Get involved in bringing the tools behind Web 2.0 to life

This begins with a confession among friends. It has been a few years since I first heard the term *Web 2.0*. My introduction to the hip buzzword was buried in a bunch of "tech talk" at a seminar, and it had no meaning for me. I remember thinking, Oh, no! Not a new World Wide Web to understand. So, I ignored it, hoping it would go away.

Sometime later, I realized that long before the term *Web 2.0* appeared on the scene, many of us were unknowingly helping to pioneer it as we blazed a new trail incorporating early forms of social media into our communication work using the Web—for example, the use of text, images, video (vblogs), audio (podcasts), stories (blogs), online feedback (forums) and virtual classrooms (webinars).

Today, I still detect a blank stare in many circles when Web 2.0 is mentioned. But, with sweeping speed, the social media explosion continues to change the communication landscape. The technologies that define it have everything to do with what is important to all of us as communicators—connecting people, helping leaders share their messages in the most powerful ways, and using virtual technologies to bring people together across differences and distance.

A recent global study conducted by Melcrum reveals that corporate communicators recognize the benefits of social media in improving employee engagement, increasing internal collaboration, building internal communities, creating two-way dialogues with senior executives and developing culture. However, in the same study, more than 70 percent also said they didn't know how, or weren't sure how, to integrate social media into their communication strategy.

How do we learn how?

Like any pioneering effort, there is no playbook—we have to write it. It starts with recognizing that Web 2.0 technologies add a whole new set of tools to our value-added portfolios as communicators. It gives us an edge in becoming the perfect collaborative partners for IT, HR and mainstream business organizations to forge the path. They need us, and we need them, to creatively build strong global cultures, rich with new levels of innovation in how they communicate, collaborate, transfer knowledge, and achieve a better understanding of one another across multigenerational organizations and the communities we serve.

What does Web 2.0 ask of us as communicators?

It asks us to look at the new and different with a "beginner's mind," and be willing to reach beyond our conditioning of *who, what, where, when* and *how* to embrace more person-to-person approaches in reaching, connecting, engaging and listening to people. It invites us to break the sacred rules, reinventing what we know with a sense of openness.

What are people telling us beyond the buzz of Web 2.0?

People (and I include communicators) like building and being part of a community. We want more personal interactions with others. Instead of messaging, we want communications to be real and relevant. Instead of hooks and corporate-speak, we want plain talk with leaders who speak with integrity and are open to listening to our ideas. Instead of refining the sound bite further, we want open, meaningful dialogue that engages us and involves us in the process.

What important role can communicators play in Web 2.0?

A big one! See yourself as a resource ready to forge this new frontier with others. With a slight shift in mind-set, we have skills that are badly needed to bring these new ideas, technologies and collaboration tools to life for everyone. Get involved! •

> Web 2.0 invites us to break the sacred rules, reinventing what we know with a sense of openness.

about the author

Debbe Kennedy is a founder, president and CEO of the Global Dialogue Center, a virtual gathering place (www.globaldialoguecenter.com), and Leadership Solutions Companies, specializing in custom leadership, organizational and virtual communications solutions (www.lscompanies.com). Her book *Putting Our Differences to Work: The Fastest Way to Innovation, Leadership and High Performance* will be published in 2008.

what's *your* opinion?

If you feel strongly about a communication issue, tell us. Send articles for consideration to *cwmagazine@iabc.com*. Please include your name, organization and contact information. Articles may be edited for length and clarity.