

SEM Gorilla
Guide to Web 2.0

BONUS:

SEM Gorilla
UNCOVERS the
Best Link Baiting
Techniques

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What exactly is Web 2.0?

Web 2.0. You've heard the hype, and you've probably heard the phrase tossed around by professionals in the business. You might even have some idea of how Web 2.0 works. As a marketer, any evolution in the Internet and its workings is something you need to keep up with. In this chapter, I'll try to explain what Web 2.0 is and how it can help you with your business.

In order to consider Web 2.0, we must first revisit the beginnings of the Internet. Web 1.0, the original World Wide Web, was considered a source of information. Web 2.0 by contrast is considered a networking platform. Whereas people used the Internet at first for data storage or data searches, it is now a medium whereby data is the driving force, but it is used to modify, restructure, and share common data.

In other words, Web 2.0 isn't really a kind of site. It's the ability of the users to modify the site they're on.

Often readers participate in Web 2.0, contributing their own content or adding to what's already there. Web 2.0 is often referred to as having an open source development, meaning that the information you see on a site may be compiled from a number of sources and by numerous different developers.

As an example, think about YouTube. The site, www.youtube.com, is nothing more than a video uploading site. Yet less than two years after its creation, YouTube was purchased by Google—for \$1.64 billion. This is only one example of how the concept of Web 2.0 is proving to be profitable.

Another good example of Web 2.0 in action is Myspace, located at www.Myspace.com. It's a community, where users create a profile page about themselves and invite friends to join and communicate with them. MySpace registration, like many other Web 2.0 applications, is free. The site offers templates for easier page creation, or you can create your own.

There are plenty of other interactive sites where people post pictures, videos, and more. These are easy to find via an Internet search; you've probably already been on plenty without even realizing it. Any time you see users actively participating in the content of a site, you are looking at a Web 2.0 site. Let's take a look at some examples in the next section.

Why Web 2.0 Works

Web 2.0 is very easy for visitors to understand. They can learn the applications easily (and often it's not even considered "learning"). They readily see what you are looking for, and it requires nothing more than an Internet connection on their end in order to work.

Consider some of these Web 2.0 models:

EBay

Started as a sole proprietorship in 1995, EBay has grown into a gigantic online auction house. The company itself doesn't sell anything; instead, users join (the membership is free) and list items for sale for very small fees. EBay's money is made from the nickel-and-dime insertion and listing fees; they also charge a commission at the end of the sale.

This site would have been useless without people to offer products and other people to bid on them. Instead, it's one of the biggest sites on the Internet. Users are "rated" by those who do business with them. If a person tends to list items for sale and not deliver, or if he's slow in shipping, buyers can readily find this out before placing a bid.

Some EBay users write online guides, which you can read in order to perform research on a particular kind of item. For example, let's say you like buying porcelain dolls. A quick EBay search reveals that there are 81 related "guides" to dolls. You can learn what constitutes a "collectible" doll or an "antique" doll. You can find out how to care for the dolls, and the difference between bisque and porcelain. There are tons of other guides, covering every topic from how to do your taxes to comparisons of plastic and wooden accordions.

EBay also offers user reviews of products like cameras, computer monitors, and video games. The review scores are averaged to give the total rating for the product; the reviews themselves can also be rated as helpful or not helpful.

All of these factors serve to help EBay retain its customer base. Users are apt to turn to the guides and user reviews first as their research source, so they're more likely (since they're already on the website) to bid on EBay listings than to go to other sources.

Another Web 2.0 example is **craigslist**.

It's an online classified advertising site; membership isn't even required in order to post an ad, although it's easier to control your ads or the ones you're interested in if you do have an account. You can find almost anything there—jobs, services, romance, and goods. Officially, it covers 450 cities; don't

discount it if your city isn't listed, though. With over 7 billion page views per month, users aren't necessarily limited to a certain geographical area.

Craigslist was started in 1995 and became incorporated in 1999. It is user-oriented and, rather than being run as a typical corporation, depends on users to find more ways to create income for the site. Craigslist aficionados are a loyal lot, tending the site as if it were their own—which is the whole point of the Web 2.0 concept. They tend to be active on the message boards and are quick to flag postings that are inappropriate.

Del.icio.us, though a newer member of the Web 2.0 community, is an application that helps bloggers increase traffic. It also has created a new method for the Internet community as a whole to create searches. The users themselves define methods to determine how searches work, which should make searching both more effective and more productive.

Web 2.0 is changing everything about the way we search the Internet. With its integration into our world, we are not passively practicing read-and-click. Instead, we post comments, modify search engines through the use of our own vocabulary, and share photographs, videos, and information with each other.

What Can Web 2.0 Do For My Business?

Because Web 2.0 invites participation, you can utilize it to promote and market your business. Whereas in 1990 your “web site” might have consisted of nothing more than a static-looking business card, today your site can be totally interactive.

Depending on your product, you might invite customers to write reviews, modify descriptions, add comments, and much more. If you have a blog, be sure to enable comments so that your readers can share information with you (more on that in a moment).

Because of the give-and-take social nature of Web 2.0, customers tend to bookmark and revisit your pages often. The customers themselves carry out the “updates” to your site. For example, if you offer a forum, you will find that members strike up conversations with each other, often with little prompting from you. This gives you more “hits” to your site, resulting in higher rankings; it also serves as an update to your webpage.

Letting customers have free reign to comment on your products may seem scary at first, but it can give you the tools you need to improve your product line and your business. Plus the sense of

ownership those customers develop causes them to have a loyalty that you would not have seen in the 1990s.

Plus, as visitors become customers and read your blog, your emails, or your other communications, they feel as if they know you—creating even more loyalty. If you're old enough to remember walking to the corner market as a child to get an ice cream cone, then you know exactly how that feels. You wouldn't have dreamed of going to the Minute Market or 7-11 Store when Mr. Smith's grocery had exactly what you needed—and he knew you. He asked about your family, your school grades, and your dog. That's the kind of relationship that Web 2.0 can help you develop, if you do it right: a sense of camaraderie.

Web 2.0 is easy to integrate into your website and your business. It's considered a “lightweight” business model. It works sort of like a beta software—the content and interaction continually changes. Any reader is free to change it or improve it, if you set it up that way.

Elements of Web 2.0

There are several different elements to Web 2.0. I'm not going to try to cover all of them here; instead, I will focus on the ones that I feel are most important to your business on the World Wide Web.

The first is social bookmarking. If you visit Wikipedia, it has this to say about social bookmarking:

“On a social bookmarking system or network, users store lists of Internet resources that they find useful. These lists can be accessible to the public by users of a specific network or website. Other users with similar interests can view the links by topic, category, tags, or even randomly.

Other than web page bookmarks, services specialized to a specific subject or format - feeds, books, videos, music, shopping items, map locations, wineries, etc. - can be found. Social bookmarking is also part of social news sites like Reddit.”

Here are some of the biggest social bookmarking sites:

del.icio.us <http://del.icio.us.com>

Digg <http://digg.com>

Flickr <http://flickr.com>

Furl <http://www.furl.net>

Slashdot <http://slashdot.org>

Squidoo <http://www.squidoo.com>

Stumbleupon <http://www.stumbleupon.com>

Yahoo My web 2.0 Beta <http://myweb2.search.yahoo.com>

Social bookmarking sites use **tags** to organize their content. The analysis of tags helps to classify, rank, and share the resources that are available on the net.

A tag can be a keyword or keyphrase that is associated with the information, video, picture, etc. that describes it. You create your own tags on your blog or for the social

bookmarking site, so you have total control over the usefulness of the tag to your content.

Let's look at how this works. Say you are using free blogging software, and you choose to add the tag "golf clubs" to your article. Next time someone enters golf clubs into a search engine toolbar, your site will be listed on the results page because of your tag. This is highly targeted, motivated traffic that comes to your page—for free—because of the blog post. It didn't cost you anything to "catch" that client!

The best part about it (well, besides the fact that driving traffic was totally free) is that it can happen in minutes. Look at the following screen shot. In it I searched "Google blogs" for the term "golf clubs." I refined my search to the Last Hour postings just for the purposes of this illustration; you could have found plenty of very relevant searches by not refining it so much. Anyway, as you can see in the picture the top listing on Google for "golf clubs" came up only eighteen minutes ago! So by using Web 2.0, you're guaranteed almost instant results.



In addition to social bookmarking, tags, and blogs, people are using interactive forums, videos, and podcasts (audio recordings) to create user-friendly sites.

Forums, if you have the time to keep them active, are great for building your repeat customer base. The various sections of the forum can be tailored to fit with your different categories of goods or services. People have a tendency to bookmark forums and return to them over and over.

How do I implement Web 2.0?

One of the easiest ways to integrate Web 2.0 into your website is by creating a **blog**. Weblogs, or “blogs” for short, are much more fun than the old personal web pages. Instead of visitors glancing at your page and clicking away, they are able to communicate with you—even if you've never met them before. They are able to write to you in relative anonymity, since their email address isn't required for a blog comment.

To start a blog, you can simply go to a blog hosting site. Two of the largest and best ones are blogger, located at www.blogger.com, and wordpress, which you can find at www.wordpress.com (for the hosting site) or www.wordpress.org (for the blogging software to be hosted on a different site).

You can create you blog in minutes and write about whatever you choose. You'll develop a huge fan base; part of the fun of blogging is the community itself. People who've been into it for years will help you. And you'll find that they aren't all under 20; in fact, many bloggers are in the 40 to 60 age range.

Once you've set up your blog, there are tons of templates, settings, and add-ons that you can use to personalize it. Whatever topic you choose, you'll find that people *are* out there

reading it. Keeping it diligently fresh, by updating it often, is the key to success with a blog.

Youtube and other video uploading sites

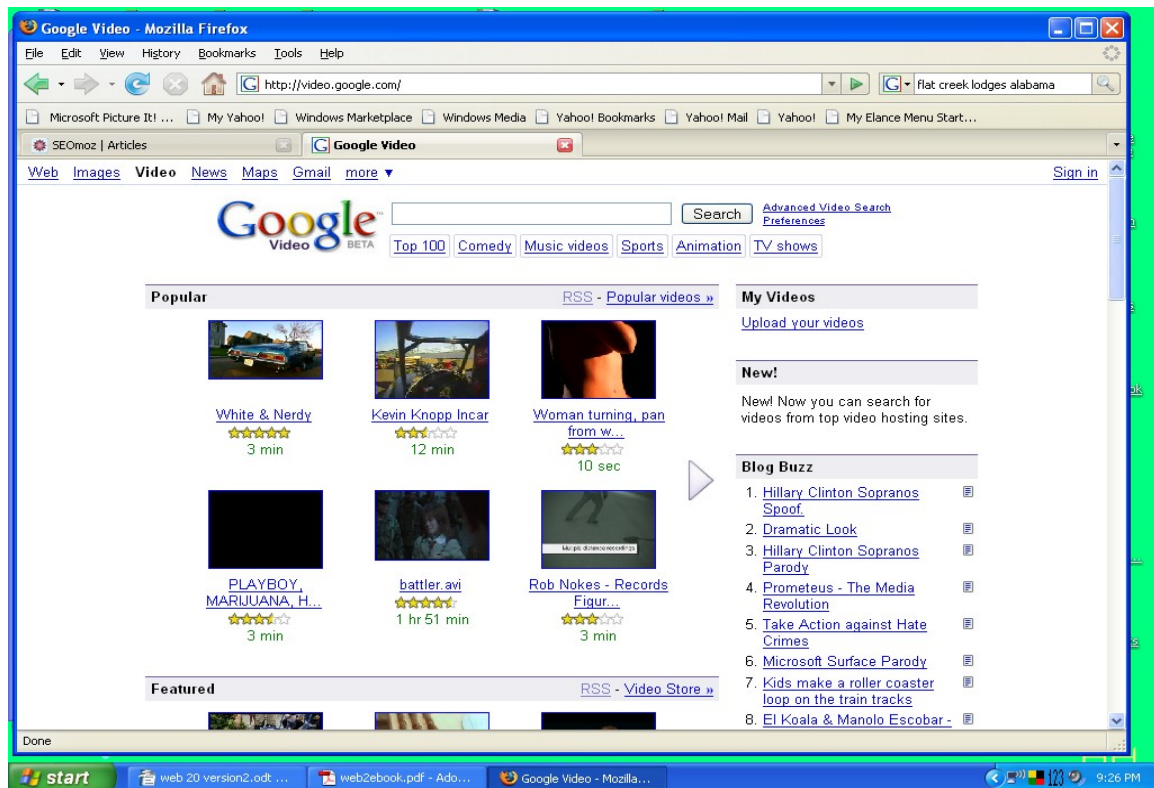
if you have a product that lends itself to video, Youtube is a great way to get your site out there quickly. Videos on youtube are divided by category (there's a great how-to section) and then rated by members. If you're going to make a promotional video for your site, its content should be somewhat related to your product or service.

Because of YouTube's success, there are hundreds of video sites where you can watch and/or upload videos. Some of them have reached millions of hits—as much as 30 million! Plus, your video is viral, which means it can be passed on to thousands of people in only a few hours.

YouTube's front page is interesting and inviting; it shows the most recently uploaded videos, along with category choices and comments:



In addition to YouTube, you also might try Google video, located at <http://www.video.google.com> .



There are plenty of other video services. If you're determined *not* to use the big guys, you may find some of these sites useful for video

SelfCast TV <http://selfcasttv.blinkx.com>

BoFunk <http://www.bofunk.com>

Flurl <http://flurl.com>

Vsocial <http://vsocial.com>

Zippy Videos <http://www.zippyvideos.com>

Podcasting

A podcast is an audio broadcast that is available via the Internet. It is usually done in a subscription format, and it uses a feed to

deliver the file. Users subscribe and in return they receive a regular update with new files. Podcasts can be listened to at the convenience of the user.

Podcasts are also known by other names, often because of the device or file that is responding to them:

Autocasts

Javacasts

Media RSS

Palmcasts

Skypecasts

and many more!

If you're interested in creating a podcast, visit one of these sites to learn more:

<http://www.podcastdirectory.com>

<http://www.podcastalley.com>

<http://www.ipodder.org>

<http://www.digitalpodcast.com>

<http://podcasts.yahoo.com>

Podcasts can be played back using the computer or a digital audio player; all that's required to play them is audio software. There are no bandwidth issues with podcasts, like you may have found with other files in the past.

How can you utilize podcasts?

- For supplementary information on your website

- for educational purposes—any how-to topic that relates to your business, product, or service is useful on your website as a podcast
- self-guided tours of your site, your service, and more. A podcast gives your visitors a great opportunity to learn more.
- Commentaries

Many TV directors have even started to create commentary podcasts of their shows; is there a way you can carry that over into your business?

Social bookmarking

Web 2.0 has brought about tons of social networking sites: MySpace, LiveJournal, Classmates, Reunion, and others. Friends can keep in touch or even reconnect. Connecting or re-connecting with friends can help you to become a part of a social network that helps your business grow and thrive.

Techniques Used in Web 2.0

Sites that are “web 2.0” enabled often use some or all of the following:

- Ajax-based applications (or other Rich Internet Apps)
- CSS
- semantically valid HTML
- Microformats

- Syndication
- RSS
- Their own domain name
- extensive tag usefulness
- wiki software (blogging, mashups, etc)
- REST or XML Webservice APIs

The ONE THING you must do: **Linkbaiting**

If you want to get thousands of natural inbound links, you absolutely must use a method called linkbaiting. In link baiting, you use the Social Networking sites to your own advantage in order to get links. By creating a story, video, or other product that is funny or interesting, you create “buzz.”

In other words, you make people want to link to your site—and only ONE successful link bait can turn your site into one of the most respected sites in its topic! So—even if you *ignore* all the other advice I give you, please do create link bait.

One huge advantage of using link bait (as opposed to, say, a linking farm) is that the search engines will not blacklist you. They see these links as completely natural, because they're coming from people discussing your topic on forum, posting it, blogging about it, etc.

In order to create link bait, first you have to find out how linkworthy a topic is. It's good to look at some of the social networking sites listed above to see what topics are getting tagged in your particular niche.

Every social network has somebody writing about their topics. In fact, if there is nobody talking about your favorite topic, then it should be easy for you to create your own link bait by simply writing about your (their) favorite topic, using their lingo. Be sure that it's a topic you're passionate about. Note that I didn't say "write what you know." It isn't necessary that you be an expert, only that you have a strong opinion about it. One of the best forms of link bait is when you disagree with the opinion of a so-called expert in your field. Controversy is sure to stir up discussions!

If you don't have a strong opinion at the moment, and there's nothing newsworthy going on, consider interviewing a professional in your field and then writing a summary of that interview. If you're particularly good at creating software tools, make something useful. Or perhaps you have knowledge of the history of your industry, or you can write a step-by-step "how to" list. The goal here is not to write the only outrageous story; the goal is to cause a stir.

You'll need to perform your normal sort of keyword focus in order to optimize your link bait. Use the keyword tools that you

normally employ (I'll talk a lot more about selecting keywords and the best tools to use for search engine marketing purposes in my book, **Complete SEM Gorilla.**)

Now, once you have created your link bait you'll want to track your "buzz." In other words, you've got to find out what people are saying about you. You should probably subscribe to RSS feeds to cut down on the time factor. You'll find some of the blogs, forums, and message boards via a search engine, but RSS feeds will make your life a lot easier.

When creating link bait, you are giving your site both search engine ranking and great links at the same time. The two go hand-in-hand and together they create the best visibility for your website. In my opinion, this is the **#1 WAY** to improve your standings and drive traffic to your site---with virtually no effort.

Ideas for Link Bait

- Interviews with experts
- Giveaways: anything that's free, like e-books, lists, tools, and software
- New plugins or themes
- Newsworthy
- Your disagreement with an expert opinion
- Helpful information
- Jokes
- Product testing
- Contests
- Exposing a scam

In the Future

There's no doubt about it: Web 2.0 will remain an exciting and ever-changing part of our Internet from now on. As a marketer, you must always be on the lookout for ways that you can find and reach new visitors. For maximum exposure, consider integrating Web 2.0 applications into your marketing plans. Start today!

For more information on Search Engine Marketing, or to learn how to set up your entire website for maximum exposure and efficiency from start to finish, visit www.SEMGorilla.com . We can give you all the tools you need to create a truly optimized website from start to finish.

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