



## Disintegration 2.0



The Xpragmatic View #117  
 May 19, 2009  
 by [Marc Buyens](#), Xpragma  
[marc.buyens@xpragma.com](mailto:marc.buyens@xpragma.com)  
[url: http://www.xpragma.com/view117.php](http://www.xpragma.com/view117.php)

Enterprise 2.0 usage is on the rise. Recent publications indicate that a growing number of companies have implemented so-called 'social tools' and that the effective use of such tools increases. Is this the year of the final breakthrough?

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### The year of the final breakthrough?

The last couple of weeks, we observed an increased interest in Enterprise 2.0. According to a number of recently published reports, there are a growing number of companies that have implemented so-called "social tools" (blogs, wikis, social networking/messaging). In addition, the use of these tools by employees is increasing. For technology icons such as Dion Hinchcliffe, a reason to claim that we now live "[The year of the shift to Enterprise 2.0](#)".

Still, even he is well aware of the fact that it remains a difficult exercise that most management teams do not know very well how to handle and therefore, remain wary of the potential outcome.

Entirely correct and the main reason for this uncertainty has once again to do with "hype".

The expression "Enterprise 2.0" was introduced by Andrew McAfee<sup>1</sup> in an article in the spring 2006 edition of the Sloan management Review and stood for the use of Web 2.0 tools and approaches in a business context.

In itself, there's nothing wrong with this. However, by using an expression that also included the '2.0' suffix, McAfee implicitly suggested that Enterprise 2.0 might also deliver some of the viral successes that we have observed in the Web 2.0 space.

From a marketing perspective, it was a smart move that, very likely, resulted in more media attention and more readers of his blog. Unfortunately, for the business world, it created a new hype.

Indeed, as we have already described in [Aphorisms and Enterprise 2.0](#), this '2.0' label creates wrong expectations. This '2.0' expression moves our perception of this concept from the actual functional tools to the potentially, extraordinary results.

As we all know, when hearing the expression "Web 2.0" today, nobody any longer thinks about the initial list of concepts and characteristics first published by Tim O'Reilly. Today, Web 2.0 especially stands for the hardly conceivable viral successes of phenomena such as Wikipedia, Facebook and other Twitters.

Using the expression 'Enterprise 2/0' is suggesting that similar outcomes might be possible behind the company walls. This is incorrect. As we have already stated before:

*Enterprise 2.0 will not exist because the conditions that are the basis for the viral success of Web 2.0 do not exist within the enterprise and cannot be replicated within the enterprise.*

So, it is no surprise that today, nearly half of the organisations are using some combination of social tools, yet without experiencing the major breakthrough. Of course, there are some companies with a level of "significant" success.

Indeed, from a tools perspective, Web 2.0 is no real revolution. The business world is already using various forms of collaborative tools for years. None of these have ever delivered the major breakthrough in productivity or in knowledge management that was hoped for. Improvement, yes. Breakthrough, no. The same will happen with the Web 2.0 tools in the enterprise.

And that is very normal. The viral success of Web 2.0 is directly linked to a very specific context: large numbers of participants, absence of obligations, free of charge, authority and self-control, no hierarchy, for fun. We can be wrong, but we think that this is not the description of the average company.

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Now, this is not all bad news. This observation might give us an indication of what Enterprise 2.0 really should be.

With McAfee's Enterprise 2.0, we implement a number of tools, but we have not yet the organisation that can really benefit from these tools.

In fact, this is very similar to what we already observed in the innovation space. We have a great definition of what good innovation management must be. Unfortunately, most of it is in direct conflict with the existing organisational structures. Same with Enterprise 2.0.

So, perhaps now is the moment to finally tackle the real problem. To move our organisations in a direction that avoids most of the structural problems we experience. Towards organisations where individuals have more freedom, more authority and more self-control and especially, less bosses.

Moreover, perhaps that Web 2.0 will do the job for us. Indeed, the viral forces of Web 2.0 will make that individuals will not wait for the initiative of their bosses to start using such tools behind the company walls. There is little that can prevent this. More rules, controls and procedures will not avoid this.

Perhaps that this will be the start of a process that will finally tear down our outdated organisational structures that, already for decades, are no longer aligned with the needs of our evolving society.

And yes, perhaps that later we will then be able to confirm that Hinchcliffe was indeed right then he stated that 2009 was "The year of the shift to Enterprise 2.0". Then also "Enterprise 2.0" will get its correct meaning: not the use of Web 2.0 tools within the enterprise, but the tearing down, the disintegration of "Enterprise 1.0".

Wait and see.

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<sup>1</sup> McAfee is an Associate Professor in the Technology and Operations Management area at Harvard Business School, and a visiting Associate Professor at the Center for Digital Business in the MIT Sloan School of Management.

### 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.


 LinkedIn profile: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/marcbuyens>

 Follow on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/mbuyens>

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Xpragma bvba - Mechelsesteenweg 254 - 2820 Bonheiden - Belgium  
Tel. +32-(0)15-340 845 - [info@xpragma.com](mailto:info@xpragma.com) - [www.xpragma.com](http://www.xpragma.com)

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