

## A Beginner's Guide to Web 2.0 Tools for Business

By Susan Kuchinskas

published on BNET.com 5/15/2007

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

That's why Hill & Knowlton, the international public relations agency, developed Cogenz, a Web 2.0 social bookmarking tool. Cogenz lets users bookmark web pages in a central repository and tag them with keywords. It also identifies subject-area experts and their internal networks, based on whose bookmarks and tags are most popular within the company.

With 1700 people working in 70 offices, "People may not know there are others interested in the same thing," says Niall Cook, Hill & Knowlton's director of marketing technology, who developed Cogenz with a pal in his spare time. "Doing a visual analysis lets us find those connections and see where the experts are."

All well and good. But if you don't have a Niall Cook in your office to custom build Web 2.0 tools, where should you begin? We prepared this basic guide as a starting point to help you identify Web 2.0 services that might prove useful inside your company. To browse a more comprehensive directory, visit [All Things Web 2.0](#) or [Go2Web20](#).

### Finance

---

Spreadsheets and other essential tools for finance professionals are moving on to the Web, and as they do, they're acquiring new functionality to facilitate seamless collaboration and data exchange.

**Google Docs and Spreadsheets** Google's Web-based word processing and spreadsheet applications are great for collaboration, and they're compatible with their Microsoft Office equivalents.

**Zoho Sheet** An online spreadsheet service that's compatible with all Excel documents. An application programming interface (API) is available for enabling seamless integration with many other software tools.

**SalesBoom** This hosted service started out as a customer relationship management product; today it has expanded to include commission and expense management. Limited customization options, but well-suited for smaller companies.

## Forecasting, Risk Assessment, or R&D

---

When evaluating new technology or speculative projects, how do you evaluate risk and identify winners or losers? Predictive market tools work sort of like a stock market, allowing individual participants to make simulated investments based on the feasibility of a given initiative. Together, such evaluations represent the collective wisdom about the question at hand.

**Inkling** Easy-to-create hosted prediction markets can be customized to match an existing corporate website. Free trial available.

**HSX Virtual Specialist** Provides hosted prediction-market tools for complex forecasting problems such as anticipating box-office receipts for Hollywood movies.

## Human Resources

---

Instead of just posting forms and directories online, hoping users will find them, Web 2.0 services make it easier for workers to help themselves and find one another. They also provide tools to identify networks of people who are most influential within an organization.

**Workday Human Capital Management** Founded by the former CEO of PeopleSoft, Workday is a flexible, Web-based enterprise resources planning tool for human resources professionals.

**Cogenz** Finds the best-informed or best-connected people by looking at whose bookmarks on a subject are most popular.

## Marketing Communications

---

As core Web 2.0 technologies like blogs, wikis, and video-sharing sites revolutionize how companies communicate with customers, a new crop of specialized Web 2.0 tools are making it easier than ever before for marketing professionals to get the word out.

**Astoria Software** A Web-based content management tool for coordinating all aspects of the production process, from project-based collaboration to tracking and syndication of published documents.

**Jadu Intranet 2.0** A Web-based content management system that offers products for non-technical users, government clients, and small- to large-size companies.

**Marqui** Web-based content and project management tools for creating integrated marketing campaigns.

## Project Teams

---

Software-based collaboration tools can be cumbersome because they require users to define work groups and establish processes ahead of time. These Web 2.0 equivalents are more flexible, so project teams can evolve gradually.

**IBM Lotus Connections** Social software from Big Blue with modules that allow participants to create and share profiles, blogs, bookmarks, and project-status dashboards.

**BaseCamp** A versatile project-management tool that combines blogs, lists, and multimedia content so users can track project milestones and communicate with team members.

**CentralDesktop** A wiki-based collaboration tool for non-technical users. Exceptionally easy to set up, with templates to help newbies get started.

## Sales

---

Sales teams use customer relationship management (CRM) tools to coordinate leads generation, marketing, customer outreach, and account management efforts, but CRM software is notoriously difficult to install and deploy. Web-based CRM simplifies the task.

**Salesforce.com** The granddaddy of the Web 2.0 industry, with a flexible and well-developed suite of Web-based CRM products.

**Relenta CRM** Based on a proprietary email client that tracks all sales-related communication, Relenta is targeted at small- to medium-sized companies.

**Microsoft Dynamics CRM Live** The software giant's Web-based version of the shrink-wrapped Dynamics product is expected to launch later in 2007.