in its promise of making IT a utility for small businesses.”*

—Karthik Ananth, Engagement Manager, Zinnov

As governments in developing countries recognize the tremendous benefits of the Internet to the community and the economy, things will change: infrastructure to support broadband will get better and access to the Internet will become affordable to the common man.

The state-owned Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL) was the sole Internet provider in India in 1995. Today, there are 49 private companies providing Internet services (<http://www.trai.gov.in/interserviceproviderA.asp>).

In 1998, there were 1.4 million users on the Internet. In 2007, there were 42 million of them. Though, this number is low compared to the population of the country, there is a clear increasing trend.

(<http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia/in.htm>).

In India, a monthly broadband subscription starts from approximately ₹199 (US\$ 4.5).

IT & Telecom Ministry is embarked on an initiative to make computers available for purchase under ₹10,000 (US\$ 226).

Broadband usage in India is growing at 20% per month and is only going to get more widespread.

[http://www.zinnov.com/presentation/India\\_Internet\\_Penetration.pdf](http://www.zinnov.com/presentation/India_Internet_Penetration.pdf)

Traditionally, software was bloated, clunky, difficult to use and boring. Business software was expensive and needed long-term contracts, licensing agreements, and an IT team to take care of the installation, deployment and configuration. The word “software” would bring up memories of bits, bytes and mathematically infused algorithms that are out of the reach of the common man. Today, software is sexy again.

## Easy to Build

*“You have entrepreneurs that are able to launch a product as a one or two person company and have literally millions of customers.”*

– Thor Muller, Founder, GetSatisfaction.com

In addition, the tools, technologies (especially virtualization<sup>1</sup>), and programming languages to build stuff online got simpler and more advanced with time. The entry barrier for starting an online business became dramatically low.

Just like a puzzle, everything clicked perfectly into place and opened the gates for more and more software and services to be unleashed on the Web and ready to be used in the enterprise context as well.

## From Web 2.0 to Enterprise 2.0<sup>2</sup>

*“Enterprise 2.0 is the use of emergent social software platforms within companies, or between companies and their partners or customers.”*

– Andrew McAfee, researcher, author, and inventor of the phrase “Enterprise 2.0”<sup>3</sup>

The application of Web 2.0 tools and techniques to the enterprise is called Enterprise 2.0. Any service or tool that is used for business purposes (e.g., running a PR channel on YouTube, marketing services on Twitter, collaboration on Google Apps, or tracking sales on Salesforce.com) would constitute as Enterprise 2.0 applications.



## ***Difference between Web 2.0 and Enterprise 2.0***

	Web 2.0	Enterprise 2.0
Coined by	Tim O'Reilly	Prof. Andrew MacAfee
When	2004	2006
Revenue model	Ad-based	Subscription-based
Your data is owned by	Vendor	You or your company
Service reliability	No	Guaranteed
Customer support	No	Email, phone, forums etc.
Training	No	Email, webinars, videos
Mindset	Social/ Fun	Business-focused
Examples	Facebook, Twitter	Salesforce, Google Apps

## **Software as a Service (SaaS)**

*“During the PC era, the technology stack was controlled by Microsoft Windows® and Wintel – the ‘Wintel’ era. We are now entering a new era, called variously ‘Cloud’ or ‘SaaS’ or ‘Enterprise 2.0’.”*

– Bernard Lunn, guest author, ReadWriteWeb<sup>4</sup>

SaaS is just a model of how software is delivered. SaaS refers to software that is accessed via a Web browser (e.g., Microsoft Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, or Apple Safari) and is paid on a subscription basis (monthly or yearly). Different from the traditional model where a customer buys a license for acquiring software and assumes ownership for its maintenance and installation, SaaS presents several advantages to the customer.

You might be already using SaaS if you use Google’s Gmail or Microsoft’s Hotmail services to check your email. Compare this to software that you download by paying for a license and then install on your computer. If you have more than one computer, you would need to buy individual licenses and install the software on each machine manually. With SaaS, all you need to do is open your browser, go to the website (that is providing you the service), log in and start using the service. No downloads, configurations, deployments, or installations. It provides the freedom of a completely hassle-free experience!



*“Universal accessibility and ubiquitous get-it-anytime-anyplace is a critical advantage that SaaS applications have over traditional software.”*

— Treb Ryan, CEO, OpSource Inc.

### **SELF-SERVICE SaaS**

*No one comes selling software to your doorstep anymore*

Someone tells you about XYZ.com or you hear about it online through another social networking channel like Facebook or Twitter.

You go online to check it out, read features, customer case studies, and possibly their blog to see what the company is about.

If you like what you see and read, you will sign up for a free account to test or try the software. The free account will not give you access to all the features but it is as good as a wine-tasting session.

You spend a few days checking out the software with your colleagues as well.

If you love it, you upgrade your account to a paid subscription using your credit card online.

You hardly require help or assistance since the software is so easy to use and their help section online would have answers to all your questions and concerns.

You were used to buying software, installing it, getting presentations and training from the vendor. Today, this has transformed to self-service online. All you need to do is to fire-up your browser, sign up for the service, and start using it.

## **Small Businesses, Big Engines**

*“Small businesses with fewer people and systems should outsource their IT management. With that, IT overhead goes out the window.”*

— Alok Mittal, MD, Canaan Partners, India and Founding Member, Indian Angel Network

Sophisticated and powerful software is no longer restricted to larger deep-pocketed companies. The Internet is leveling the playing field in enterprise software as well. Today, small businesses have access to the same software that powers larger companies and at a fraction of the cost (Fig. 11).

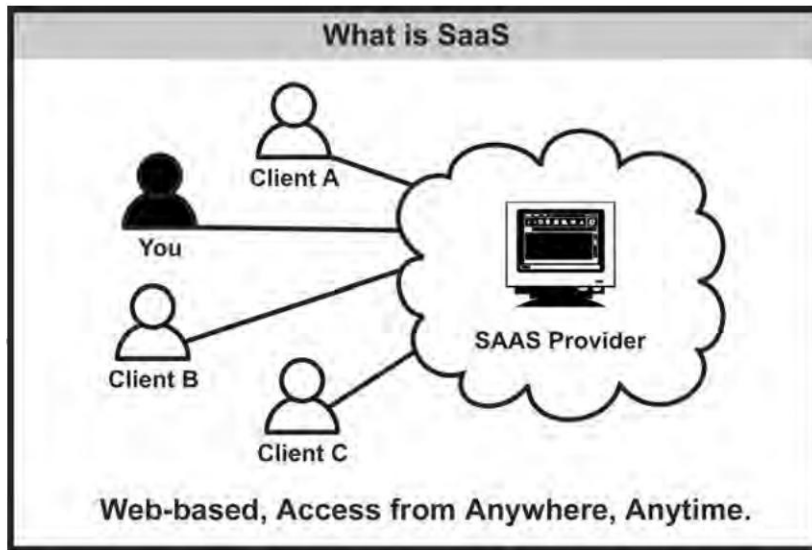


Fig. 11

## Top 11 Reasons to Fall in Love with SaaS

*"We are seeing businesses getting started with enterprise software application within minutes as opposed to days, months and years. This is a massive advantage. People realize that they can take out their credit cards and purchase departmental or even individual levels of software access that is much more powerful than what their CIO's would have bought for them for millions of dollars a few years back."*

— Byron Deeter, Partner, Bessemer Venture Partners

Our discussion went past lunch time. Shaw had vaguely heard of web-based software used by businesses in different areas like customer

relationship management, sales force automation, collaboration, accounting expense management, human resources and payroll, but he did not have the slightest clue as to why he should get into the game now.

We chose a corner table, as I launched into the benefits of SaaS.

**1. Lower cost of entry**

*“SaaS has brought the power of computing to businesses that otherwise could not afford new and dynamic applications.”*

— Ryan Allis, CEO and Co-founder, iContact Corporation

You can think of SaaS as “renting” software over the Internet. The SaaS provider hosts, operates, and maintains the application on secure servers. You, as a user, sign up for the service, first on a trial plan, and only if you are satisfied with the value it provides you, you buy a subscription to the application. Compare this to the large up-front payment that you sometimes make for the software that is installed at your office.

His eyebrows went up.

“So Shaw, do you own your apartment or are you renting it out?”

“Well, at the moment I am renting out an apartment. In fact, I just moved in a few months ago. The realtor was reputed and showed us around the furnished apartment before we took a call to sign the lease. Plus, the apartment is in a really safe neighborhood. That was my wife’s biggest concern,” Shaw said.

SaaS is similar. It’s like renting out a flat in a building – you don’t own the building but are paying a monthly fee to use the flat. The building owner takes care of repairs, new enhancements, security, and makes sure that the building is in a good condition to stay in. You are merely paying the landlord to use the building in exchange for a monthly fee. And the reason people like a rented place is because either they cannot afford to buy a flat outright or they don’t want to get into the hassle of owning a place and then taking care of its repairs and maintenance and other peripheral costs.

Instead of buying a high-end, expensive customer relationship management (CRM) software from a vendor, you can just go to Salesforce.com, sign up, and start using the software.

When Starr Tincup, a marketing/advertising company wanted to cut costs, they resorted to using online software provided by Salesforce.com to track their customers and Vtrenz to manage marketing and sending email newsletters. Using SaaS-based tools, they had a clear view of their sales pipeline, customers and prospective deals, and they were able to manage more work even with fewer employees in the company.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. SaaS is for everyone, not just techies!

Suddenly, he looked a bit perturbed.

“But I have a consulting business. Everything is offline. My clients are offline and sometimes not tech-savvy. Why would we need to use online software? Our business works,” Shaw said.

“Ok Shaw, you call yourself an offline business. So, then do you use email?” I asked.

“Yes, of course. We can’t live without email. It’s how we keep in touch with everybody. Who doesn’t use email these days? We decided to use Gmail since it was just so easy to set up for our company.”

“Well then, Shaw, the good news is that you are already using SaaS in a small way in your company.”

Technology speeds things up. It can help you communicate with your clients or even systematize your internal workplace. You could use online tools to keep a track of your prospects or customers, manage their projects, invoice them, or track how much time you are spending on their work. Or you could use online tools to manage your HR, payroll, internal workflow, etc. The new kind of “social” tools let you track what customers are saying online (blogs, comments, Twitter, etc.) and make this available for your business to tap into at any time.

Gmail didn't ask you to install anything on your computer. If you needed help, you would quickly browse the online support pages on Gmail and if Gmail came out with a new feature tomorrow you would also see it when you logged on next. So, come to think of it, Shaw's little offline consulting outfit is very much already using SaaS and Shaw didn't even know it. In addition, you don't have to be a technology business to take advantage of SaaS. I bet over a few years you probably won't even need the software that you installed at your workplace. You and your team will only use web-based applications.

**3. No software or hardware to purchase, install or maintain.  
Pay as you go...**

*"Without online software we would still be using Microsoft Excel! The thought of going back makes me shudder at how amateur this was. A step in the dark ages. I still can't believe that some companies still do this."*

— Matthew Philogene, Owner, raramuridesign

Just at \$19 a month, you can set up a customer support channel for your company online if you opt to sign up with ZenDesk, a SaaS-based help desk management tool. Better yet, you don't need to pay until you try out the software fully. The pay-as-you-go model of SaaS gives you the power to pay monthly subscriptions without any long-term contractual requirements.

SaaS has a predictable monthly fee associated with it and as a business you don't need to make capital investments in servers, and people to manage those servers. If technology is not your core business, then why not let someone else manage the technology for you?

"So, I can do away with the servers that we plan to buy at our office for setting up a client project management portal?" Shaw intervened.

I told him: “Absolutely. You are a consulting company for crying out loud. You shouldn’t be managing servers and tech stuff. You need to focus on growing your core business.”

#### **4. On-demand**

SaaS applications are always available when you need them with the added benefit of accessing them from anywhere as they are web-based. Think about it. We don’t care how power is delivered to us at our homes. All we are concerned with is that when we switch the button on for light, the light comes on. The way the electricity flows from the central grid to our locality and then is routed to our homes is none of our business. It’s there when we need it on-demand. We pay for it monthly, on a usage basis. This is exactly the same with SaaS.

#### **5. Low risk**

Shaw was completely impressed with my argument. I saw a spark in his eyes.

You are free to take the software for a test run (most offer 30 days of free trial) and see if it adds value to your business. Unlike traditional software where you had to commit to licenses and lengthy contracts, SaaS offers business owners like you the chance to fully engage with the software in your company and let everyone use it for free. Only if it adds value to your company, do you opt to pay for it. Earlier, the upper management or the IT department would make the decision of buying the software that the entire company would use. Today, even the junior analyst who has stumbled upon a cool application can sign up, check it out and recommend it to his team.



## Freemium plans

“Freemium is a business model that works by offering basic Web services, or a basic downloadable digital product, for free, while charging a premium for advanced or special features.”

— Wikipedia

Most SaaS products are built on the freemium model. Typically, you can sign up for a free account or a limited 30-days trial account that offers basic features. If you want more advanced features, you will have to upgrade your account to a higher paying plan.

Freemium plans help consumers answer an important question: “Is this the right software for me?”

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freemium>

“So, what happens if we try it and don’t like what we see?”

You can then either email the company to cancel your account or just never log in again. It’s that simple. Personally, I try three or four applications before committing to any one for our business.

### 6. Free upgrades

With SaaS, you have immediate access to the new features and functionality, all at the same cost (unless otherwise mentioned). Unlike traditional software where upgrades would happen once a year or once in six months (with you having to install the upgrade physically on each computer and manually troubleshoot issues that may crop up), the SaaS vendor continuously pushes new updates and fixes to the application, which can be immediately accessed by the customer. This reduces the length of time it takes a customer to recognize value from the software. It’s amazing to wake up one day and find that your favorite application has now more powerful features that you can take advantage of, maybe even features you had recommended or needed!

“So, how often can I expect updates? What if I subscribe to a service and I don’t see updates in a long time. Is that even possible?”

An active and good SaaS vendor will usually release upgrades including a major feature every quarter and upgrade their code every month with enhancements and fixes.

## 7. Superior customer service and user experience

*“Most people are surprised and delighted to learn that Software-as-a-Service is amazingly all about the Service, not the Software. By hosting the application and being available over the Internet, vendors are much closer to their customers than they ever were with shrink-wrap software. It’s really bringing back the old time small business values of customer service and being a friendly, real human being.”*

– Sunir Shah, Chief Handshaker and Head of Integrations,  
FreshBooks

It is the “service” in the “software as a service” that really makes all the difference. SaaS vendors are judged on a month-to-month basis. Are they innovating with new features and product roadmaps? Are they answering your support queries on time? If either of these fail, the vendor will risk losing business altogether.

Personally, when I am choosing an application to use in my workplace, my entire team tries it out before we commit to a paid plan. We even send out customer support questions to see how fast we receive an answer. Are all the people who will be using the application comfortable with it and understand all the features of the application? Unlike traditional software, SaaS makes the vendor more “at risk,” therefore making them innovate on a monthly basis.

## 8. Switching is easy

Imagine you buy an expensive phone and then the iPhone comes along. You wish you had the chance to switch.



Online tools let you easily switch providers if something does not work out right. In any case, you have used the free version of the software and evaluated its benefits against the competitors. Now, down the line if the SaaS provider screws up, you are free to discontinue at any given time and take your business elsewhere.

“Ok, I get it. So, the power rests with the customer instead of the vendor. Earlier when we made significant capital commitments for on-premise software, we weren’t even sure if the vendor would give us adequate support. What we finally got could end up being completely different from what we were expecting. Plus, they have managed to close the sale so there is no real incentive for them to provide exceptional support or any after-sale service. Whereas, since we would be paying SaaS vendors on a month-to-month basis, they remain more alert and sensitive to customer expectations.”

#### **9. Scales according to your business needs**

*“The fact that SaaS solutions innovate and morph at a fast pace helps small companies innovate at a faster clip. This offsets the odds stacked against them whilst competing with big boys.”*

— Subraya Mallya, SaaS Evangelist and Entrepreneur

SaaS applications are very flexible. You can start with two employees (and only pay for two users per month) using the application and gradually add more people to the system. This flexibility helps you scale when your business demands it (a great option for startups) rather than the vendor selling you software (which always has more features than you really require) for 50 people when only 10 people will be using it in the first year.

#### **10. No lock-in and you still own your data**

“So what happens to my data that is stored on the application in my account?”

Shaw had raised a very good point. Even though you use their software as a service, you still own all the data that you put into the system. Hence, before making a choice to go with a vendor you need to make sure you can get your data out (the vendor should allow you to export your data) at any time.

#### 11. SaaS loves everyone

Since it's web-based, SaaS can be used by Windows, Linux, or Mac users, providing true platform independence over the Internet. All you need is a browser and an Internet connection. What didn't work on a Mac but worked on a Windows machine would now work on both because all you need is a browser to connect to the software. It doesn't matter which machine or operating system you use! So even within your organization, as teams, employees, freelancers, and clients use multiple at home and at work, the software works seamlessly on all their different computers, without requiring any setup or installation tweaks.

"That's really useful! We sometimes face a lot of issues with different versions and operating systems. And it actually makes sense – as even Gmail can be accessed from any type of computer and even a mobile phone." Shaw thinks aloud.

*"The ability to quickly and easily turn on new applications with a significantly lower initial cost of ownership makes SaaS an attractive offering for small- and mid-sized businesses..."*

– Goldman Sachs<sup>6</sup>

Shaw still appeared to be reeling from the shock that his company could be using cutting-edge technology. He always considered software a luxury afforded by larger companies. Though he couldn't figure out one part of the puzzle. Being an astute businessman, he wanted to know how SaaS vendors could afford to charge so little for their software.

“So, how come SaaS is so inexpensive to use? How do companies afford it?”

SaaS applications are architected on a multitenant model where all the customers share the cost of software, hardware, infrastructure, and maintenance (Fig. 12).

In a very simple way, this is how it is done. Let’s say 10 people access application A today. Each of these people will access the same version of the code that is hosted on application A’s server(s). Tomorrow, when application A is updated, each user will immediately get access to the new features. For the company behind application A, it is a volume game – the more subscriptions they sell, the more cost-effective the application becomes!

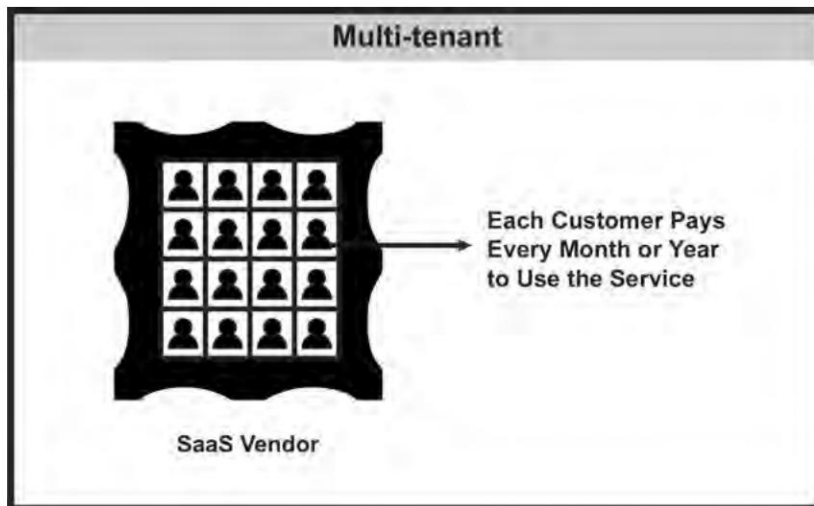


Fig. 12

**SPRINGBOARD RESEARCH*****India is the fastest growing SaaS market in Asia Pacific***

32% of SaaS adopters are replacing an on-premise application.

Indian SaaS market, which was \$105 million in 2009, is estimated to be worth \$352 million by 2012.

“Zero or low maintenance” is the leading reason for SaaS adoption in India, followed by “ease of use”.

In terms of satisfaction, SaaS scored an average of 8 on a 10 point scale (where 10 is the highest score and 1 is the lowest).

*Data compiled from Springboard bulletin “Software-as-a-Service in India 2009/ 2010” from Springboard Research, an IT market research provider*

“And I’m guessing that this kind of software can actually be perfect during a recession?”

Shaw was quick on the draw.

***Recession-friendly***

*“As we experienced during previous economic downturns, companies that invest smartly during the bad times, emerge more agile and better prepared to grow faster after the recession.”*

— Archie Black, CEO, SPS Commerce<sup>7</sup>

What do you think of when the recession looms over you? Automatically, we start thinking of lowering costs first. With SaaS, you get access to powerful features, can get started immediately, pay a small monthly subscription fee, and you don’t need to invest in expensive hardware. Seems like Utopia!

So, then when you are looking to slash costs, why would you buy software, servers, and spend money setting them up?

Shaw did not have an answer for that yet. I continued.

SaaS is almost like a panacea in bad times. Why not take a look at your systems and IT infrastructure and see what can be offloaded to a SaaS vendor? This will not only reduce your in-house costs of maintaining the application but will also free up time from your team to work on issues that will actually bring in business.

Tulip Telecom, a local data telecom provider, opted for using a SaaS-based CRM solution to help them keep a constant check on their costs.<sup>8</sup> As did South Yorkshire Housing Association (SYHA), a non-profit organization that provides local families and individuals with affordable housing, to keep costs and in-house efforts low.<sup>9</sup> Today, they spend their time on strategic issues that lie within their core business rather than troubleshooting internal email systems, which in a period where resources are scarce and work is more can be a huge boon!

*“The ability to adopt on-demand services on a pay-as-you-go basis will be a perfect sourcing strategy for businesses seeking greater cost-controls and flexibility.”*

— Jeff Kaplan, Founder, THINKstrategies

Shaw’s face glowed in the dimly-lit coffee shop. He had, by this time, fallen in love with SaaS and what it could do for his business. Now, they wouldn’t need to install any software, worry about networking equipment, and upgrading the software. Plus, there are so many different SaaS services out there that they would have fun trying to try out most of them and see which ones fit their growing company. He knew that in order for his small business to compete with the big guys, he needed good systems in place that his team could leverage. They needed to be at the forefront of technology and use it to their advantage – and not necessarily own it. Before we parted, he had a question.

“So, does that mean that the non-SaaS software that people are using right now will become obsolete? What will happen to companies like Microsoft that made their fortunes selling software on CDs?”

A lot of traditional software companies are grappling with this currently. Either they adapt to the web-based model or become

obsolete. When the Facebook generation of users come to the enterprise, they would want a browser and an Internet connection. I don't think they would be waiting around for software to download, install, and configure. "Look around Shaw, don't you think everything is moving to the Web?"



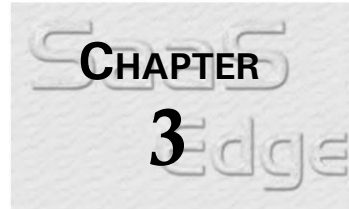
### *SaaS in a nutshell*

Web-based, on-demand, and rented  
Subscription-based and pay-as-you-go model  
No software or hardware to install, configure or deploy  
Low cost of entry  
Try it before you buy it  
Low risk  
Better customer service  
Flexible and scales to your needs  
No long-term commitments  
Platform independent

### References

1. Phil Wainewright, "Eight reasons SaaS will surge in 2008", ZDNet.com, Jan 2, 2008, <http://blogs.zdnet.com/SAAS/?p=432>
2. Harvard Business School professor Andrew McAfee is credited with coining the "Enterprise 2.0" term when he saw the potential to apply to business the concepts of Web 2.0 tools, which until recently have been used primarily by teens and college students to build social networks.
3. Andrew McAfee, "Enterprise 2.0, version 2.0", blog.hbs.edu, May 27, 2006, [http://blog.hbs.edu/faculty/amcafee/index.php/faculty\\_amcafee\\_v3/enterprise\\_20\\_version\\_20/](http://blog.hbs.edu/faculty/amcafee/index.php/faculty_amcafee_v3/enterprise_20_version_20/)
4. Bernard Lunn, "The New Stack: SaaS, Cloud Computing, Core Technology", ReadWriteWeb.com, October 29, 2008, [http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/new\\_technology\\_stack.php](http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/new_technology_stack.php)

5. Jeremy Quittner, "How SaaS Helps Cut Small Business Costs", BusinessWeek.com, Dec 5, 2008, [http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/08\\_72/s0812025631431.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/08_72/s0812025631431.htm)
6. Goldman Sachs (<http://www.internetnews.com/bus-news/article.php/3714376>)
7. Archie Black, "SaaS in tough times: Don't just survive, thrive", ZDNet.com, Aug 26, 2009, [http://news.zdnet.com/2100-9595\\_22-334669.html](http://news.zdnet.com/2100-9595_22-334669.html)
8. Swati Prasad, "Indian firms turn to software-as-a-service", ZDNetAsia.com, May 12, 2009, <http://www.zdnetasia.com/news/software/0,39044164,62053978,00.htm>
9. Cliff Saran, "Case studies: SaaS in action", Computer Weekly.com, Aug 20, 2008, <http://www.computerweekly.com/Articles/2008/09/11/231932/Case-studies-SaaS-in-action.htm>

A graphic for Chapter 3. It features the word "SaaS" in a large, light gray, sans-serif font. Overlaid on the right side of "SaaS" is the word "CHAPTER" in a smaller, bold, black, sans-serif font. Below "CHAPTER" is a large, bold, black number "3". To the right of the "3" is the word "Edge" in a light gray, sans-serif font, partially overlapping the "3".

## CHAPTER 3

# USING ONLINE SOFTWARE AND SERVICES: MINDSETS AND MYTHS

Money and banking have evolved over time. In the beginning, people used the barter system to exchange goods and services. Because of the inherent inefficiencies of barter, tokens of the same value were introduced. Early money came in seeds, leaves, and even salt, followed by metals like gold, silver and copper. The Chinese invented paper to represent money that could be redeemed for something valuable. Ancient temples and churches were used as banks that stored people's money (since people thought no one would steal money from a place of worship).<sup>1</sup> As people saw the advantage of a "bank" (or a central place to store their valuables), they gave up hoarding (even if it meant that their money was stored with other people's money). Over the years, banks have become well established custodians of public money and money is now just a series of ones and zeroes digitized on a hard drive somewhere out of your reach. Credit cards have replaced cash and sending money to any part of the world is done with a few clicks through online transfers. People changed, adapted, and embraced a completely hassle-free, banking experience (and now through mobile too). Right from the beginning, banks have always been like SaaS providers, safeguarding your most valuable possessions and providing you a service as and when you need it.



It had been almost two weeks since I had met Shaw and his team. They were generally sold on using web-based applications but the team had questions and concerns that needed another round of debating, convincing, and dispelling myths and mindsets, especially now that they were getting into business software rather than free Web 2.0 applications. It struck me that these questions seldom crop up when people sign up for a free service, but always hover in the air when money gets involved.

We all sat around the small conference table. There were two techies, a project manager, an intern, an accountant, Shaw's assistant, and the man himself.

"Thank you all for coming. As you all are aware, we are planning on using a few online business software applications within our company. Creating a blog, a Twitter account, and hanging out on Facebook is great outreach, but we need to automate and systematize our internal working so we can get a clear picture of our work, customers, sales, projects, deliverables, invoices, etc. Leveraging web-based technology will allow us to become more productive, efficient, and cut costs. I believe this is the way forward for our company and I understand that with a new way of thinking and working a lot of questions will arise. I am hoping that today we can diffuse any inhibitions, mindsets and myths that we have about online software and embrace a new way of working soon," Shaw started off optimistically.

And thus began the advent of The Interrogation.

## **MYTH #1: NEW, UNPROVEN, AND HYPED**

Shaw: "So, firstly, let me start off the question round. Am I wrong in assuming that SaaS is still very new and unproven? Is it more hype than reality? My team tells me that this is the general word on the street."

Everyone in the room nodded their heads in agreement.

Like a soldier guarding his fortress, I began using Google as an example – simply because of people's sheer familiarity with the brand and its applications. I asked: "How many people use Gmail,

Hotmail, Yahoo, or any other typical email service to check mail every day?"

Like good kids in school, everyone in the room put their hands up. There, I had already proved my point. They were already using SaaS. Take for example, Gmail. Google maintains the email software and the thousands of servers that are required to scale the service. One day someone sent you a Gmail invite and the next thing you know you have your very own Gmail account – a prized possession in the mid-2004 when the service was released as invitation only. You never installed the software. Some mornings after you log in to check your mail, you are greeted with new features and add-ons that are completely free. Over the years, the service got better. Hotmail, launched in July 1996, has 343 million monthly users and Gmail, launched in April 2004, has close to 146 million users who access their email through a browser.<sup>2</sup> If you are using any web-based email, then you are already hooked onto SaaS.



### ***Do you still think SaaS is not new?***

Google Apps, a suite of web-based office applications, which started in 2006, has over 3 million businesses and more than 30 million active users.

Source: <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2010/09/three-million-businesses-have-gone.html>

Workday, a SaaS provider of human capital management software, won one of the largest SaaS deals in 2008 to provide its software to 200,000 people at Flextronics, a large electronics company.

Source: [http://www.informationweek.com/news/services/saas/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=207603344&cid=RSSfeed\\_IWK\\_News](http://www.informationweek.com/news/services/saas/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=207603344&cid=RSSfeed_IWK_News)

Salesforce.com (provider of online CRM service), the granddaddy of all SaaS companies, was founded in 1999, and by late 2009 supported more than 2 million subscribers worldwide.<sup>3</sup>

NetSuite Inc. (provider of ERP, CRM, and order management for small to medium companies) has been in business for more than eight years with a global base of approximately 70,000 subscribers in approximately 7,000 companies.<sup>4</sup>

Or, to get an idea of the popularity and growing power of SaaS companies, check out SaaS>Showplace.com, a well-known directory of SaaS vendors and product categories that lists over 1200 SaaS vendors across 80 industry verticals.



### ***Next Gen: A wake up call for all business***

Shane and his friends are almost graduating from business school. They are young, energetic and wired. They spend most of their time online on their favorite Web 2.0 tools and services – checking mail and chatting, sharing videos on YouTube, uploading photos from their mobile phones using TwitPic, staying on top of news through RSS feeds on Google Reader, broadcasting updates about what they are doing and their experiences via Facebook and Twitter, researching on Wikipedia and even occasionally blogging using Blogger or Posterous. When Shane's friend invited him to LinkedIn, he quickly signed up and started using the tool the same day. Today, Shane has over 300 connections on his LinkedIn account – hopefully making it easier for him to find a job when he graduates in the summer. Shane loves the ease of use, simplicity, intuitiveness and sleekness of these apps that he can use from anywhere and anytime without getting bogged down by the type of operating system or machine that he is on.

When Shane and his friends leave college and look for a job, they would want to work in a company that also uses similar tools. They would expect their business software to be Web-based, easy to use, intuitive (heck, no one taught them how to use Facebook, Twitter, or even set up a blog), simple, and built with the same collaborative features that they are accustomed to with the Web 2.0 apps. Downloading and installing a bulky and complicated application would be a thing of the past.

Just as I finished, the techie chimed in. “But don’t you think that just like the collapse of the ASP model, SaaS will fail too?”

The ASP (Application Service Providers) failure of the late 1990s is a common story that gets brought up in comparison to SaaS. ASPs were ahead of their time. Back then, bandwidth, servers, and data storage were expensive. Web technology was nascent. ASPs were not true SaaS providers. They were like hosting companies. They hosted customer applications in data centers, which customers did not want to host in-house. For every new customer, there would be a new server provisioned with the application. As customers grew, this became very capital-intensive and exorbitantly expensive to maintain and ultimately led to the demise of the ASPs.



***In the future, why will you own, when you can rent?***

German software maker SAP that mostly sells multimillion dollar contracts to other large companies, in late 2009, decided on a flexible pricing model that lets its customers pay on a quarterly or monthly basis.

Microsoft is offering subscription prices on its Office 2010 suite. Adobe Systems bought a company in late 2009 that sells software on a subscription basis.

Oracle, which has mostly stayed away from the SaaS model, is moving toward signing up companies for software subscriptions as opposed to traditional licenses.

Clearly, the world is moving toward a subscription-based or pay-as-you-go pricing model.

Source: [http://www.businessweek.com/technology/content/dec2009/tc2009129\\_232135.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/technology/content/dec2009/tc2009129_232135.htm)

Today, things are different. As mentioned earlier, bandwidth, servers, computers, and hardware are much cheaper. Web technology has progressed and SaaS applications are architecturally different. People’s mindsets are changing and they are now more open to transactions online. Businesses understand that the use of

technology is much more important than its ownership. Further, in order to cut costs, companies are evaluating what is core and noncore and hence SaaS is a far more attractive and efficient model for businesses. Even non-technical companies like the Structural Waterproofing Company (SWC) of Kolkata, India, have adopted SaaS tools from Microsoft that helps them focus on their core business and run it in a profitable way.<sup>5</sup>

## MYTH #2: LOSS OF CONTROL

*“We have overcome the notion that you have to do everything yourself.”<sup>6</sup>*

– Amy Wohl, Consultant/Industry Analyst and Writer

The techie looked unconvinced and shot out another question. “Yeah, but we don’t want to lose control of our systems. We are used to managing our own servers and things have gone pretty smoothly for us. How do we trust the SaaS vendor to run the system as efficiently as we do in-house?”

This is another classic myth. Sometimes losing control is good because you really don’t need that delusionary control. It’s just that we are not comfortable with parting with some things and try to hold on to them as tightly as possible. Deprivation makes us feel insecure. We tend to fear losing control, do more than we can take up, and then ultimately fall on our own weight. But when we change, we discover new possibilities and alternatives. We have gotten used to leasing bandwidth, power, books, movies, and even our own homes! Banks provide us the services to access our money at any time. At the end of the day, the money is still ours (even if it is not in our possession) and we pay the bank a small fee to store and manage the money. If you are not a technology company, then it really does not make sense to own IT and the overheads that comes with it. What is important is to focus on your core competency and outsource the rest to a specialist.

In mid-2009 Serena Software selected Google Apps Premier Edition for its messaging and collaboration needs, saving more than \$750,000 and countless IT hours. One of the main reasons they

shifted to a SaaS model was because managing their in-house servers was getting expensive and time-consuming.<sup>7</sup>



### *What do the IT guys have to say?*

*"The reaction of our staff to Google Apps was overwhelmingly positive. Plus, ongoing maintenance is nil."*<sup>1</sup>

— Paul Berry, CTO, *The Huffington Post*

*"One of the huge benefits that Google Apps brings is never having to upgrade again. And not only that, but Google's giving us something new every single day."*

— Brent Hoag, Director of IT, Commercial Cleaning Products  
Industrial Goods, North America

*"We decided to go to Google Apps enterprise-wide (4,100 users) with the whole Google Apps suite. My users are happy now, but I also save \$1.6 million dollars per year."*

— Bob Rudy, VP and CIO, Semiconductors Technology,  
North America

Compiled from <http://www.google.com/apps/intl/en/business/customers.html>

## MYTH #3: THREAT TO THE TECHIES

The tech guy was afraid that his job would become redundant if his company started using web-based software. He was in charge of managing the systems within the office and if these were outsourced from another company, he would probably be out of his comfort zone or possibly given the pink slip. Earlier, we witnessed a sense of protectionism from the West as jobs were outsourced to India and China. Today, we are witnessing insecurities within companies as they prepare to increase efficiency by harnessing web-based applications.

The truth is that you still might need the techie who can evaluate different SaaS offerings, build relationships, ascertain if they are technologically sound, and have the correct security policies in place. In some cases, the web-based offerings can be integrated with existing systems in-house. The technology team can work on strategic business objectives that are closely linked to the company's bottom line instead of setting up servers and worrying about software upgrades.



### *The IT guy that bit the cheese*

Dhanil Shah, the IT professional at PPFAS, a boutique financial services company in Mumbai, used to spend most of his time on hardware, network management, and configuration issues related to IBM's Lotus Notes emails and workgroup management software they had setup for 60 people. He had to make sure the server was online all day, people could access their mails from home, and the server was backed up often. Each person was only given a few hundred megabytes of email space. Changing this policy would mean getting bigger servers, time spent in configuring, and a larger backup drive as well.

In 2008, the company moved its emails to Google Apps. Today, they have a shared calendar on Google Calendar, which syncs with the BlackBerry phones that their executives have. Dhanil does not need to worry about email space as each user has almost 7 GB of space now. He can now remotely administer everything related to users through a secure webpage that Google Apps provides.

Thanks to these SaaS apps, his time is now wisely focused on other parts of the business, especially in maintaining critical financial software that the company has purchased over the years and which is their core business.

*"Managing ever-increasing hardware and installed software, upgrading and maintaining the same constantly was a challenge. Now, this is something we don't have to worry about."*

— Rajeev Thakkar, CEO, PPFAS

For small companies and startups that find it expensive to hire a full-time IT professional, SaaS is god-sent. Sudha Iyer, CEO of Metamorph, a staff training and placement company, chose SaaS over licensed software for their accounting needs in her three-person company in August 2008: billing, invoicing, cash flow, and profit and loss records. She wanted to cut costs related to buying licensed software and then having an IT professional manage that licensed software.<sup>8</sup>

Besides IT, SaaS can free up resources in other areas of your workplace too. Mane USA Inc., a fragrance and flavorings maker in Wayne, NJ, adopted a SaaS version of Automatic Data Processing Inc.'s payroll and benefits software about a year ago. Employees now have self-service capabilities for making benefits changes, freeing up Mane's human resources staff to do other work.<sup>9</sup>

## MYTH #4: SaaS IS EXPENSIVE

"But you talk about cutting costs and increasing efficiencies. Isn't SaaS expensive in the long run?" The accountant asked and scribbled something on paper and handed it across to me.

I looked at his calculation.



### *Accountant's Analysis of Packaged vs. SaaS Software*

Cost of Packaged Software License: \$1200

Cost of the same software with SaaS: \$50/month

SaaS software will become expensive after 2 years.

I wondered why he had not taken into account the cost of managing their servers on which the packaged software would run including cost of bandwidth, security, encryption, personnel to manage the servers/computers, upgrades, backup/restore, downtime etc. Within two years, assuming the packaged software does not get updated (which is another cost in itself), it would become outdated and become "shelfware." Hardware upgrades are expensive and time-consuming. Every time there would be an update, you



would need to set aside time and manpower to upgrade the software. Imagine running an accounting package on 5 computers in your office and each time there was an update to the software, calling in the IT professional and asking him to upgrade everything. If something were to go wrong, that would mean downtime for the accountant working on that computer and for your business as a whole. If something were to crash, you would lose data that probably is not backed up. With SaaS, this responsibility is shifted to the vendor. Updates and backups to the software are free (you wake up one morning and see new features in your app), you pay a monthly or yearly subscription, and the software remains fresh and up-to-date from month to month.

Within a period of two weeks, Delhi Freight Corporation, a mid-sized transportation company, moved from managing their trucks and cargo using spreadsheets to a full-fledged browser-based SaaS Fleet Management solution. The SaaS solution cost them only 20% of the on-premise solution over a three-year period. Similarly, The Headstart School, an educational institute in India, has achieved 64% savings by opting for a SaaS-based student information system.<sup>10</sup>



### *Shelf-ware is expensive*

Do you have shelf-ware? Shelf-ware is software that you have bought and is now sitting on your shelf unused. Asset and service management software company, Peregrine, estimates that 25% of all software is bought but never used, remaining in the shrink-wrap it came in. Morgan Stanley has found that 20% of enterprise resource planning (ERP) licenses were not implemented, while the figure rises to 40% when it comes to customer relationship management (CRM) applications.

SaaS eliminates shelf-ware by letting you try the software before purchase so you can gauge its value to your business, and the moment it becomes irrelevant, you can simply stop using and paying for it!

(<http://ww2.itweb.co.za/office/progress/0510170913.htm>)

## MYTH #5: SaaS IS DIFFICULT TO CUSTOMIZE AND INTEGRATE

The techie chimed in once again. I began to wonder if his excuses were aimed at derailing Shaw's vision of leveraging SaaS applications. Somehow, this guy was too attached to the old traditional model and was not willing to let go. "But, isn't SaaS difficult to customize and integrate with other apps and systems?"

I wondered what kind of customization a small company like theirs would want. The rule of the thumb is that if you need heavy customization (software that is so specific to your working style), then you probably should custom develop it and not go for off-the-shelf software. Of course, this would be expensive and depends on your requirements. What's happened in the past is that people have customized applications so much that they have now become bloated and unmanageable (even by the original vendor that developed it). Instead, why not choose an online application that is closest to what you want to accomplish and start using it? Over time, the application will evolve – all good SaaS applications evolve on a month-to-month basis and even provide an application programming interface (API) that you can build on (for the more technically inclined).

How much customization do you need to manage your emails, provide a help desk support channel, track your projects, send email marketing newsletters, back up your computers, write a document or make a presentation online? The answer is none.

## MYTH #6: SaaS IS NOT FEATURE-RICH

"Well, aren't SaaS applications really simple and not very feature-rich? Would we need to switch applications as we grow, and need more features and complexity in the application?" The project manager was speaking from his point of view.

I decided to explain with the old familiar example. Google Apps look simple in the beginning. So, does Gmail. Under the hood, they are packed with powerful features that you uncover as you start using the application. Google Labs showcases new Google projects "that aren't quite ready for prime time." It serves as a testing

ground for new services being developed. This is a way for Google to gain feedback on the products before releasing the final versions.<sup>11</sup>

Just like Google Labs, almost all SaaS vendors listen to their customers every month, and add features that are relevant to their audience. Being web-based, updates can be easily rolled out for customers to enjoy without downloading or installing the software on the local systems. FreshBooks, a popular accounting software, updates their application almost twice a month with new features and enhancements.

Additionally, as I mentioned earlier, APIs allow people from all around the world (mostly developers with good technical skills) to develop features for the SaaS application.

## **MYTH #7: SaaS REQUIRES A STEEP LEARNING CURVE**

Shaw's secretary was quiet through the earlier part of the discussion. Suddenly, she voiced a concern. "But, is the learning curve high when using a web-based application? I mean, we do have to sign up on our own, no one comes to our office for a demo and I have so much on my plate that I don't want to spend more time learning a new tool. Do you think non-technical people like me will have a problem?"

Just like Web 2.0 tools, SaaS applications are built on the assumption that its end users will be non-technical people like you and me. Adoption is a huge challenge for any software company, so the easier they make the application (I looked at the project manager), the easier would it be for the average user to get used to the application. SaaS applications are built to give the user a near hassle-free experience since they are judged every month (as opposed to the one-time fee you pay for your software that you download or install on your computers). If a service I use fails to provide my team and me a positive experience, I will stop using it and move to the next best competitor. It's as simple as that.

In addition, SaaS apps are self-service tools that you have to figure yourself and hence are crafted with simplicity in mind. They come built with video tutorials, help FAQs, forums, and a thriving community of other users who also use the application. Did you ever remember Google sending any of their representatives to get you started on their Gmail project? This is a new era of sophisticated, simple yet powerful self-service applications that you can start using almost instantly!

The secretary looked a little relieved, but the thought of learning a new software on her own freaked her out. To her, “software” was a complex and a scary word. But, since she had got herself an account on LinkedIn, Facebook, and even Gmail, I knew she had crossed the adoption hurdle. After she went through the process of signing up for a few applications she would be well on her way to teach others.



### *Help is closer than you think...*

In the next few years your local computer guy (who is possibly familiar with your needs) will not only fix your computer, upgrade software, and manage your website/hosting, but will also help you get up and running on various SaaS applications.

For a few minutes, there was silence and I got the feeling that pretty much all the myths had been successfully dispelled. When people are unsure, they look for loopholes. Of course, the techie looked at everyone and voiced his last, but most important question.

## **MYTH #8: SaaS IS NOT SECURE**

*“The most common myth regarding SaaS is the lack of control over enterprise data and the consequent security issues. As the market matures and adoption becomes wider, these concerns will gradually fade away.”*

– zBalaka Baruah Aggarwal, Manager, Syndicated Research,  
Springboard Research

“Compared to hosted software, SaaS is not secure and reliable. I am probably better off hosting the application at my own workplace rather than having sensitive data sit on someone else’s server.” I was surprised that it took so long for the IT guy to voice this particular concern. Normally, security concerns were always the first thing that cropped up during a conversation. Perhaps, he thought he would leave his ace card for the end.

He was grossly misunderstanding the concept. When you pay a SaaS vendor, you not only pay them for using the application, but you also pay them for security, backup, and their infrastructure. Security is something they understand (and have to understand) as it is so tightly tied in to their business model and therefore they are likely to do a better job of managing your data than you can internally! According to Springboard Research, SaaS players give high priority to addressing security and privacy issues as their business model depends on these fundamentals.<sup>12</sup> Managing security and being a “hosting” provider might not be your core competency. So, it makes sense to let someone who understands the technology better handle it. Isn’t it the same reason you put your money in the bank, or hire a guard to man your home while you and your family sleep soundly?

SaaS security does not differentiate between large and small customers. Being a small company, you benefit from the same rigorous security standards that large companies enjoy with the same SaaS vendor.

Also, there is a whole lot that goes behind securing a SaaS application. Security is also about data privacy, encryption, intrusion detection, password policies, and disaster recovery. Are you prepared to monitor your servers 24/7 and take the responsibility of making sure you have the right intrusion detection tools? Is your business ready to dabble with setting up firewalls, replacing server parts if something were to go wrong, or provisioning a daily data backup plan? Do you currently have sufficient expertise to take this up or would you rather spend your cash flow on customer acquisition and growing your business? I looked pointedly at the accountant.

The room was quiet again.



### *Can you match up?*

Typical hosting infrastructure of a SaaS vendor:

- 100% network uptime guarantee.
- Network redundancies: partner with multiple network providers.
- 1-hour hardware replacement guarantee.
- 24/7/365 support and immediate response to emergency support tickets.
- Dedicated firewall and remote back up of your data.
- Data center secured by keycards, biometric scanning, and constant surveillance.
- Intrusion detection systems.
- Conditioned power providing all servers with uninterrupted power supply.
- State-of-the-art fire suppression system.
- Cooling, temperature, and humidity control systems.
- Website and port monitoring tools.
- SSL certificate setup.
- Antivirus protection.

Data compiled from Rackspace.com, a North American hosting provider.

As long as SaaS companies continue to innovate, release frequent upgrades to their software, and lower the total cost of ownership for a business, they are going to be irresistible. At the end of the day, you need to find a SaaS vendor that you trust who can provide you confidentiality, integrity, and availability of your information at any given time. Just like any business transaction, you still need to do your due diligence before choosing a vendor and application.

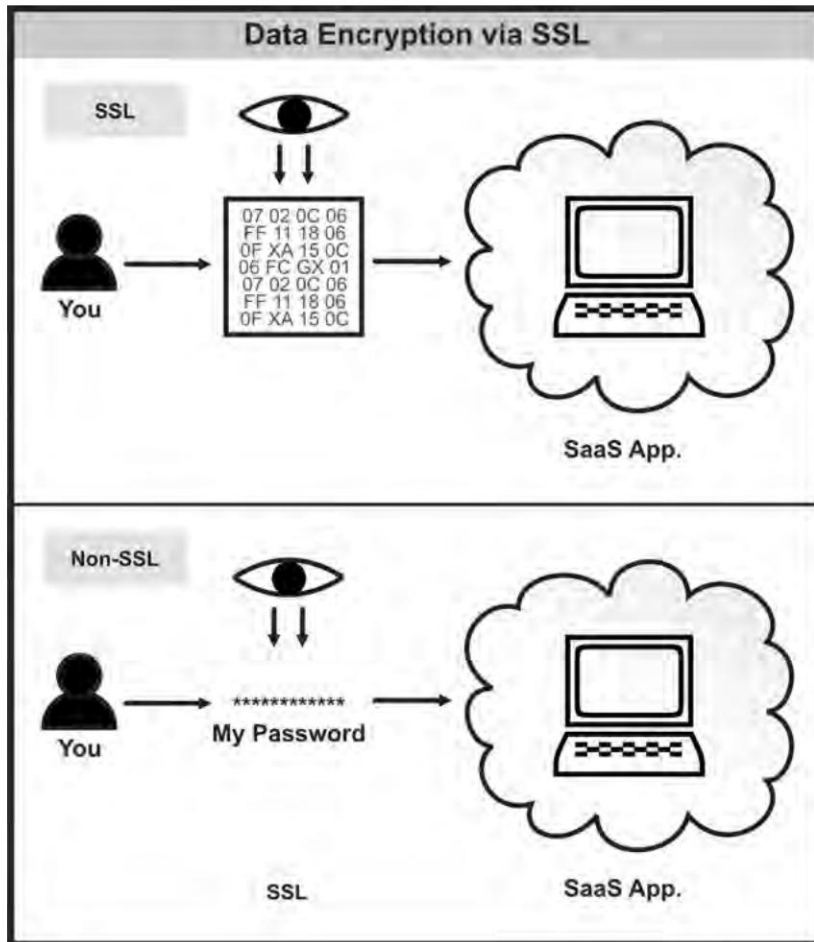


Fig. 13



## ***What you should know about SaaS security?***

*Is your data encrypted and stored?*

Critical data like passwords that you store on your SaaS provider's site should be encrypted and stored so that even if someone retrieves your password they will not know what to do with it.

For example, a password like "mypassword" will be encrypted and stored like "kdmKU8787sdd"

*Is the data you send to the SaaS application encrypted?*

Most applications will boast of as being SSL-enabled. What this means is that the data that you send between your computer and the SaaS application is encrypted first and then transported. It's like sending a coded message. SSL will make it very difficult for unauthorized people to view information traveling between your computer and the SaaS application's server (Fig. 13).

*How robust is the permission system of the application?*

If the SaaS application is going to be used by people inside (employees) and outside your company (partners, contractors, clients etc.) then you want to ensure that the application is built with sophisticated permission and user access system so that the administrator can set the right kind of permissions for different people who are going to be logged in. These people should then only have access to the information that they are allowed to see.

For example, if you have given your clients access to your SaaS collaboration application, there should be a way for you to disallow them from seeing certain files that you have uploaded to the system.

*What are the physical security measures that your vendor is providing?*

See the table above "Can you match up?"

Over the next hour, I gave them examples of real companies who had overcome these myths and were now using web-based applications in their workplace.



## Case Studies

### ***Parksons Games & Sports: “Learning curve might be high”***

Parksons Games & Sports, the largest card manufacturing company in India thought it might be really hard for them to make the transition to a project collaboration and work-tracking application. Most of their employees were non-technical and were used to email- and spreadsheet-based collaboration. Aditi Sheth-Kejriwal, business development head, wanted a new way of working using web-based tools so she could keep a track of all projects related to the company from a central location.

After going the SaaS way, the only problem the company faced was to instruct and motivate its non-tech-savvy employees and non-PC users to use the online tool regularly. Over the first few days when a couple of people got used to the system, they easily trained the other employees. It has been more than three years that their team is still using the tool on a daily basis to keep track of their work and to collaborate with designers and freelancers.

### ***Raramuridesign: “Didn’t know how the system would work and whether the support from the vendor would be as good as promised”***

Today, Raramuridesign, South-African online web development and content management company, uses SaaS applications for invoicing, project collaboration, email, document collaboration, and customer relationship management. Their founder, Matthew, believes that the support on paid service is much better (hence, they have ditched open source systems) and have been really impressed with the online support they get from their SaaS vendors.

### ***Indus Net Technologies: “Initial acceptance by the team takes time”***

Indus Net Technologies, a full-service web design company is using SaaS applications for the last three years. Although the initial uptake

by their team took a while, their chief executive officer, Abhishek Rungta, led from the front. Everyone in the team knew why they were moving to SaaS, what the advantages were and how would it benefit their business as a whole. Soon, everyone began to believe in the flexibility it brought to the business, and the change to SaaS was handled in the most amicable way possible.

Over the next few weeks, Shaw and his team were glued to the Web – searching for popular applications, hanging out on social networks, and seeing what others were recommending and using, and finally signing up and trying out different tools that would be easily embraced within their almost “virtually-run,” agile and forward-thinking company.

Their small company indeed would be soon getting bigger engines.



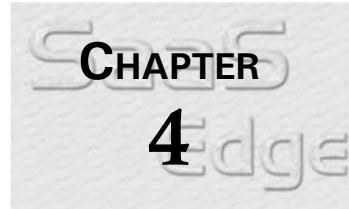
### *Common myths recap*

- New, Unproven and Hyped
- Loss of Control
- Threat to IT
- Expensive
- Difficult to Customize and Integrate
- Not Feature-Rich
- Requires A Steep Learning Curve
- Not Secure

## References

1. Anonymous, “The history of money”, essortment.com, [http://www.essortment.com/all/moneyhistorypa\\_rfrs.htm](http://www.essortment.com/all/moneyhistorypa_rfrs.htm)
2. Michael Arrington, “Bing Comes To Hotmail,” TechCrunch.com, July 9, 2009, <http://www.techcrunch.com/2009/07/09/bing-comes-to-hotmail/>

3. Bruce Richardson, "The Future of Enterprise Software", AMRResearch.com, November 20, 2009, <http://blogs.amrresearch.com/enterprisesoftware/2009/11/microsoft-oracle-sap-and-100000-missed-sales-opportunities.html>
4. Larry Lange, "SaaS: Ready for the Major Leagues?", smartenterprisemag.com, <http://www.smartenterprisemag.com/articles/2007fall/bestpractices.jhtml>
5. Swati Prasad, "Indian firms turn to software-as-a-service", ZDNetAsia.com, May 12, 2009, <http://www.zdnetasia.com/news/software/0,39044164,62053978,00.htm>
6. Elizabeth Montalbano, "Web 2.0 offers fertile ground for SAAS", Infoworld.com, March 3, 2006, <http://www.infoworld.com/t/platforms/web-20-offers-fertile-ground-saas-032>
7. Serena Satyasai, "Serena Software on switching from Microsoft Exchange to Google Apps", googleenterprise.blogspot.com, June 11, 2009, <http://googleenterprise.blogspot.com/2009/06/serena-software-on-switching-from.html>
8. Swati Prasad, "Indian firms turn to software-as-a-service", ZDNetAsia.com, May 12, 2009, <http://www.zdnetasia.com/news/software/0,39044164,62053978,00.htm>
9. Patrick Thibodeau, "SaaS still on the rise, despite IT spending slowdown," ComputerWorld.com, February 9, 2009, [http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/333346/SaaS\\_still\\_on\\_the\\_rise\\_despite\\_IT\\_spending\\_slowdown?taxonomyId=154&pageNumber=3](http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/333346/SaaS_still_on_the_rise_despite_IT_spending_slowdown?taxonomyId=154&pageNumber=3)
10. Srikanth R.P., "Jamcracker fires up Indian SaaS market", NetworkComputing.in, October 29, 2009, <http://www.networkcomputing.in/Enterprise-Applications-022Oct009-Jamcracker-fires-up-Indian-SaaS-market.aspx>
11. "Google Labs," Wikipedia.org, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google\\_Labs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Labs)
12. Swati Prasad, "Indian firms turn to software-as-a-service", ZDNetAsia.com, May 12, 2009, <http://www.zdnetasia.com/news/software/0,39044164,62053978,00.htm>



## ENABLING SaaS AT YOUR WORKPLACE

Shaw and his team were ready to take the plunge – a little nervous and quite excited to be playing the field with the big guys, with their company gaining access to the same software that big companies enjoyed for years. Their fledging startup would use web tools and software to manage everything from leads, clients, projects, payments, and human resource processes. As their business grew, these systems would automatically provide them the scalability and power as and when they needed it. One word that kept ringing in Shaw’s mind was “business utopia!”

### BUCKLE-UP FOR SaaS

*The Fuel: Broadband Internet Connection*

Investing in a robust Internet connection (or redundant connections if you are in a developing country) is a must.

*The Engine: An upgraded browser*

The latest versions of Microsoft Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, or Apple Safari browsers will give you a super experience. Newer and updated software often work with older browsers but not all of them support browsers that are very dated.

*The Passengers: Your team*

Hiring web-savvy people is key; people who can relate to the web and learn/adapt to newer technologies. The good news is that most college students entering the workforce are already adept at online tools – the web is their new playground.

*The Location: Take down the cubicles*

When all you need is an Internet connection and a web browser, you are really not bound by a particular computer that has the installed software. The traditional office becomes extinct as more and more people work in virtual teams from anywhere. In the future, depending upon the nature of your business, this could also lead to decreased overhead costs with regard to your physical office space.

RingCentral, an online business phone system provider, surveyed nearly 350 businesses and found a growing shift away from the traditional on-site centralized work force. A more widely distributed “virtual” office is quickly becoming the preferred model.<sup>1</sup>

**CASE STUDY** *The virtual mentoring company*

Sameer Guglani, who runs The Morpheus with co-partners Nandini Hirriani and Indus Khaitan, is mentoring almost 20 companies and runs his entire operation virtually except for the days he is traveling and meeting with entrepreneurs. His team uses a variety of Web 2.0 and SaaS tools including collaboration, project management, and mobile telephony to keep in touch, manage work and connect with startup founders.

They use their official and personal blogs extensively to spread the message. As they travel a lot around India, they put out messages in their social networks about their travel schedules and ask folks who would be interested to get in touch. According to Nandini, “This works beautifully – almost every time, we get 4 to 5 messages from folks who would like to catch up and other people are able to keep track of our coordinates.”

They are active on LinkedIn as well, helping them find contacts in companies with whom their portfolio startups want to do business with.

To track progress of their portfolio companies, they use a combination of Google Apps and DeskAway. Besides hosting their email with Google Apps, they do a lot of real-time collaboration on Google Docs and track their portfolio company metrics on Google Spreadsheets.

Using online software helps them access their work from anywhere, any time.

I could sense that Shaw was not comfortable with the concept of “virtual teams.” Running a business virtually has become really easy with collaborative tools. You can be anywhere and still have access to the same information that the people working in the office have.

Before Shaw and his team plunged into trying out different tools, I wanted to give him a heads-up on what they should look for in a tool. Just like kids let loose in a playground, they were already having fun trying out a dozen or so different services.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A SaaS APPLICATION

*“It’s understandable that not everything can switch to SaaS overnight. However, if you’re not in the process of moving more and more applications to a SaaS model, you are short-changing yourselves and your users. You are not going to be a hero and legend in your industry because you got really, really good at running your own servers and infrastructure. You shouldn’t spend time on things your customers don’t care about; and your customers don’t care where your software lives.”*

— Dharmesh Shah, Founder and CTO, HubSpot

### Adoption and Adaptability

The application should be very easy to adopt and everyone in the team should feel comfortable using it. Can you imagine if people

were to find checking emails cumbersome and only a few people in your team used email?

## Features

“Feature-itis” ruled earlier when you compared products using a feature list nicely drawn out in a table format cut out from a computer magazine. Don’t get worried if the SaaS application does not have a feature set specific to your company. Most SaaS applications will have features that are general to companies within your industry type. Sometimes applications have a little more than you require but that’s good because once you scale and grow, the additional horsepower may come in use.

## Performance

Although you need to see what features the application offers, you need to focus more on how the application performs on day one of trial and then on subsequent days. Just like anything on the Web, the application needs to be fast, responsive, and available whenever you need it. Slow applications are just annoying to use.

## Mobile

An application that also has a mobile-enabled website or a mobile application that you can access while on the move is definitely a plus. You can carry your office in your pocket and literally work from anywhere!

## Friend or Foe?

Most importantly, do your team members like it? The application is for them and so should have an equal part in the decision-making process. Think bottom-up approach. If you feel that your team members are merely being change-resistant, then show them the overall benefits of the system and give them time to accept it.

## References and Buzz

Has the application got buzz online? Are people recommending it within their social networks? Are there reviews of it online from actual users? The application's website can look like a Fortune 100 company but what is important is the stuff under the hood.



### ***Tips to track conversations and recommendations online***

Twitter Search: <http://search.twitter.com/>

Sift through real-time conversations between people about the company or product. You will see questions, answers, opinions, praises, complaints, and a whole lot of stuff.

Blog Search: <http://blogsearch.google.com/>

Search for the name of the company/product and see what has been written about it on blogs from around the world. Technology bloggers are opinionated and generally analyze judiciously when they review tools.

#### Status Updates

Update your status on your social networks with something like this: "Has anyone used Microsoft's new Bing search engine? Any pros or cons?"

Oftentimes, friends who have used the tool will give you candid insight.

#### LinkedIn Answers

Search LinkedIn Answers and post your own question to tap into your professional network for recommendations. Chances are that someone would have already used the tool that you are evaluating.



## EVALUATING THE SaaS COMPANY/ VENDOR

Once you have narrowed down on the service, it is important that you do your due diligence on the SaaS vendor. You do it when buying a new car – making sure the car is in good shape, that the company you are buying from is reliable, and of course lastly, the after-sales service is going to be prompt and smooth. Since the SaaS vendor will be storing your data on their servers, it is imperative you choose someone who is reliable and easy to work with.

The tech person (if you have one) can take up this evaluation exercise.

### **#1 Can I Get My Data from You?**

Even though they store your data, the data is yours. You are only renting their application. You should be able to get your data at any time of the day if you want to switch the application or just take a backup. The ability for you to export your data from the application is one way to avoid vendor lock-in. Most applications will allow you to export your data, but a head's up: don't expect a CD to be delivered to your doorstep. It will be a digital file you can store on your computer.

### **#2 Where do You Host Your SaaS Application?**

Not that it really matters (you really don't care where the power grid is located, all you care about is getting power at home). There are times when your company policies and country laws/regulations make it mandatory to ask the vendor where your data is going to be stored.

### **#3 What Kind of Reliability can the Vendor Guarantee?**

Since you are going to access the application over the Internet, it is paramount that the service provider invests not only in the reliability of the application but also in the data center where the application is hosted. Most SaaS vendors have information regarding their data

centers on their website. Frequent downtimes and outages is something that you want to avoid. Imagine you and your clients start using a SaaS application, and the application is not stable and has frequent outages and failures. Who looks bad in the picture? The SaaS vendor of course, and so do you since you made the decision to go with that SaaS vendor. You should do a quick reliability check.



### ***Reliability check***

1. Check vendor blog and scan Twitter on frequent outages and downtimes.
2. Check vendor website for information on their data center and hosting.
3. Check if the vendor has a public-facing status page that shows how their servers are doing.
  - a. Salesforce: <https://trust.salesforce.com/trust/>
  - b. Twitter: <http://status.twitter.com/>
  - c. Intacct: <http://us.intacct.com/status/>

## **#4 Customer Reference Check**

Don't feel shy to ask the vendor for contacts of their existing customers. Get to know what they like and dislike about the service and how their experience has been so far. You can also ask them how many customers they currently have and how long have they been in business. You should know if you are going to be their smallest or their biggest customer. You need to make sure your business is critical to them.

## **#5 Customer Service**

We have all had a bad experience being kept on hold on the phone infinitely or not getting responses via email. It is important to assess what kind of training and support the vendor promises and keeps up to. What kinds of different customer service channels does the

company provide? Do they have a number that you can call? What is the turnaround time for their email support? Are they on Twitter when you need them? Do they provide a live chat option if you are on the go? Do they have a vibrant support community that supports itself (where customers help other customers)? Do they have comprehensive online help and video tutorials that will make it easy for your team to adopt the solution?

## #6 How do You Protect My Data?

Though this should be answered on their site (you can find this on a security, help, or FAQ page), it is important to know what policies and methods the SaaS vendor has built to protect your data. Are they encrypting passwords when storing your data? Do they have a firewall that is protecting their servers from any unwanted traffic or how often do they back up your data just in case something happens to their servers (Fig. 14)?

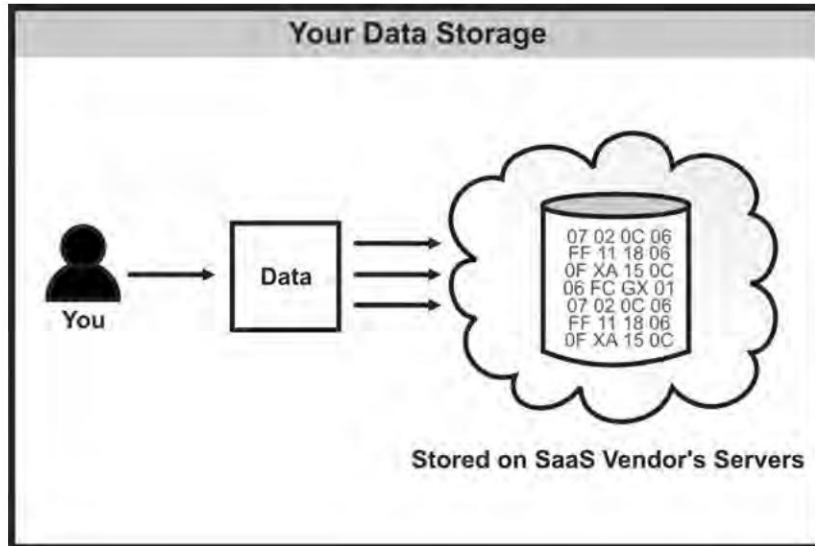


Fig. 14

## #7 What Kind of Pricing Options do They Have?

Most SaaS vendors will charge a monthly subscription fee. Some even have an annual option with a discount where you can pay for the entire year fee upfront. The latter option should only be exercised if you are sure that this is the vendor that you are going to stick with for a long time. Normally, it's a good idea to pay monthly for a few months and once the confidence sets in, then to go for the annual plan.

### **SaaS CHECKLIST** *Smart questions to ask before signing up...*

- Is there a free trial plan so that I can gauge the value this application provides?
- Are all the pricing options transparent, clear, and displayed on the website?
- Where will my data be hosted? How safe will my information be?
- How do you store my data? Is it separate or stored with other customer data?
- In a case of an emergency, how long will it take to recover my data?
- Is the data backed up daily?
- What has your uptime (the time your servers have been online) been for the last year?
- Can I take a look at a list of your security infrastructure and ways in which you will protect my data?
- How often is the application upgraded? Would I have free access to upgrades?
- Can the application scale when you have a lot of people accessing it?
- How extensive is the help documentation for the application
- How quick is the customer support to reply to problems?
- Can I take a look at references from paying customers?

I noticed someone from Shaw's team taking these points down diligently, and then looking up – probably wanting a few brownie points from his boss – with a question:

“With the Web isn't there any free software we can use? Can we rely on SaaS tools that are free?”

## SO, SHOULD YOU USE FREE SOFTWARE?

Free has been around for quite some time now.

Z. John Zhang, a Wharton marketing professor who has authored books on pricing strategy says, *“You go to a supermarket and they give you free samples and then you buy a whole box. Some bars let women go in for free and they charge the men. ‘Free’ is one of the most powerful words in marketing. It truly motivates people. If you see ‘free’, even if you don’t want it, you’re going to get it.”*<sup>2</sup>

Chris Anderson of *Wired* in his popular article “Free! Why \$0.00 is the Future of Business” calls the Web “the freaky land of free.” He adds: “In 2007, *The New York Times* went free. Once a marketing gimmick, free has emerged as a full-fledged economy right from online music, add-supported online games to Gmail, Picassa, Yahoo Mail, Twitter and YouTube.”<sup>3</sup>

Adobe, the makers of the PDF format commonly used to view documents, gives out its Acrobat Reader software for free and charges customers for its Acrobat software that helps create those documents.

Over the years, giving away free web software (freemium model) has become an acceptable business model. Firstly, the cost of developing, hosting, marketing and distributing software has drastically come down. Since software is delivered through the Internet, the cost of delivering an extra copy is virtually zero. Once a version of the application is written and maintained, it can be used by millions of customers.

As long as the application is reliable, there is nothing wrong in using the free version first, and then moving onto the paid plans when you start to scale up. Google provides a free version for its enterprise service but also has a \$50 per-user-per-year fee for

additional users and features. Ultimately, paying for the software is good since you are indirectly investing in the company's ideas, mission and technology, that go toward providing a reliable, uninterrupted and smooth online experience.

"Ok, so, we'll try out the software and maybe even use a couple of free applications. We will need to get past Jay as well." Shaw remarked, laughing out loud.

## THE CHIEF GATEKEEPER

Jay was Shaw's IT guru. Jay was responsible for keeping the computers and servers at Shaw's company running at all times. He would occasionally battle viruses and make sure the servers were updated with the latest software. On days when Jay was not installing software, he would spend the time firefighting and fixing problems around the office related to server/computer crashes, version incompatibilities and data loss. He would advise the company on new technologies and only after his approval did anything get installed on the company's computers. He was their chief gatekeeper.

*"What we are witnessing is the consumerization of the enterprise. Initial SaaS take-off is people finding the service online, trying it out and then taking out their credit cards and paying for it as a consumer. It is then that they go to the IT guys and tell them that we are using this software which is effective and that they should roll it out to everyone in the enterprise."*

—Alok Mittal, MD, Canaan Partners India, and Founding Member, Indian Angel Network

Though things were going to be different soon. Shaw and his team would sign up and try a multitude of online tools on their own. They wouldn't bother Jay anymore. They would discover new software through a quick online search and see if it will fit their needs and sign up for the trial plan without installing even a single bit of software. If convinced on the viability of the application, a monthly subscription to the application would be bought.



### *IT put to better use?*

Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen, a national fast food chain based in Atlanta, has six people in their IT team and uses online software to run the restaurant. Out of six, three of them look after the technology needs of the restaurant and the rest manage relationships with the vendors.

Source: [http://www.cio.com/article/457926/What\\_SaaS\\_Means\\_to\\_the\\_Future\\_of\\_the\\_IT\\_Department](http://www.cio.com/article/457926/What_SaaS_Means_to_the_Future_of_the_IT_Department)

An effective IT guy/department will understand user requirements, and will partner with people in your company to build the right portfolio of web-based SaaS applications that your company can take advantage of.

## GETTING SAASY: BUILDING THE VIRTUAL OFFICE

*“Web-based tools allow any company, including particularly small businesses, to take advantage of the very latest and most powerful techniques for interacting with your customers (creating web sites, ecommerce store fronts, blogs, email campaigns, leveraging social media to find new customers, monitoring customer engagement, invoicing, offering customer support on-line, accepting on-line payments, etc.), for automating your back office functions, all at a very low price, and with low risk and no IT staff required. Who wouldn’t want to take advantage of that?”*

– David Skok, General Partner, Matrix Partners

I could sense the feeling of anticipation emanating from Shaw and his team. So, I began.

Each of the SaaS applications mentioned later will give you a centralized view of your data, will be accessible from anywhere, any time and will take you only a few minutes to sign up and start using. More power to the workplace (Fig. 15)!

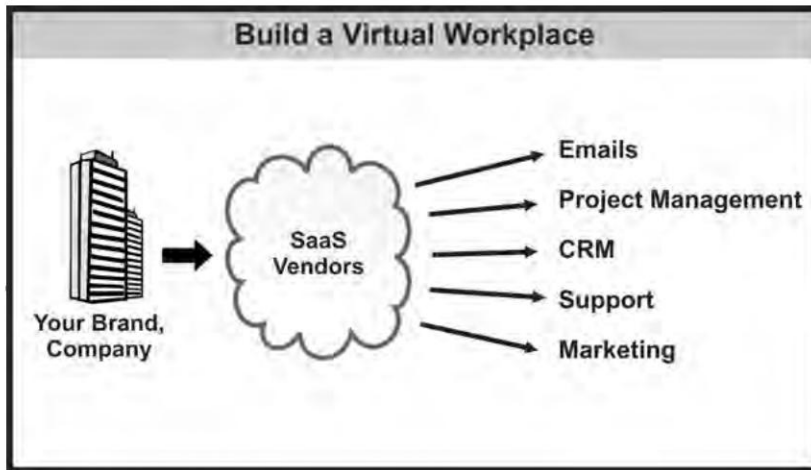


Fig. 15

## Junk Your Office Mail Servers

Second to cash flow, email is the lifeblood of any company. You already use Hotmail, Gmail, or Yahoo Mail to access your personal emails so why not enjoy the same power and simplicity for your work emails? Do away with your office mail servers and sign up for one of the online email services that will also provide you spam/virus filtering, archiving, shared calendar, instant messaging, mobile access, and online editing tools for your documents.

Apps: Google Apps, Windows Live.

Shaw looked disgruntled: "But does that mean I don't get to use Microsoft Outlook anymore? We are so used to checking mail on our computers."

Not a problem! You can still use your preferred program to check mail.<sup>4</sup> Everything remains the same except that the emails are stored on the service provider's servers (remember, they provide the service?) that you and your team can access. They even give you an administrative page that Jay (the tech guy) can manage – he can add, update, disable users, and set up your accounts smoothly. In fact, he should help you set up your emails on computers if you are using Outlook or any other email program.



## Share and Edit Documents Online

You are probably used to Microsoft Office – you write documents in Word, prepare presentations in PowerPoint, and even draw up monthly profit-and-loss projections in Excel. Once the document is completed, you attach it to your email and send it off to your team. They review it and send an attachment back to you. Somehow, you cannot open the attachment because someone has used a newer version of Microsoft Word. Or, you accidentally overwrite his changes with yours and you need to ask him to send his changes yet in another email. Often (if you are not using any one of the above email services), the attachment is so large that it never goes through.

These are common problems plaguing teams who are working on collaborative projects and often share documents with one another. Just like Wikis, wouldn't it be much better if you all could work off a single copy? Over the last few years, web-based online collaborative office suites have become really popular. Aimed at displacing the already ubiquitous and popular Microsoft's "installed" Office packages, these tools allow multiple people to create and update documents online through the browser.

"So, what you are saying is that I don't need to fire up the program I have on my desktop? Instead I log onto one of these services and write the proposal? You mentioned this when we spoke about Wikis."

Absolutely! Try it the next time you need to create a proposal for a client. Create the document online, start writing the proposal, and even invite people to collaborate with you. You can all work on the document (from your browser) in real-time and each of you will be able to see each other's changes. If real-time is something you don't want, you can update the document, share it with Jay and then let Jay update it later. Working off the same copy and from anywhere will help keep everyone in the loop.

I opened up Google Docs on my iPhone and showed it to Shaw. I showed him the unfinished manuscript of my new book.

Apps: Google Docs, Microsoft Office Live, EtherPad, InstaColl, Zoho Writer.

## Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Do you know how many leads you generate every month and which one of them is the most likely to convert to a customer? Do you know which of your sales guys or customers are the most valuable to the company? Are you able to be out of the office and still track all sales at any point in time? Do you know why your customers are dropping out or complaining about your service and is there a pattern that you can map out? Will your company be handicapped if your salesperson leaves since he is the only one who knows everything about your customers?

Shaw and his team did not have the answers to all these questions.

With a customer relationship management (CRM) tool, all of this is possible. Every conversation and communication with a prospect is tracked in the system. Information on how the prospect was in touch with your company, who is talking to them currently, what conversation has already taken place, and how likely it is that the prospect will convert into a customer are fed into this CRM system.

Shaw balked at the idea of a system when, according to him, he already had a system in place. “But Riya is already tracking most of these through a spreadsheet. What if we use an online spreadsheet that you mentioned in the previous point? Wouldn’t that work?”

It probably would initially, but when you scale up you would need to have a deeper understanding of what works and what doesn’t. A sophisticated CRM system will not only let you set up permissions for your sales staff but will also show you real-time graphs, charts, and analytics that a spreadsheet won’t. Over time, the spreadsheet will get bloated making it cumbersome for your team members to update.

Bringing transparency and accountability to the sales process has never been easier. And as you grow and hire more people to manage sales, having a scalable system like this will definitely pay off dividends. Crucial sales information will be at your fingertips whenever you require it, helping you make smarter marketing and business decisions.

Products: Salesforce, NetSuite, Zoho CRM, BatchBook.

## Project Collaboration

Our conversation extended post lunch, as we got deeper into the topic.

“Shaw, how many customers do you have and what work do you do for them?” I asked.

“Well, currently we have about 18 customers and are adding about 2–3 new customers every month. For every customer we have about 2–3 projects running simultaneously.” Shaw answered.

“So, that’s roughly around 40 active projects every month give or take a few, correct?”

“Yes, some projects are one-time assignments but most of the others are ongoing monthly retainer work that we do for our clients,” said Shaw.

“And out of these how many are going according to schedule?” I asked, waiting to see how Shaw would respond.

“Well, I am to receive a detailed work-report by the end of this week,” replied Shaw.

“And what if I tell you that I can save you the report preparation time and just like your CRM system, you can have all your project communication and information at your fingertips whenever you want to see it?”

“Oh, so a SaaS-based project management software where we can track our work and client communication and see how everything is going?”

Absolutely! A web-based system will show your projects, who is working on them, what tasks are incomplete, and what has been completed – a bird’s eye view of what is happening within your projects. Additionally, you can even let your clients access parts of the online service so they can keep track of how their projects are going. With a growing team and increasing amount of work, it’s important to give your teams an accurate view of how their projects are doing and help eliminate common problems that occur when multiple people are collaborating: multiple file versions and lost files, task accountability issues, lack of clarity, and work transparency. So let me ask you one more question: how do you delegate work within these projects right now?

“Well, we don’t have a system as sophisticated as you describe, but we use email to send tasks and updates to our team and to our clients. It’s working so we haven’t abandoned it yet.”

Sure, it’s working but again, email- and spreadsheet-based collaboration are old school. Just like I mentioned before, they lack scalability. Can you imagine how many emails are sent when three people are collaborating on a file? With a sophisticated online application, you get a platform to delegate, organize, manage, and track everything related to your projects. With reporting capabilities, your team would be spending less time preparing reports and more time actually working. Plus, when all work is delegated nicely, your team members feel confident of what they have to do. All project communication between your customers and team (that otherwise would be buried in your emails) are captured in these tools so at any given point you know what is going on within your projects. If a CRM tool helps manage your outward relationships and sales, a project/work collaboration tool helps manage your inward relationships, which is equally important to the successful completion of every client project that you have taken up. With more work and fewer resources, it’s all the more important to invest in a tool like this so that you have a predictable system to rely upon.

“Ok I get it. So, a CRM tool will manage all my sales tracking and a project tool will manage our work that takes place related to our internal as well as client projects. And if I have both of these installed at the office, we can see how we are growing, right?” Shaw asked.

Correct, except for one thing. There is nothing to install, Shaw. You will simply sign on with the browser and start using these tools immediately. Remember, these are all 100% web-based applications that you can use from anywhere. No installation, deployment, configuration, servers, and other geeky terms. You find a good CRM and a project collaboration tool, try it out, and then start using it. It’s that simple.

Products: DeskAway, Basecamp, Zoho Projects, Huddle, GoPlan.

## HelpDesk/Support/Customer Service

“Shaw, do you provide support to your clients when something goes wrong?” I wanted to know.

“Not exactly, I mean yeah, we do provide support but it’s mostly done through phone or email. And since we are a consulting outfit, we talk to our clients pretty much every day so things are resolved on an ongoing basis. But, what are you getting at? Another cool SaaS application that we should know about?” Shaw said.

Well, it’s got to do with providing customer service and support to clients through an online community and a ticketing system. You might not need a tool like this yet, but it would be helpful to be aware of it, regardless.

When you have had a problem with a service or product, have you ever emailed a company, say on their support@companyname.com and then got an automated immediate reply that a support agent from the company would get back to you within a specified time? Shaw nodded in agreement. Just like a package courier service that uses a unique tracking code for their parcels, this sort of a ticketing system gives each incoming support email a tracking number. The SaaS application stores all client and company communication about the issue in one place so if you (or the client) ever want to know how Jay solved a customer issue, you can easily tap in to the system at any time and from anywhere.

Companies that use a SaaS tool for customer support make the support process a whole lot more transparent and build accountability within the support process. Since all questions and answers will be logged, it becomes really easy for a team lead to log in and see the quality of the answers and how the customers are being serviced. In addition, you can even turn an answer into a forum topic so other people who have the same problem can benefit from the solution.

**CASE STUDY** *Good support, bad support*

Riya is in charge of client support. A client sends an email to support@yourcompanyname.com stating that the new site you built has some errors on the page. Riya received this email and forwards it to the web designer. The web designer, in turn, needs to know what browser the client is using. So he asks Riya to email the client asking him/her the exact name and version of their browser. The client replies with the version and Riya passes it to the web designer. After a few days, the problem is resolved and Riya writes back to the client. The problem with this model is the following:

- The solution is only known to Riya and the web designer, and is never documented. So, if a similar problem were to arise, the diagnostic process would have to begin from scratch instead of re-using previous knowledge.
- The email could have easily been overlooked. If Riya was out sick, the email would be unread for several days.
- The client has no way to track the problem, and its resolution.
- The company is losing out on a good knowledge base that it can create with problems and solutions like these.
- There are no metrics as to how long it took to close support tickets and how many are coming in every week.

Certain support or help desk tools are more community-driven than the others. They let your customers post a question to other community members. This way, not only does your company start a community support site, but also, over time you will notice that your best customers help other new customers who have similar problems. This is very popular among software companies where their evangelical customers spend some time answering questions because they feel so close to the product they are using.

“That is very cool. Maybe we should explore such a community-driven site first and have an open tool to manage customer conversations about our service. Maybe, later on we can see if we really require a ticketing system. That probably is more useful for a

product company. None of us have ever managed a tool like this so what kind of time commitment are we looking at?” Shaw asked.

Just like the other applications, it shouldn’t take your team more than a few hours to get used to the tool. In no time, your business will be managing all support and help-desk-related requests on autopilot. As you get more customers, the support requests will increase and with a scalable system you will feel that you can support the increasing number of customers with the same resources. The bottom line is your team will have a tight grip on the problems arising since they are documented in one system rather than getting lost in various inboxes. The problem with email (as I have mentioned earlier) is that people are using it for too much collaboration and business work, when in fact it should be used as a one-to-one communication channel.

Products: Zendesk, GetSatisfaction, Parature.

At this stage I felt that Shaw was truly getting a sense of how SaaS would give him better control over his business processes as well as improving collaboration and communication within his workplace.

There were just a couple of tools remaining to be discussed to wrap up the day’s discussion.

## Online Storage and Backup

Your data is your most important asset. As data grows in your company, you need to think about ways to protect and store your mission-critical information assets. In fact, a March 2007 report by IDC Research found that external disk storage capacity will increase by 50 percent annually on an average through 2011 and will require a corresponding data protection capacity.<sup>5</sup> While larger companies have more IT resources and deep pockets to protect and store their data, small businesses can take advantage of online backup services as they grow their business.

“Wow, we had never thought of backing up our computers in this way. The way we work is that Jay has set up several automated programs that takes important folders from our computer and stores them on a large external hard drive. In fact, we were wondering what we should do when that hard drive becomes full!”

“Or, what happens if you cannot get into your office building?” I intervened.

Absolutely, and this is the reason you can back up your machines with a SaaS solution. Backing up all your exponentially growing information (including emails, text files, images, videos, and any other information assets) is crucial as you risk losing it if one of your computers or servers crash one day. A collision repair shop in USA, when faced with server crashes, moved the backup of their four locations to a SaaS-based service. Today, they enjoy automated backups on all their hard disks and servers every night.<sup>6</sup>

Backup and recovery is important for any business and can be a time-consuming task. The data from your computers is automatically backed up on the SaaS provider’s server and you are free to run your business without worrying about data loss.

“That is even better. It will save Jay’s time doing mundane and time-consuming work every week. Though I am a little hesitant storing all our information assets with the backup provider.”

Your data is safer with them rather than sitting on a backup drive at your office. When files are backed up they are securely transmitted and stored on the provider’s secure servers.

Products: Mozy, Dropbox.

## GETTING STARTED *Backing up with Dropbox*

With tools like Dropbox ([www.dropbox.com](http://www.dropbox.com)), you can automatically (and securely, of course) back up, synchronize, and share files between all the computers you use. This is helpful when you want to back up your files to a location outside your office or if you work on multiple computers and want all your folders synchronized at all times.

You can even access your files from your mobile phone!

Dropbox started in 2007 and has more than 4 million users.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dropbox\\_%28storage\\_provider%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dropbox_%28storage_provider%29)



## Online Invoicing

The process of invoicing is a complete failure at most workplaces. The outstanding amount is calculated (or collected from the accountant) and an invoice is drawn up on a word processor, then converted to a PDF document, and emailed to the client with a cc to few other people. This process is repeated with each client every month. If you are a small company or a startup short on resources and tight on budget, this is a complete waste of time!

Shaw and his team shifted uneasily in their chairs. They knew what I was going to say next.

With SaaS, and like the other business processes already discussed, invoicing too can be automated. Sign up for one of the online invoice applications and let the application track all your invoices from a central location. Creating and sending invoices becomes a breeze. In addition, you can set up recurring invoices that go out automatically to all your clients every month. If that is not enough, your customers can also log in and keep a track of their invoices and even pay you online, making the process of creating, sending invoices and getting paid really seamless and simple.

Before leaving for the day, I asked the entire team to do a little calculation: I asked them to add up all the time that people in the company spent on creating and sending invoices and making reminder calls to their clients.

Whatever that amount was should be put towards getting more business!

Products: FreshBooks, Zoho Invoices, KashFlow.

## USING SaaS TO BUILD, MARKET AND MEASURE YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

If you are starting up or don't have a web presence yet, online tools make it easy for you to get your business up and running in no time. If you are cash-strapped, low on time, and need to get your business off the ground, then you don't have time to sit with a web designer or a developer, let alone go through the process of hiring one. Today, you can build your site, market it online, and then measure results using various online tools and techniques (Fig. 16).

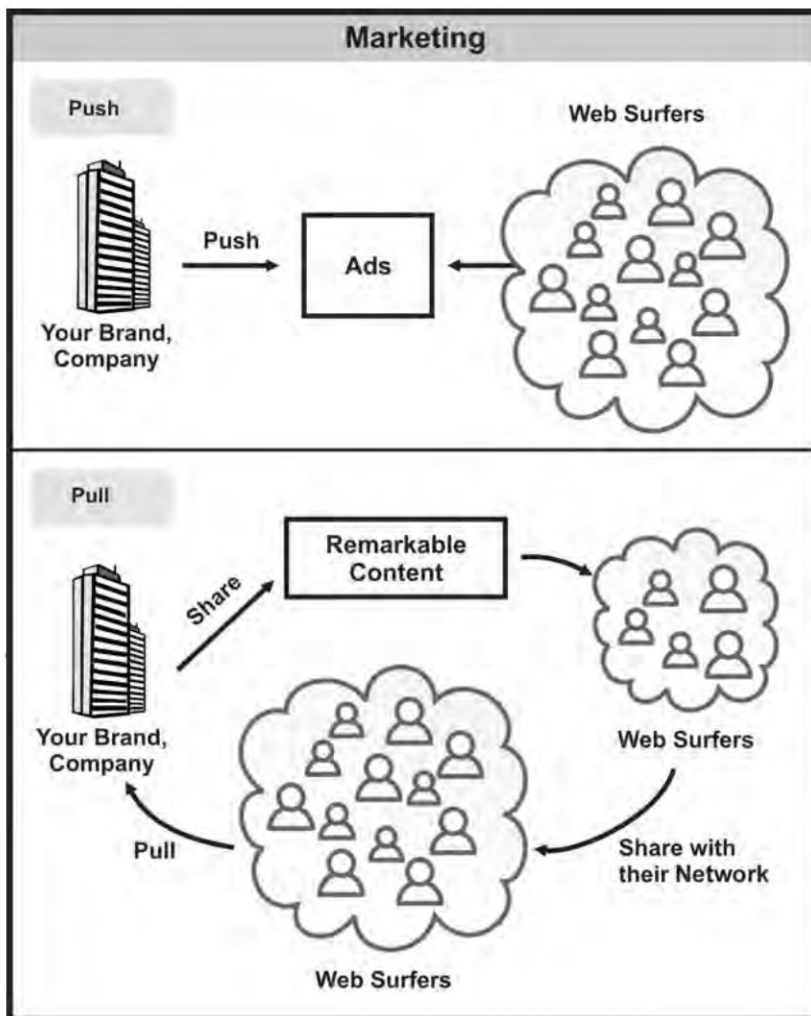


Fig. 16

## Set Up Your Online Presence

Use tools like SquareSpace, TypePad, Moveable Type, or WordPress. Sign up, choose your web address, and then start building your site from your browser. The website normally is hosted by the provider but there are options to host it on your own server (which will require more technical know-how). You can choose from a variety of templates to theme your website. Then, simply add your content, images, and create pages. That's it. You have a ready website.



### ***Web presence in 60 seconds or less with Posterous.com***

Posterous ([www.posterous.com](http://www.posterous.com)) is a free online tool with which you can create your web presence in a matter of seconds. It can be used to power any website on the web. It can be a blog, but it can also be a group, an email list, a photo stream, or your video channel. If you have anything you want to put online and share, you can use Posterous. It's dead simple, yet powerful. You don't even need an account to use Posterous. They want to let people focus on the content, instead of dealing with setting up websites.

I moved to Posterous in late 2009 on [www.sahilparikh.com](http://www.sahilparikh.com).

## **Build and Share Content**

In the online world, content is king. You can increase website traffic by building good quality, regularly updated and meaningful content that people like. This not only makes them share your content with others but also gets them interested in your purpose, company, or product. Your goal should be to increase the number of visitors to your website and keep them interested in the content you produce.

### ***Blogging***

Set up a blog on WordPress, TypePad, Blogger, Posterous, or Tumblr and start building content that is meaningful and unique to attract visitors. If people like your blog, they will subscribe to it and you might be on their daily/weekly reading list.

### ***SlideShare***

Upload your presentations, tag them, get feedback, and find people showcasing them on their personal or business blogs.

## *Flickr*

Put up your pictures, drawings, blueprints, designs, or artwork and get feedback from people. People interested in your work will subscribe to your Flickr feed and will be constant spectators of your work.

## *YouTube*

Be your own media channel. Put up tutorials, training videos, videos of your customer testimonials, or just fun stuff that goes around in the office. People will start embedding your videos on their sites and blogs, which will eventually send traffic to your site.

## *Press release distribution*

Be your own PR agency. Whenever you have something groundbreaking to say (let's say you have a product release or a new service breakthrough) you can sign up for PR.com, PRLog.org, Free-Press-Release.com, or PRBuzz.com and send out a press release. Your press release will get picked up by the leading news sites online and increase traffic to your site.

## *Email marketing*

Email marketing is an excellent way to build relationships with your prospects and customers at their convenience. First, you should start building an opt-in database of subscribers. These are people you might have met at a trade show, conference, exhibition, or anyone who has given you permission to contact them about your business. Using an email marketing SaaS application (popular ones are ConstantContact, iContact, CampaignMonitor, or MailChimp), you should send out a simple and good-looking monthly newsletter to all your subscribers. These tools also allow you to track how many people open and read your newsletters.

## *Surveys*

SurveyMonkey.com is a great tool for sending out polls, surveys, and questions to your customers or prospects and get feedback from them so you can improve your service or your product. By engaging

users, you start building a relationship with them so they keep coming back to your website.

### **CASE STUDY** *Marketing made easy with HubSpot*

HubSpot ([www.hubspot.com](http://www.hubspot.com)) is a SaaS application that helps businesses get more leads and customers using inbound marketing, a style of marketing that focuses on getting found by customers. HubSpot now has about 2,000 customers to help their business “get found” online.

One example is Vovici, an enterprise software company that was able to increase the number of qualified visitors to their website by 400% using HubSpot’s software. They achieved this by using HubSpot to identify where their best prospects were online and then optimizing their online presence so as to be more easily “found” by these potential customers.

Vovici did not need to download or install anything. They simply signed up with HubSpot online and put the tool to use.

## **Listen**

Tuning into what people are saying is even more important than participating. Here are online tools that will help you gauge what sentiments people have about your product or service.

### ***RSS feeds***

Using Google Reader or any other RSS reader, go through blogs within your industry to keep up-to-date with the trends taking place.

### ***Google alerts***

Set up keywords you would like to track (your product, business, competitors, etc.) and set up Google Alerts. Every time an article or a blog mentions that keyword you will receive an email notification.

### *Twitter search feeds*

Search Twitter with certain keywords and then store the RSS Feed in your reader. This way, you can keep a track of any conversation happening on Twitter that mentions that particular word – very powerful in tracking real-time conversations and sentiments about your product, service, brand, or industry.

### *Google trends*

With Google Trends, you can search for topics and see how often they have been searched on Google over time.

## **Measure Everything**

Set up an analytics program – all marketing efforts need to be measured so you understand what is working and what is not. By setting up Google Analytics on your site, you can see the demographics of the people who visit your site: how much time they spend, whether they have clicked in from search engines or directly, and what keywords have they typed to get to your site. Moreover, you can find out how many people are coming from Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other new social media channels.

Can offline channels give you such accurate results without having to spend thousands of dollars?

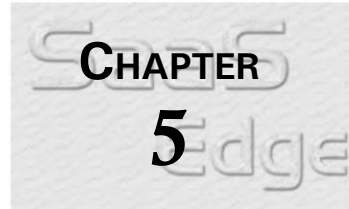
Online marketing takes time and is a patience game. It's more about building your brand online, stating your purpose (and what you stand for) rather than just selling your services. Conversations have replaced direct selling. There are so many websites and services like yours that are out there that you need to constantly think about how you can differentiate your message from the others. Why would people talk about you and come to your site?

As the online medium evolves, there will be newer and newer forms of media that companies can take advantage of to market their services. Who would have imagined just a year back that there would be businesses using Twitter and Facebook?

“True, or who would have thought that someone like me would be thinking about using SaaS applications to compete with the bigger boys and transform my business?” Shaw interjected.

## References

- 1 Praful Shah, “Is the traditional office becoming extinct?”, Entrepreneur.Venturebeat.com, December 2, 2009, [http://entrepreneur.venturebeat.com/2009/12/02/is-the-traditional-office-becoming-extinct/?utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_medium=twitter-publisher-main&utm\\_campaign=twitter](http://entrepreneur.venturebeat.com/2009/12/02/is-the-traditional-office-becoming-extinct/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=twitter-publisher-main&utm_campaign=twitter)
- 2 “How About Free? The Price Point That Is Turning Industries on Their Heads”, Knowledge.Wharton.upenn.edu, March 04, 2009, <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article.cfm?articleid=2169>
- 3 Chris Anderson, “Free! Why \$0.00 Is the Future of Business”, Wired.com, February 25, 2008, [http://www.wired.com/techbiz/it/magazine/16-03/ff\\_free](http://www.wired.com/techbiz/it/magazine/16-03/ff_free)
- 4 You will access your mail using IMAP. See the provider’s website on how to set up your mail program to use IMAP.
- 5 John Magee, “SaaS Spells Relief for Small Business”, smallbiztechnology.com, <http://smallbiztechnology.com/archive/2008/07/saas-spells-relief-for-small-b.html>
- 6 Esther Shein, “Saved by SaaS: Data backup via software as a service”, Computerworld.com, June 30, 2008, [http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9104618/Saved\\_by\\_SaaS\\_Data\\_backup\\_via\\_software\\_as\\_a\\_service?taxonomyId=83&pageNumber=1](http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9104618/Saved_by_SaaS_Data_backup_via_software_as_a_service?taxonomyId=83&pageNumber=1)

A graphic for Chapter 5. The word "CHAPTER" is in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below it, the number "5" is in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font. To the right of the "5", the word "Edge" is in a large, light gray, sans-serif font. The background is a light gray with a subtle, repeating pattern of the word "Edge".

## CHAPTER 5 Edge

### WHAT NEXT?

*“The best way to predict the future is to invent it.”*

– Alan Kay, Computer Scientist

**I**t had been a little over three months since I had heard from Shaw and his company. I thought of checking up on him and seeing how things were working out.

Instead of the usual coffee shop rendezvous, this time we decided to Skype.

Shaw sported a big smile while he adjusted his web camera. Over the last few months, his team and business had grown. His wife opted to help out with research for client projects by collaborating from home. He had also hired a couple of designers who virtually assisted the entire design process. All in all, online services had made his business a well-oiled machine.

In addition, online buzz was slowly starting to pick up. Users, customers and fans were noticing them and understanding their brand. It was a slow process but they could see results. In fact, three of their latest customers were traced back to a Twitter conversation. Shaw had already shortlisted a few potential companies to partner with by following their CEOs on Twitter and checking out their Facebook Fan Page. With technological advancements, the world



was becoming a smaller and a more level playing field.

They had uploaded photos from their second annual trip to Flickr last week and then announced it on their blog. Seeing how much fun they had, they received a few positive comments and even a resume from a prospective employee. That led to pretty perked up team spirits.

I could see that Shaw was having fun. He felt in control. While the CRM application updated him on the latest sales numbers, the project collaboration tool updated him on who was slacking off in his team and what work still needed to be done for a client. Information was available to him at any time of the day. He could run his business off his new iPhone if he had to. He was really geared up.

His company was coming across as a winning company – an open, young, energetic company that was keeping costs low and competing on a global scale. I am sure their competitors envied them.

“This is like magic! We have transformed ourselves from being old school to cutting-edge. Everyone here just loves to use online applications as it saves us so much time and money. Everything seems so much more transparent, within our reach and under our control. I think every company should harness the power of online tools for their business and take part in social media to further engage with their audience. There are millions of people out there who could discover what you stand for. Why wouldn’t any business jump at this opportunity?” Shaw wondered animatedly.

As we exchanged a few more ideas, he wanted to know if – now that they had harnessed the present – I would be willing to shed some light on the future. “So, as we move along, what’s going to happen next? Where is everything going to go?”

It was simple. We started with dial-up connections to access the Web. Then moved to broadband for Internet messaging, voice calls over the Internet, social networking, and collaboration. Next up, we are going to witness the Web become absolutely ubiquitous – fabricated seamlessly into our work and social life. A part of everything we do.

## WEB-BASED: APPS FOR YOUR DAILY LIFE

Everything eventually will transform to becoming web-based.

Applications will become easier to use, have simple yet customizable interfaces, having in-built social features that behave like your social network. With the cost of starting an Internet business going down, there will be thousands of tools flooding the market. These tools will “talk” to each other. Single sign-on services like OpenID and OneLogin will be demanded so that you won’t have to remember ten usernames and passwords for the ten applications that you access!

## THE MOBILE WEB

Your mobile phone will be the new computer. Mobile phones will run your popular applications and provide you with even more mobility to run your office from anywhere.

Every application that you currently use on your browser will be present on these phones and platforms.

## OPERATING SYSTEMS (OS)

*“However, the operating systems that browsers run on were designed in an era where there was no Web. So today, we’re announcing a new project that’s a natural extension of Google Chrome – the Google Chrome Operating System. It’s our attempt to re-think what operating systems should be.”*

– From the Google blog<sup>1</sup>

Since web applications will become prolific, you won’t need to keep anything installed on your computer. Your computer will have a basic operating system that will connect to the Web and serve you your applications. Updating your operating system will be automatic and in the case of a failure, the operating system will fix itself.

## RECOMMENDATION ENGINES

As more and more people go online, companies are going to have a field day trying to get your attention as a consumer. You will have more choices but it will be equally confusing to choose from so many products and services. Hence, you will rely on the recommendations from your friends and networks. Instead of using search engines for finding information about your next vacation, you will tap into the power of your social network.

## SMARTER SEARCH ENGINES

With the threat from social networks, search engines will return relevant, better, and fewer results.

## GOING GREEN

As the Internet grows, the number of data centers (that house the servers that will power your business) will increase. This will force us to look for alternate and renewable energy sources to power these power-hungry centers.

Carbon footprint: *A measure of the amount of carbon dioxide produced by a person, organization or state in a given time (Wikipedia).*

As responsible humans, we need to look for ways to reduce our carbon footprint.

With SaaS, since you rent out software, it is almost like car pooling. Since the SaaS vendor is providing a service to thousands of customers they make sure they invest in the latest and most energy-efficient servers and infrastructure.

## LOCATION-BASED SERVICES

Applications will be designed with location-based services. You will be in touch with things happening around you. Get discount coupons

as you drive through your neighborhood or get to know who is attending the conference in Hawaii even before you have attended the first lecture. It is a creepy thought but your devices will know where you are and what you are doing.

## VIDEOS

Online videos are going to be omnipresent. Mobile phones with a video camera is the norm. People carrying devices with video cameras will be inclined to take videos and then share it with the rest of the world. Think: software demos, customer testimonials, and case studies all done by video! The Web will be a lot more interactive and engaging.

## REAL-TIME WEB AND INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Everyone is going to participate in at least one network, if not more. Not just the early adopters. *Everyone*. Every business is going to compete to get your attention. With over 65 million tweets a day on Twitter, and everybody wanting to constantly share information, we are going to suffer from information overload. Tools that solve this overload, those which aggregate, simplify, and deliver the information to our followers and us will be in demand.

## SIXTH SENSE

And if you haven't heard of it already, then take a look at Sixth Sense,<sup>2</sup> a wearable gestural interface that augments the physical world around us with digital information and lets us use natural hand gestures to interact with that information. You can stop by any surface and read this book, flip through your photos, or check your mail.

## BEING REMARKABLE

Even though the Web levels the playing field, it ups the ante for every business that is playing on its turf. You would need to be remarkable to get noticed. People will demand a compelling reason to tweet, blog, or just talk about you. Innovative businesses will make news. Mediocre businesses will barely survive.

---

### References

---

1. Sundar Pichai, "Introducing the Google Chrome OS", [googleblog.blogspot.com](http://googleblog.blogspot.com), July 7, 2009, <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2009/07/introducing-google-chrome-os.html>
2. Pranav Mistry, "Sixthsense: integrating information with the real world", [pranavmistry.com](http://www.pranavmistry.com), <http://www.pranavmistry.com/projects/sixthsense/>
3. Numbers compiled by <http://jess3.com/> and video hosted on <http://vimeo.com/9641036>



## EPILOGUE

Two facts represent the new scenario.

#1 People are spending more time online than ever before.

There are 1.73 billion Internet users worldwide (September 2009), 234 million number of websites (Dec 2009), 126 million number of blogs (as tracked by BlogPulse), 500 million people on Facebook and 1 billion number of videos YouTube serves in a single day!<sup>1</sup> These numbers would have increased at the time of publishing this book.

#2 The next year is going to see even more tools, online services, and mobile applications.

Statistics and numbers will change dramatically. In November 2009, the number of daily tweets from people all over the world reached 24 million. On February 2010 this climbed to a staggering 50 million tweets per day. At the time of publishing, I am assuming it will cross a 100 million. Similarly, some of the applications that I checked out today did not even exist last year. Some that I am using might morph into newer services, be bought over, or become obsolete when this book comes out.

The thing that is constant online is rapid change. And this pace of innovation will be accelerated in the coming years.

What's required of you is a desire to change and a willingness to implement a new work culture. A commitment to building an open, democratic, smart and a forward-thinking organization where online tools are embraced; bloated, soon-to-be-extinct installable software is phased out; a culture of knowledge-sharing, learning, and participation is revived and online marketing and social media participation is encouraged throughout the organization.

The people who are willing to change the way they think will win.

The question is: are you willing to play?

---

## References

---

1. Numbers compiled by <http://jess3.com/> and video hosted on <http://vimeo.com/9641036>



## INDEX

2020Social blogs 18

### A

Abhishek Rungta 103  
AbsoluteWorld Channel 49  
Accounting 72  
    software 96  
Acrobat Reader Software 114  
Aditi Sheth-Kejriwal 102  
Adobe 114  
    systems 89  
Alan Kay 133  
Alok Mittal 6, 70, 115  
Alternate and Renewable Energy  
    Sources 136  
Amazon 10  
    product Wiki 26  
Amazon.com 26  
Amit Ranjan 6, 50  
Ammado 56  
Amy Wohl 90  
Analytics Program 131

Anand Mahindra 42  
Andrea Krause 56  
Andrew MacAfee 68, 69  
Android 43  
Annual Plan 113  
Antivirus Protection 99  
Apple Safari 69, 105  
Application Programming Interface  
    (API) 95, 96  
Archie Black 81  
ASP (Application Service  
    Providers) 89  
Autoblog 19  
Automated Backups 125  
Automatic Data Processing Inc.'s 93  
Automation 72  
Awakening Technologies 22

### B

Back up 98, 110, 124, 125  
    of your Data 99, 112  
Bandwidth 89, 93



Barack Obama 27  
 Barcamp 27  
 Basecamp 121  
 BatchBook 119  
 Ben Grossman 39  
 Benjamin Yoskovitz 14  
 Bernard Lunn 69  
 Bessemer Venture Partners 71  
 Bhavin Turakhia 54  
 BiGMarK 39  
 Bill Gates 60  
 Biometric Scanning 99  
 BlackBerry 1, 15, 66, 92  
 Blogs 10, 12, 17, 21, 54, 55, 73, 106,  
     130, 134, 139  
     post 20  
     search 109  
 Blogger 88, 128  
 Blogger.com 13  
 Blogging 12, 20, 88, 128  
 BlogPulse 139  
 Bloomberg 37  
 BMI 48  
 Bob Rudy 91  
 Brand 18  
     awareness 60  
     on flickr 48  
 Brent Hoag 91  
 Broadband  
     internet 67  
     internet connection 105  
     usage 67  
 Building  
     authority 18  
     brands 22  
     your brand 131  
 Business  
     blogs 18

    networking 38  
     owners 1  
     professionals 31  
     software 68  
 Byron Deeter 71

## C

Campaign Monitor 129  
 Canaan Partners 70, 115  
 Carbon Footprint 136  
 CEO 2, 42  
 Chris Anderson 114  
 Chris Brogan, President 8  
 City of Melbourne 27  
 Cleartrip 18, 19  
 Client  
     project management portal 74  
     support 123  
 Cloud 69  
 Co-founder 59  
 Collaboration 6, 23, 72, 106, 124  
     applications 66, 101  
 Collaborative 118  
     tools 107  
 Commercial Cleaning Products  
     Industrial Goods 91  
 Communities 6, 30, 60  
 Community-driven 123  
 ComScore 48  
 Configuration issues 92  
 ConstantContact 129  
 Content 128  
 Core Industries 51  
 Customer Relationship Management  
     (CRM) 2, 88, 102, 119, 121  
     application 94, 134  
     service and support 87, 122  
     solution 82

Customization 95  
 Customized Applications 95

## D

DailyFinance 19  
 Daimler AG 50  
 Data 113, 124, 125  
     backup 98, 113  
     center 89, 99, 110, 136  
     encrypted 101  
     privacy 98  
     storage 89  
 David Skok 116  
 Decision Makers 1  
 Delegate 121  
 Delhi Freight Corporation 94  
 Delicious Search 52  
 Delicious.com 51, 52  
 Dell 4, 40  
     mini 10 40  
     mini 9 laptops 40  
     outlet 43  
 Delta Airlines 48  
 Design by Reeses 44  
 DeskAway 40, 43, 107, 121  
 Dhanil Shah 92  
 Dharavi Redevelopment Project 27  
 Dharmesh Shah 107  
 Dial-up Connections 134  
 Digital Telegram 31  
 Directi 54  
 Disaster Recovery 98  
 Document Collaboration 102  
 Dominos 43  
 Doolally 48  
 Dot-com Bubble 6

Dove Evolution Video 49  
 Downtimes 111  
 Dropbox 125

## E

Edelman Digital 51  
 Electric Grid 65  
 Email Marketing 1, 129  
 Employee First, Customer Second  
     (EFCS) Campaign 50  
 Encryption 93  
     passwords 112  
 Energy-efficient Servers 136  
 Enterprise 2.0 69  
     applications 68  
     data 97  
     resource planning 94  
     software companies 66  
 Entrepreneurs 1  
 ERP 88  
 EtherPad 118  
 Excel 118  
 Expense Management 72  
 Export your Data 110

## F

Facebook 3, 7, 10, 30, 31, 40, 44,  
     46, 54, 55, 56, 65, 69, 83, 97,  
     131, 139  
     Fan Page 37, 58, 133  
 FAQs 97  
 Fidelity Investments 47  
 Financial Software 92  
 Firewall 98, 112  
 Fleet Management Solution 94  
 Flextronics 87

Flickr 7, 47, 54, 129, 134  
Forums 97  
Foundation for Youth Social  
Entrepreneurship (FYSE) 55  
Founder 82  
FoxyMoron 59  
Free Trial 75  
    plan 113  
    version 78  
Freemium 76  
    model 114  
FreshBooks 40, 77, 96, 126  
FrontPoint Security 49

## G

Genentech 49  
GetSatisfaction 124  
GetSatisfaction.com 68  
Gmail 17, 66, 69, 74, 79, 87, 95,  
114, 117  
    project 97  
Goldman Sachs 79  
Google 66, 87, 91, 97, 114, 131  
    alerts 130  
    analytics 131  
    Apps 66, 68, 69, 87, 91, 92,  
95, 117  
    Apps Premier Edition 90  
    blog 135  
    blog search 13  
    calendar 92  
    chrome 69, 105, 135  
    docs 28, 107, 118  
    labs 95, 96  
    reader 88, 130  
    search 36  
    search 52  
    sites 28

GoPlan 121

## H

Hardware 92  
    upgrades 93  
Harley-Davidson 49  
Harry Potter 26  
Harshil Karia 59  
Harvard Business 47  
    IdeaCast 47  
HCL Technologies 50  
Headstart School 94  
Help Desk Management 74  
Help-desk-related Requests 124  
Hosted Software 98  
Hosting Provider 99  
Hotmail 69, 87, 117  
HP Printing 26  
HubSpot 107, 130  
Huddle 121  
Huffington Post 91

## I

IBM 27  
IBM's Lotus Notes Emails and  
Workgroup Management 92  
iContact 129  
    corporation 72  
Inbound Marketing 130  
Indian Angel Network 70  
Indus Khaitan 106  
Indus Net Technologies 102  
Information Overload 137  
Infosys 18  
Infrastructure 98  
Innovative Beverage Group Holdings  
Inc. 41

InstaColl 118  
 Install 121  
 Instant Messaging 66  
 Intacct 111  
 Internet  
     connection 106  
     messaging 134  
 Intrusion detection 98  
     systems 99  
 iPad 65  
 iPhone 31, 47, 65, 66, 77, 118, 134  
 iPod 37  
 IT Department 75  
 Izzuu 56

## J

Jeff Kaplan 82  
 JetBlue 40  
 Jimmy Wales 23  
 Johnson & Johnson 49  
 Jonathan Schwartz 14

## K

Karthik Ananth 67  
 KashFlow 126  
 Katherine Gershon 48  
 Keycards 99, 131  
 Knowledge Worker 67

## L

Larry Sanger 23  
 Learning Curve 96  
 Lenovo 40  
 Licensing Agreements 68  
 LifeMojo 57

LinkedIn 4, 7, 10, 30, 31, 38, 42, 44,  
     46, 55, 97, 107, 131  
 LinkedIn Answers 39, 109  
 LinkedIn Profile 39  
 Linux 79  
 Live Chat 112  
 Location-based 136  
 Long-term Contracts 68

## M

Mac 79  
 Management (CRM) 73  
 Mane USA Inc. 93  
 Mashable 14  
 Matrix Partners 116  
 Matthew Philogene 74  
 Media Channel 129  
 Media-sharing 50  
 MediaWiki 28  
 Medpedia 27  
 Michael Arrington 13  
 Microsoft 60, 82, 89, 90  
     excel 74  
     internet explorer 69, 105  
     office 118  
     outlook 117  
     PowerPoint 50  
 Mobile  
     enabled 108  
     phones 137  
     telephony 106  
 Mom Central 37  
 Monitor trends 41  
 Monthly  
     fee 72, 74  
     subscription 81, 115  
     subscription fee 113

Morgan Stanley 94  
 Moveable Type 127  
 Mozilla Firefox 69, 105  
 Mozy 125  
 Multitenant Model 80  
 My DeveloperWorks 27  
 Myths and Mindsets 86

## N

Namit Nangia 57  
 Nandini Hirrianiiah 106  
 Netcore Solutions 14  
 Netflix 51  
 NetSuite 119  
 NetSuite Inc. 88  
 Network 99  
     management 92  
 New Marketing Labs 8  
 New York Times 31  
 NGO Post 57  
 Nicholas Carr 65

## O

On-demand 83  
 OneLogin 135  
 Online  
     business 68  
     collaboration tool 23  
     collaborative office suites 118  
     conversations 60  
     marketing 131  
     software 107  
     spreadsheet 119  
     storage 124  
     tool 22, 78, 134  
     travel site 19

videos 137  
 OpenID 135  
 Openness 6  
 Operating Systems 135  
 OpSource Inc. 70  
 Opt-in Database of Subscribers 129  
 Oracle 89  
 Order Management 88  
 Outsourced 91

## P

Papa John's 43  
 Paperless Office 30  
 Parag Parikh Financial Advisory  
     Services (PPFAS) 1  
 Paragon Fellowship 56  
 Parature 124  
 Participation 6  
 Password Policies 98  
 Paul Berry 91  
 Paul Gillin 53  
 Pay-as-you-go 74  
     model 83  
     pricing model 89  
 Payroll 72  
     Benefits Software 93  
 PbWorks 28, 29  
 Peregrine 94  
 Permission and User Access System 101  
 Permissions 119  
 Photo-sharing 47  
 Picassa 114  
 Pixar 26  
 Pizzaturnaround 43  
 Platform Independence 79, 83  
 Pluggd.in 15  
 Podcasts 47

Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen 116  
 Posterous 88, 128  
 Posterous.com 15  
 Power 75  
 PowerPoint 118  
 PR.com 129  
 PRBuzz.com 129  
 Presentations 128  
 Press Release Distribution 129  
 Press-Release.com 129  
 Privacy issues 98  
 PRLog.org 129  
 Product  
     blog 15  
     roadmaps 77  
 Profile 37, 44  
     page 42  
 Project  
     collaboration 120, 134  
     management 106  
 Prudentcloud 33  
 Publishing 13, 31  
 PVR Pictures 58, 59

## R

Rackspace.com 99  
 Rajeev Thakkar 92  
 Rajesh Jain 14  
 Raramuridesign 74, 102  
 ReadWriteWeb 69  
 Real Syndication System 16  
 Real-time  
     collaboration 107, 109  
     web 137  
 Recommendation 52  
     engine 51  
 Recruiting 38

Rededit.com 51  
 Reid Hoffman 38  
 Release Upgrades 77  
 Renting 72  
     software 72  
 Reporting 121  
 RescueTime.com 45  
 RingCentral 106  
 Robert Kerrigan 30  
 Robert Scoble 33  
 RSS 16  
     feeds 88, 130, 131  
     reader 16, 17, 130  
 Ryan Allis 72

## S

SaaS 2, 69, 71, 74, 75, 87  
     adoption 81  
     application 96, 107, 130  
     based tools 73  
     provider 72, 78, 85  
     security 98  
     showplace.com 88  
     vendor 77, 78, 82, 99, 111  
 Sachin Agarwal 15  
 Sales Tracking 121  
 Salesforce 69, 111, 119  
 Salesforce.com 68, 73, 87  
 Sanjay Mehta 41  
 SAP 89  
 Scalability 121  
 Scribd 56  
 Search Engines 131, 136  
 Security 93, 98  
     issues 97  
 Self-publishing 12, 13  
 Self-service

- online 70
    - tools 97
  - Semiconductors Technology 91
  - Sequoia Capital RIP 50
  - Serena Software 90
  - Servers 89, 92, 93, 112
  - Service 110
  - Seth Godin 22
  - Seth Godin's Blog 19
  - Share Documents 118
  - Sharing 6
  - Shelf Software 95
  - Shelf-ware 94
  - Sixth Sense 137
  - Skype 133
  - SlideShare 6, 50, 54, 128
  - Smashing Magazine 15
  - Social
    - bookmarking 51
    - conversations 36
    - issues 57
    - media 8, 11, 53, 59, 134
      - channels 131
      - tools 8
    - network 2, 30, 37, 43, 44, 50, 51, 103, 135, 136
    - networking 3, 7, 48, 66, 70, 134
    - software 68
    - tools 73
    - wavelength 41
  - Software as a Service (SaaS) 1, 69
  - Software Upgrades 92
  - Sony 18
  - Sony Vaio 44
  - South Yorkshire Housing Association (SYHA) 82
  - Spreadsheet 28, 94, 119
  - Springboard 81
    - research 97, 98
  - SPS Commerce 81
  - Spyre Studios 44
  - SquareSpace 127
  - Squidoo 56
  - SSL certificate Setup 99
  - SSL-enabled 101
  - Stacy DeBroff 37
  - Standout Jobs 14
  - Starbucks 40
  - Starr Tincup 73
  - Startups 14 78
  - Static Website 5
  - Status Updates 1, 109
  - Steve Apfelberg 55
  - Steve Jobs 26
  - Steve Rubel 51
  - Students 1
    - information system 94
  - Stumbleupon.com 51
  - Subraya Mallya 33, 78
  - Subscription 72
  - Subscription-based 83, 89
  - Sun Microsystems 14
  - Sunir Shah 77
  - Support 124
    - community 112
  - Support or Help Desk Tools 123
  - SurveyMonkey.com 129
  - Surveys 129
- ## T
- Tag photos 47
  - Tags 52
  - TechCrunch 13, 14
  - Technical Teams 1
  - Technorati 13
  - Technorati.com 12

The Big Switch 65  
 The Kiruba Incident 18  
 The Morpheus 106  
 THINKstrategies 82  
 Thor Muller 68  
 Threadless 9  
 Ticketing System 122  
 Tim O'Reilly 69  
 Traditional 82  
     software 75  
 Training and Support 111  
 Treb Ryan 70  
 Trending 36  
 Trendsmap.com 41  
 TripAdvisor.com 65  
 Trudy and Peter Johnson-Lenz 22  
 Tulip Telecom 82  
 Tumblr 128  
 Tweet 32, 137  
 Twihard Party 59  
 Twiki 28  
 Twilight Saga 59  
 TwitPic 88  
 Twitter 1, 3, 7, 10, 18, 30, 31, 35,  
     43, 44, 54, 55, 56, 66, 68, 69,  
     73, 88, 111, 114, 131, 133, 137  
     search 36, 109  
     search feeds 131  
     stream 43  
 TypePad 13, 127, 128

## U

Updates and Backups 94  
 Uptime 113  
 User  
     experience 77  
     participation 9  
 User-generated Content 6

## V

Venture  
     capitalists 19  
     woods 19  
 Video  
     cameras 137  
     sharing 7  
     tutorials 97  
 Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited  
     (VSNL) 67  
 Vimeo 54  
 Voice Calls Over the Internet 134  
 Vovici 130

## W

Waterproofing Company (SWC) 90  
 Web 1.0 5  
 Web 2.0 2, 6, 8, 9, 17, 57, 65, 66  
 Web  
     applications 86, 91  
     based 67, 102  
     browser 106  
     tools 58  
 Webworkerdaily.com 46  
 WetPaint 26, 28  
 Wharton 114  
 Whole Foods Market 19  
 Wiggly Wiggles 47  
 Wiki 23, 27  
     software 25  
 WikiAnswers 26  
 WikiBooks 26  
 Wikipedia 7, 22, 65, 88, 136  
 Wikispaces 28, 29  
 Windows 79  
     live 117  
 Windows® and Wintel 69



Wintel 69  
Wired 114  
Word 118  
Word of Mouth 60  
WordPress 127, 128  
Wordpress.com 13  
Work-tracking Application 102  
Workday 87

## Y

Yahoo 7, 87  
    mail 114, 117  
Yammer 54, 66

YouTube 7, 43, 48, 49, 54, 68, 88,  
114, 129, 139

## Z

Z. John Zhang 114  
Zappos.com 41  
zBalaka Baruah Aggarwal 97  
ZenDesk 40, 74, 124  
Zinnov 67  
Zoho  
    CRM 119  
    invoices 126  
    projects 121  
    writer 118