

## Web 2.0: Potential Applications For The University

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IDC 6010-900  
Summer 2009  
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## Executive Summary

Southern Polytechnic State University is a modern forward-looking institution. With students on campus and distant learning, the University has been using web technology to teach classes, recruit students and maintain its reputation as a leading educational institution in the State of Georgia. However, SPSU does not have a comprehensive strategy to implement the latest internet tools known as Web 2.0.

Web 2.0 can be defined as a group of tools on the internet consisting of blogs, wikis, social networks, microblogs and other media software. These tools are characterized by their interactivity and their flexibility. Many Corporations and learning institutions are increasingly using this technology for both internal and external communication. Universities and colleges have found that Web 2.0 tools have helped them to improve the quality of their educational experiences and improve the flow of information to and from the student body.

In this report, I have examined several of the formats associated with Web 2.0 and looked at how they have been used in other schools and universities. Each format has advantages and limitations in an educational setting. The use of technologies such as blogs, wikis, social networking sites and microblogs have the following advantages:

- ◆ They improve collaboration among students, researchers and faculty.
- ◆ They improve the speed and reach of the institution's communication.
- ◆ They can provide class content to students.
- ◆ They can assist in recruitment of new students.

Web 2.0 also has some drawbacks. Because of the decentralized, open nature of some of the platforms, privacy and control of information is a concern when using Web 2.0 technologies. There is also the issue of matching the media to the content. Not all of the Web 2.0 technologies are good matches for all the Universities needs. However, many of these concerns can be overcome with planning and guidance.

After analyzing the forms of media, their affordances and limitations, I recommend the following steps for SPSU to implement a Web 2.0 strategy:

- ◆ Define clear objectives
- ◆ Consider IT concerns
- ◆ Appoint project leaders and supervisors
- ◆ Identify risks
- ◆ Establish a clear policy for the use of Web 2.0

By following these recommendations, SPSU can target Web 2.0 technologies where they will be most effective and will be able to minimize the risks that are associated with Web 2.0.

**A** journalist uses twitter to alert his followers on twitter about his arrest in Egypt and is released from jail (Comm, 2009, p.26). The Georgia State University Science Library sets up a blog to update students about upcoming events and new acquisitions to their collection (Vogel & Goans, 2005). Deloitte sets up social networking sites to tap into their alumni connections and they attract 100,000 users (Cone, 2007, p. 28). And, MWW Group, a public relations firm sets up wikis to reduce email and coordinate projects among their employees (Dahl, 2006, p.42). These are just a few ways organizations are implementing Web 2.0 Technologies.

The term “Web 2.0” first came into common usage in 2004 to describe a set of tools on the internet consisting of blogs, wikis, social networks, microblogs and other media software (Dawson, 2009, p.15). These tools have gained in popularity and usage over the past years and an increasing number of companies and large organizations are realizing the value of using them in both internal and external communications.

The variety and flexibility of these Web 2.0 technologies provide an opportunity for educational institutions, such as Southern Polytechnic State University, to extend their educational reach, improve the flow of information to and from the student body, create a more closely knit community of students and teachers and improve methods of collaboration and teaching at the university. This paper will look at several Web 2.0 technologies, their affordances and limitations, how each could possibly be used and will finally recommend an approach to implementing a Web 2.0 communication strategy at SPSU.

## The Rise of 2.0

Web 2.0 can be described as tools on the World Wide Web that allows communication, information sharing, and collaboration. These tools have been used to develop a more connected and interactive approach to communication

by individuals on the internet. Some of the Web 2.0 tools are:

- ◆ Blogs
- ◆ Wikis, such as Wikipedia
- ◆ Social networks, for example Facebook or Myspace
- ◆ Podcasts
- ◆ Video sharing on sites like YouTube
- ◆ RSS feeds
- ◆ Tagging
- ◆ Social bookmarking sites, such as Del.icio.us
- ◆ Mash-ups
- ◆ Virtual worlds like Second Life
- ◆ And Microblogging using tools such as Twitter

Businesses and other organizations have started to realize the benefits of some of these platforms and have begun to integrate them into their communication strategies. These companies see a use for these platforms for better knowledge management, better collaboration and for enhancing their corporate culture (Lynch, 2008, p. 17). A recent survey of 1988 executives reveals that adoption of social networking tools, blogs, wikis and mashups has risen since 2007. Companies have been adding an average of three Web 2.0 tools to their technology portfolios since the survey was first conducted in 2007.

Universities have also started to see the benefit of using Web 2.0 tools in their communication strategies. However, due to fears of litigation, ownership issues concerning materials, bureaucratic resistance to change and other factors, Universities are slow to accept these platforms on a institution-wide basis. Where Web 2.0 is being used in Universities, it tends to be individually rather than institutionally (Friere, 2008).

Web 2.0, however, shows promise for Universities and some of the technologies should be added to their communication strategies. I will look at several of these tools, their affordances and limitations.

## Blogs

Weblog or Blogs are web pages that are run by an author or multiple authors containing announcements, opinions or discussions, usually with hyperlinks to other blogs of interest on similar topics (Efimova, 2004). The first blog was begun in 1992 by Tim Berniers Lee and was named "What's New." The blog was a single page that provided links to other sources of news on the Internet. The term "weblog" was coined by Jorn Berger in 1997 (White, 2004). Open source software called Blogger was developed in 1999 which made it easy for most people to create their own blogs. The blog search engine Technorati has over two million blogs indexed in its search engine covering a wide variety of topics from sports and entertainment to religion and politics.

Blogs have many features that make them suitable for used for communications within an organization. Blog entries are organized in chronological order and can be tagged which makes it easy to search for a topic or entry. Users can leave comments and contribute to the information on the site. This ability to interact also encourages use and a sense of community. The single location format of blogs make them a good way to collect and share information especially in an organization whose members are spread out in different locations.

Used as an external communications tool, blogs can be used for marketing and customer relations. Fortune 500 companies are increasingly setting up blogs that allow their executives, product managers and venture capitalists to

**"Companies that adopt blogs must realize that developing a candid dialogue with customers is the best way to build a meaningful relationship."**

communicate with the public (Li, 2004). In the Web 2.0 world, consumers now expect personal connections and blogs that allow consumers to interact with representative of a company will build trust (Li, 2004, p.8). According to Lee, Hwang and Lee, "Companies that adopt blogs must realize that developing a

candid dialogue with customers is the best way to build a meaningful relationship” (2006, p.316).

Blogs also allow organizations to present a human face to the public. One example of this use of blogs is Microsoft. Microsoft shows clips of its engineers engaged in current projects on their Microsoft Developer Network’s Channel 9 blog in an attempt to establish a favorable image in the community . Blogs also help companies’ visibility by pushing them to the top of search engines’ lists. Because each post is a separate web entry and postings are often heavily linked to, search engines will list them near the top of any relevant search. This increases an organization’s web presence (Li, 2004, p.8).

Large organizations can also use blogs as a tool for internal communication. One of the main uses of blogs is as a source to share and manage knowledge. According to Li, “Blogs provide institutional searchable knowledge management” (2004, p. 1). This allows sharing between employees in a single location in a searchable format. Blogs are easily tagged and searchable, which allows employees to access information easily.

Blogs can also bridge the gap when employees are working from multiple locations. This will cut down on travel, email and conference calls. Also, less energy is spent on blaming others for mistakes since the format is transparent (Li, 2004, p.7). Blogs also allow management and executives to stay abreast of events in other parts of the company and to be privy to the thoughts of their employees.

Finally, Blogs will help with recruitment and collaboration as more of the workforce becomes younger and technically savvy. Companies that are using Blogs and other Web 2.0 tools that younger users are familiar with will benefit from their expertise (Hathi, 2008).

## Wikis

Another Web 2.0 tool that is being used in organizations is the wiki. "Wiki" means fast in Hawaiian (Dahl, 2006, p.41) and is defined as "a website that lets people freely create, edit, and link a collection of articles" (Barrett, 2008, p. 3). Wikis can be edited from remote locations and changes to the content are documented. These sites are an inexpensive and easy way for users to share information and knowledge.

The advantages of wikis to organizations are that they are centrally located, secured and easily accessible through the World Wide Web. Collaboration on projects by either external or internal users is easily accomplished (Dahl, 2006, p. 41). Hasan notes wikis are beneficial for companies because "a wiki represents the power of many and this power is distributed collectively to improve content quality. Each author is able to change the contributions of other authors, refining the quality of the knowledge asset." (2006, p. 200). Wikis can act as a documentation system, don't need moderation, and can display a history of the changes made. Documents and attachments are embedded online allowing users to see the most current version of the document.

Wikis also is an inexpensive timesaver because they reduce the number of emails and conferences needed among members of a team (Dahl, 2006, p.42). Dahl points out that through a wiki "a team of employees can collaborate on a single document or spreadsheet in real time-trading ideas and criticisms, adding new features and images-without having to send documents and attachments back and forth" (2006, p. 41). Dahl also adds, "the wiki also has slashed the number of meetings and conference calls: Anyone can simply pull up the wiki on his or her Web browser and get a full progress report at any time," (2006, p. 42).

Knowledge management is another benefit of using a wiki in an organization (Hester, 2008 p. 161). Wikis allow companies to centralize information from employees and users from disparate locations. Hasan and Pfaff argue that wikis



provide an “ideal collaboration environment that offers users the capability to co-create and co-evolve a knowledge repository” (2006, p. 21).

## Social Networking

Facebook and Myspace are two examples of social networking sites online. These Web 2.0 tools focus on building communities of users with shared interests and allow users to select their groups and choose the members of those groups. As the name implies, social networking is a largely social function with users posting personal information and sharing that information with others.

Recently, social networking is starting to be used as a tool for communication in large organizations for several functions.

- ◆ Companies can connect employees who work in different places.
- ◆ Employees can cultivate relationships within the organization
- ◆ Companies can build a more cohesive workforce.

IBM is one company that has been using their own social networking site, “Beehive.” A research team at IBM has looked at the uses and results of their employees interactions with “Beehive” (Dimicco, Millen, Geyer, Dugan, Brownholtz, & Muller, 2008). The study found that the common uses of Beehive included connecting on a personal level, advancing their career within IBM and campaigning for projects and ideas within the company (Dimicco et. al., 2008, p. 719). Dimicco et al. also note that Beehive increased communication between employees who formerly did not communicate with each other on a regular basis. These employees began reporting that they now consider some of these online connections to be close colleagues (Dimicco et. al., 2008, p.715).

The IBM research also shows that the widely distributed workforce feels more connected to their fellow employees. The employees appreciated the ability to connect with one another. This leads to greater satisfaction, a more unified workforce and better worker retention. The study shows that “across all of the

interviews there was a constant theme that connecting on a social level was a source of personal satisfaction” (DiMicco et al., 2008, p. 716).

## Microblogs

The latest Web 2.0 technology to show phenomenal growth is microblogs. Microblogs use Simple Message Service (SMS) as its platform, which is a technology used by the telephony industry for messaging. This technology allows microblogs to be a form of blogs where the users are limited to 140 characters. Users can write short posts and send them out to friends and other observers using text messaging, instant messaging, email, or the web (Java, Finin, Song, & Tseng, 2007, p.56). Twitter is the most popular example of microblogging (Java et. al., 2007, p.58).

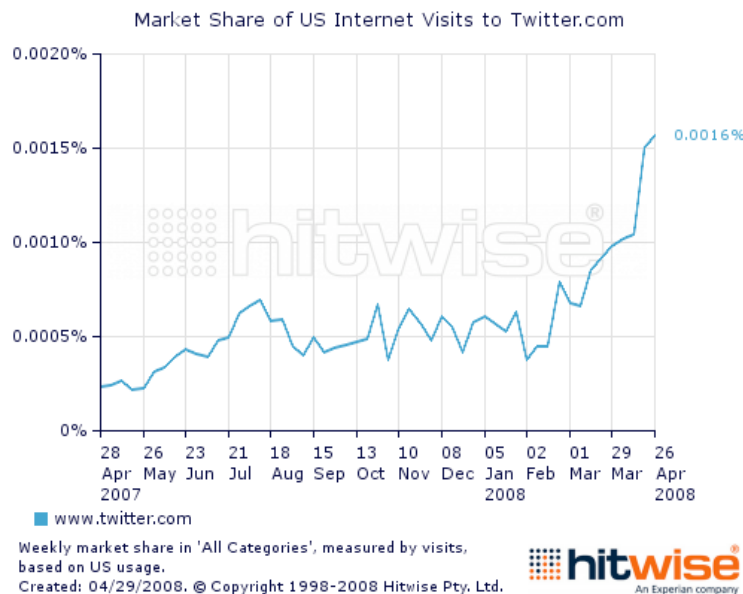


Figure 1. Taken from [http://weblogs.hitwise.com/us-heather-hopkins/2008/04/twitter\\_gaining\\_momentum\\_but\\_s\\_1.html](http://weblogs.hitwise.com/us-heather-hopkins/2008/04/twitter_gaining_momentum_but_s_1.html)

Growth of microblogs has been rapid with the most popular being Twitter. According to Heather Hopkins (2008), an online analyst at Hitwise US, traffic to Twitter has increased to 8 times what it was last year ( See Fig. 1).

The format of microblogs allows messaging to occur over the internet and wireless connections. This allows instant access for the users and information to be transferred quickly. Users can follow updates from their friends, on almost any topic, and share these short conversations with people in almost any location. The speed and accessibility brings people together in unexpected ways. Steven Johnson comments in Time Magazine, "for as long as we've had the Internet in our homes, critics have bemoaned the demise of shared national experiences ... We still have national events, but now when we have them, we're actually having a genuine, public conversation with a group that extends far beyond our nuclear family and our next-door neighbors" (2009, p. 35).

Since Twitter began in 2006, users have been discovering new uses for microblogs. The recent nature of the format means that there has been limited time to study and discover new uses for the technology. However, some organizations have been using microblogs for marketing and branding. Companies can send out short posts and announcements about new products, special deals and also provide customer service to their customers (Stewart, 2008, p.17).

Microblogs like Twitter also have potential as real-time news feed. They can be an effective form of communication to send out time-sensitive information to a large audience. For example, the American Red Cross uses Twitter to alert the public about floods, tornadoes, and disaster alerts. They can also use Twitter to provide disaster information, maps of disaster areas and volunteer information (Stewart, 2008, p. 17).

## Web 2.0 Goes to School

The flexibility and interactive nature of Web 2.0 technologies make them good candidates for use by Universities. Many higher learning Institutes have begun making use of Web 2.0 in several areas:

- ◆ Delivering content
- ◆ Communicating between students and faculty
- ◆ Encouraging collaboration and participation
- ◆ Recruitment

The variety of platforms available to Web 2.0 and their relatively low cost allows schools to adapt the content and need to the proper format. Universities are seeing that Web 2.0 allows them to lower costs, accelerate innovation and knowledge creation and increase creativity through collaboration (Freire, 2008, p.5). These technological developments are changing the relationship between students and teachers. Claire Schooley, an analyst at Forrester Research who specializes in educational trends claims, "That interaction between student and professor is going to become more prominent where you have already read about or watched the lecture online. The days of the large university with a 300-person lecture hall are over. Universities will be built very differently, with the concentration on workshop life" (Lombardi, 2007). Below are some examples of how learning institutions are using Web 2.0.

**Delivering content:** While some Universities, such as SPSU, have been providing online content and online classroom for some time, many Universities are finding new and novel ways to use the interactive technology to deliver content to students. In some cases, instructors are distributing lectures and encouraging debate and research on Web 2.0 platforms so they can use class time for more in-depth discussions (Lombardi, 2007). Other lecturers are providing students with podcasts and videos of their lectures that students can review away from the classroom (Swain, 2008).

The medical department at Temple University found that the stethoscope skills of their medical students improved after they listened to sample of heartbeats and the University is now providing podcasts of heartbeats to their students (Lombardi, 2007). Another professor who is using Web 2.0 technologies is Kenneth Hartman at Drexel College. In his e-learning program, Drexel uses a platform called *TVEyes.com* to locate television and radio broadcasts that are relevant to the courses, which then automatically feeds students the content (Lombardi, 2007).

Some schools are even looking at ways of using virtual 3-D environments to conduct seminars and to allow students to participate. Kevin Jarrett of Walden University is researching the virtual program *Second Life's* educational potential. Jarrett says, "It's one thing to look at a discussion board, wikis and blogs. It's something else completely different to physically act in a 3-D environment with others in your class. There is increased engagement and feelings of identity" (Lombardi, 2007).

**Communicating with students and faculty:** Many schools are also finding that using Web 2.0 Technologies to enhance their communication with students provides several benefits. Platforms such as blogs and wikis can cut down on email and allow for student feedback and interaction. Microblogs such as Twitter can get information out to the student body in a quick and efficient manner.

One example of blog use for communication is at the Georgia State University Library. In 2003, the science liaisons at the library began using a blog to update the science students and faculty about science issues at the library. The librarians were able to update the science department about new acquisitions, lectures and course offerings. The advantage of the blog was that registered faculty and students could add their own announcements and information as well as comment on others postings. The blog also cut down on email updates, which were often ignored or

blocked by spam filters and the blog did not have the space or time concerns that a printed newsletter would have. (Vogel & Goins, 2005)

Interaction is another benefit of using Web 2.0 for communication. Royal Holloway, University of London set up a Facebook site to allow students to provide suggestions concerning reconstruction of the library. The students did take advantage of the opportunity. Over 200 students posted comments in the next 24 hours (Swain, 2008).

**Encouraging Collaboration:** Using Web 2.0 technology can also encourage more participation and interaction with students. Some schools are using wiki technology to create papers and collaborate on projects. This allows the students to see each other's work and allows the teacher to see what each student contributes to the project (Lombardi, 2007).

The group approach of wikis also motivates students into being more actively involved and more motivated. Barbara Knauff of Dartmouth College says that self-publishing tools such as wiki are a good way to encourage original thought in college students. Knauff says, "They write for their peers as well and it creates a different motivation. They want to do well, don't want to look phony and get excited about the projects with the media aspect," said Knauff (Lombardi, 2007).

In addition to wikis, students are using RSS feeds and bookmarking sites such as Del.ici.ous to organize their research and classwork and using social networking sites to engage in debate and feedback for classes (Swain, 2008).

One interesting use of Video in the classroom is at Texas A&M. In their public speaking course students give a live presentation and video of the presentation is posted on a server where the students can critique themselves and the professor can send them a private critique. This makes public speaking less traumatic for the student (Lombardi, 2007).

**Recruiting:** Students currently entering higher education are more technologically astute than their predecessors. They have grown up with the Internet and the tools of Web 2.0, so they expect the interactivity that these tools provide. As a result of these new expectations, many Universities and Colleges are now seeing Web 2.0 as a selling point when recruiting new students. The use of Web 2.0 tools, such as blogs, wikis and social networking tools, are being looked at as a way to encourage students to choose their schools (Lombardi, 2007).

Universities also can use the Web 2.0 tools to show students what to expect at their schools and can help new students become active members of the student body, sometimes before they have even been admitted. For example, Seton Hall University has set up a social networking site that provides students with a log-in with their acceptance information. Perspective students “can e-mail roommates, make friends and find out the best campus hangouts even before they accept admission” (Lombardi, 2007).

The use of Web 2.0 technologies provides many more opportunities for Universities and Colleges to improve their communication strategies, educational delivery and recruitment. The Web 2.0 platforms have become pervasive in individual’s lives and students have come to expect the interactivity and flexibility that these tools provide. The question is no longer whether to use the tools, but how they can best be used. Brian Kelly of UKoln, an expert in digital information management says that the question used to be whether Web 2.0 was relevant when it comes to higher education. Kelly says, “I think that’s generally accepted now” (Swain, 2008).

## Drawbacks and Limitations of Web 2.0

While Web 2.0 has potential to improve communication and education in higher learning institutions, it also has some limitations and drawbacks. Some of the limitations of Web 2.0 are because of the culture of the University. Others are due to fears of litigation or the lack of control of information involved in Web 2.0 platforms. Sometimes, the problem is simply matching the content with the proper format. These problems can all be overcome with proper planning and guidance.

**“Universities should be risk-taking organizations. Learning is a risky process.”**

Juan Freire in his paper *Universities and Web 2.0: Institutional Challenges* points out that culture is a problem at many universities. Bureaucracies in many universities are risk-averse and it is difficult to make radical changes in the way they function (2008, p. 1). However, an overall strategy that can show the benefits of adopting

Web 2.0 tools can start to change the culture. Kelly says, “Universities should be risk-taking organizations. Learning is a risky process” (Swain, 2008).

Freire also points to the possibility of rejection by students, personnel and users. He writes, “in most cases, change is a matter of personal interest and work without any specific incentive system adapted to these objectives” (2008, p.2). This rejection may be due to a lack of incentives or because of perverse effects with any new uses of technology (Freire, 2008, p.3). Any approach to implementing a Web 2.0 strategy in a higher education institution should contain incentives for teachers, students and personnel to use the tools. This may be easier as younger tech-savvy, digital natives enter the student body (Freire, 2008, p.2).

Existing software platforms at institutions may also be an obstacle to implementing Web 2.0 tools in any institution. Although Web 2.0 platforms are



mostly inexpensive, institutions have invested a great deal in Web 1.0 technologies. Any effort to change or replace Web 1.0 technologies with new software and less expensive Web 2.0 platforms may be viewed with suspicion because of the low cost. IT departments may look at the cheaper applications as inferior (Freire, 2008, p. 3).

Budget concerns can also be a large factor for most enterprises when assessing whether or not they are properly equipped to embrace Web 2.0 (Williams & Williams, 2008, p. 37). The rapidly changing nature of Web 2.0 technologies may also cause some hesitation when attempting to implement a 2.0 strategy. Decision-makers will not want to implement something that may not be relevant in a year (Freire, 2008, p. 3).

The major concern with Web 2.0 technologies is the fear of open, interactive nature of these technologies. There is always a clash between the openness of the new Web 2.0 tools and the need for security and control that most organizations need. There is a danger of student misbehavior, a leak of information on platforms such as blogs, wikis or social networking sites that may be damaging to the institution as well as issues of ownership of the content on blogs or wikis or other platforms (Dawson, 2009, p.28). There needs to be a balance between the risks and the benefits of the technology (Dawson, 2009, p. 35). Some of the Web 2.0 technologies, such as Facebook provide solutions to this problem by allowing a closed environment. These sites, as well as intranet sites and some blogs can restrict users to only allow individuals who have been invited or have a password (Freire, 2008, p.3).

Some organizations have dealt with this concern of control by either establishing a bottom-up approach, which favors the open exchange of information and decentralization. According to Dawson in his book *Implementing Enterprise 2.0*, advocates of this approach believe “the most valuable initiatives will emerge without senior management guidance or invisibility. At this point organizational support for the activities can be sought and gained” (Dawson, 2009, p.31).

A top down approach will assign groups to monitor or use the Web 2.0 technologies within the organization or on third party sites with clear rules and guidelines (Lee, Hwang, & Lee, 2006, p. 321). This provides more centralized control, but may also allow the loss of information by limiting the openness of the technology.

## Matching The Media To The Message

As we have seen, Web 2.0 tools have many potential uses as well as many limitations. Byrne says, “enterprises looking for long-term success should take a methodical approach to selecting the right tools” (2008, p. 32). Blogs, wikis, podcasts, social networking and each of the possible platforms have particular affordances that need to be matched to both the content and the audience.

In their paper *The Role of Different Media in Designing Learning Environments*, Collins, Neville and Bielaczyc (2000) look at the different affordances and limitations of various types of media. They point out that the same message may have different meanings if different media is used to deliver the message (Collins et. al., 2000, p.145). Developing a media literacy and choosing the right tool to use for the message will be invaluable in implementing a Web 2.0 strategy.

Collins, Neville and Bielaczyc (2000) use four main characteristics to measure media types:

- ◆ **Transmission characteristics**—how the message is delivered (p. 146)
- ◆ **Recording characteristics**—what kind of record is produced by the media (p. 147)
- ◆ **Production characteristics**—how the media is produced (p. 147)
- ◆ **Social characteristics**—what kind of emotional or social interaction does the media produce (p. 147)

These four characteristics can help technical communicators determine what particular media format is best depending on the content and audience. For

example, the transmission characteristics of video are that it may require high bandwidth, is not interactive and can be seen by many viewers. Video is relatively permanent and easy to reproduce. These are some of video's recording characteristics. Its production characteristics are that it is relatively difficult to produce and requires some amount of specialization and its social characteristics are that it is highly credible and the producer is largely invisible (Collins et. al., 2000, p. 152). Using these criteria, a technical communicator can determine which content would be most suitable to be delivered through video.

Whether the media is video, text, audio or face-to-face teaching, a technical communicator should be able to take into considerations the media's affordances and mix and match the media and the message. This knowledge will assist the technical communicator in designing any kind of Web 2.0 strategy.

## Recommendations

As we have seen, a Web 2.0 approach in higher learning institutions has great potential to improve communications, to assist in teaching, learning and research and to build a thriving academic community. In a university like Southern Polytechnic State University with its emphasis on technology and a number of distance learning students, Web 2.0 has even greater potential. However, implementing a strategy to utilize Web 2.0 technologies will require a focused effort. Any strategy will have to take into consideration the system designs and possible upgrades, incentives for students, teachers and personnel to use the technologies, how and where the technology will be used and a clear policy for users of the tools.

I would recommend the following:

**Define objectives:** It will be important to come up with a set of clear objectives before implementing any strategy. Some departments will benefit from Web 2.0 tools more than others. Areas where collaboration is important may benefit from wikis. Other areas where information flow is

important, such as the library may benefit from blogs or microblogs. Dawson suggests “prioritizing desired outcomes” (2009, p.34).

**Consider IT concerns:** Although many Web 2.0 platforms are inexpensive upgrading system design or architectures may be a factor. Security and bandwidth may be a concern. Training or new software may be needed as well (Dawson, 2009, p. 36).

**Appoint project leaders and supervisors:** A project leader or sponsor who is familiar with the objectives of SPSU’s communications plan as well as the technology and the affordances of the formats will be necessary to coordinate with departments, IT and users. This should be a technical communicator who is knowledgeable about both the advantages and risks involved in the use of these technologies.

**Identify risks:** Web 2.0 platforms are often open and decentralized and carry with them risks for any organization (Dawson, 2009, p. 35). Privacy issues, ownership of content issues, and risks to reputation are all possible problems when using Web 2.0 technologies. Identifying these risks will help to avoid problems when the Web 2.0 strategy is implemented.

**Establish a clear policy:** Establishing clear guidelines for users helps to avoid legal problems and public embarrassment. Clear rules can also encourage use. IBM saw an increase in the use of their internal blogs once they had established clear guidelines for their employees (Kolari et. al. 2007).

Since Web 2.0 is still relatively new, its uses are still in experimental stages. Juan Freire (2008) offers some advice when implementing a Web 2.0 strategy to help make the most of Web 2.0. First, learn from previous and ongoing experiences. Freire says that any institution should learn from what others are doing and what they have done in the past. Harvard, MIT, and Stanford University are just a few schools using Web 2.0 technologies that can share their experience (Freire,

2008, p. 4). Also, keep the Web 2.0 technologies as open as possible. Freire says, "Web 2.0 is especially useful and creative when knowledge is digitized, modular and allowed to be used and distributed in a flexible way" (2008, p.4).

The role of technical communicators in establishing a Web 2.0 strategy is essential. The expertise technical communicators can contribute includes not only knowledge of how media works and which media fits the content, but also how to present material in the most effective manner. Their knowledge of the advantages and risks inherent in each format can help shape the policies and strategies for Web 2.0 communication.

## Conclusion

Web 2.0 is growing rapidly. Individuals are becoming more comfortable with the various formats and are coming to expect the flexibility and interaction that the technologies provide. Business and other organizations are using blogs, wikis, microblogs, podcasts, social networking and other platforms to market and communicate with customers, clients and employees.

Web 2.0 also provides opportunities for universities and colleges. Teachers can teach students in various locations. They can provide video, audio and other presentation over various platforms. Students can collaborate on projects on wikis and blogs. And, schools can use social networking sites as a recruiting tool. But, the free flow of information also has pitfalls. Possible legal problems, leaks of private information and ownership issues are just a few of the drawbacks of using Web 2.0 technology at a University.

However, with careful planning and knowledgeable guidance, these issues can be minimized. The Web 2.0 technologies can be targeted to where they will be most effective and Southern Polytechnic State University can benefit from all of the potential that Web 2.0 provides.

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