



Looking at the past | The Xpragmatic View



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Facing today's difficult economic conditions, companies are considering any solution that will allow reducing costs or that will strengthen their operational effectiveness. However, before moving further, they better know why they didn't use such solution before.

As the recession deepens, we see an increasing number of articles and blog posts with recommendations of how companies can address today's challenges. As always, most of this is rather superficial, not providing any real value. However, some articles do get our attention.

A good example of this was a recent article by Dion Hinchcliffe¹ titled "[Using Web 2.0 to reinvent your business for the economic downturn](#)".

In his article, Hinchcliffe lists a number of initiatives organisations can deploy in order to exploit the potential benefits of recent technological evolutions such as Web 2.0. This includes approaches such as:

- Moving to lower-cost online/SaaS versions of enterprise applications
- Using Enterprise 2.0 to capture the knowledge and know-how of employees
- Strategically moving IT infrastructure to the cloud
- Embracing new low-cost models for production such as crowdsourcing
- Etc.

As usual, Hinchcliffe's analysis is very correct and insightful, although not all of this will be applicable to any organisation and the potential gains will differ from company to company.

However, we especially fear that this is an overly optimistic view on the transformational capability of information technology. Whatever the perceived impact of the revolution that is called Web 2.0, reality is that IT essentially remains a strategy enabler and very rarely becomes a competitive differentiator.

Therefore, instead of dreaming too much of the huge cost reductions and the unlimited possibilities of this new technology, first try articulating why you had to wait for Hinchcliffe's article before moving in such direction.

Indeed, most of Hinchcliffe's recommendations are not really new. Several organisations are already deploying such initiatives as part of their core business. As Hinchcliffe states:

"Many of the more transformational aspects of the 2.0 era now have extensive groundwork laid for them, are available in genuinely enterprise-ready solutions/pilots, and many have just been waiting for the right situation..."

Be it that the "right situation" might be there now, this is no guarantee that your "ability to execute" has improved. The same organisational, structural, mental or cultural roadblocks that were inhibitors for an earlier adoption of such technology have not disappeared. You are still the same company.

Therefore, if this list of recommendation suddenly seems to be the way forward, you better try

to understand why you didn't know about this before or why you did prefer not moving earlier.

Not being faced with a crisis at that moment is not the correct answer.

And a correct answer is important since it will determine the likeliness of your success while adopting Hinchcliffe's recommendations.

¹ Dion Hinchcliffe is founder and chief technology officer for the Enterprise Web 2.0 advisory and consulting firm [Hinchcliffe & Company](#), based in Alexandria, Virginia. At [ZDNet.com](#), he is currently editor-in-chief of the Web 2.0 Journal.

About the author



Marc Buyens is analyst, management consultant and owner of Xpragma. Marc started Xpragma in 1999 after a 20+ years career in the IT sector. Today, he provides advice, training and mentoring services focusing on the intersection of technological evolution, organisational change and business strategy: a messy world of unfulfilled promises.



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