



## First chaos, then direction | The Xpragmatic View



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 by [Marc Buyens \(@mbuyens\)](#), Xpragma  
[marc.buyens@xpragma.com](mailto:marc.buyens@xpragma.com)  
 url: <http://www.xpragma.com/view121.php>

Today, we stand at a time point where companies must choose a new direction. The convergence of a number of conflicting influences makes that keeping the current status quo is no longer an option. But do we choose the right direction?

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In [The case for Business Interaction Management \(BIM\)](#) we presented a number of reasons that make that companies must abandon their primary focus on (internal) business processes and instead, focus more the interactions these processes have with other, external or internal parties.

As for the focus on the interactions with external parties (customers, partners...), we do not stand alone in this pleading. As we described in [Is BPM doomed?](#), in the BPM space, groups such as the [BP Group](#) are also promoting an "Outside-In" BPM approach, which focuses on the customer experience, as opposed to the more traditional Six Sigma and Lean approaches which aim essentially at the optimisation of the company-internal aspects.

However, for the interactions with internal parties (the employees), things remain very quiet. Everyone is well aware of the fact that present conditions are not really brilliant, but there are few candidates to tackle the problem.

It is quite normal. The individuals who are in the best position to develop the necessary changes are themselves "captive" in a network of interactions with their peers and other colleagues, both higher and lower in rank. Any rethinking of this interaction network, by definition, also touches their own position. So, it is normal that there are few candidates to initiate the change.

Unfortunately, this exercise must be done. We stand at a time point where the convergence of a number of conflicting influences forces us to change position.

First, there is the observation that today, more than ever, there is an absolute "disconnect" between the personal ambitions and desires of individuals and the way companies allow achieving these goals within the scope of their position as an employee.

Second, coincidence or not, we have seen over the past years fundamental evolutions, such as Web 2.0, that have given individuals unprecedented possibilities for self-deployment, creativity and own initiative. The logical consequence is that more and more (potential) employees wish to use these tools also within the enterprise, but especially, want to find there a similar "personal experience".

Third, the observation of the viral success of Web 2.0 in the field of creativity, participation and enthusiasm has triggered the interest of companies, hoping that similar advantages can be gained by adopting similar tools, a movement that we know as Enterprise 2.0.

Unfortunately, all of this is difficult to reconcile. The net result is a situation that becomes even more complex than before. As we have described in [Enterprise 2.0 - enter the dark force](#), the reasons why individuals (or employees) want to use such tools are not necessarily the reasons the company has in mind. Also, the results the company is hoping for are not very realistic since the context, which has made the viral success of Web 2.0, does not exist within the enterprise. In some way, both parties want to use the same "tool", but for completely different reasons and neither party gets what it's hoping for.

Still, it makes sense introducing Web 2.0 tools within the company context. In many cases, they simply offer better solutions for the day-to-day challenges and, given the right context, they indeed have the potential for being a basis for more than incremental improvement.

But first, the right context.

And this right context has everything to do with the way employees will be allowed to interact, at all levels, with each other and with the outside world. This calls for reconsidering differences in positions and rank. This involves new forms of collaboration, a redistribution of tasks and of decision-making authority and a scale-down of certain forms of control. However, this has also to do with new forms of governance and more responsibility for individuals. This is an enormous challenge and therefore, not really the freewheeling world of Web 2.0.

Therefore, it was an unfortunate choice of Andrew McAfee when he initially coined Enterprise 2.0 as the use of Web 2.0 tools within the enterprise. These tools create some opportunities, but within a traditional organisation it makes little sense. Instead, Enterprise 2.0 is an enterprise that has the willingness for reconsidering its organisation, its way of operating and the interactions between employees at all levels in a fundamental way so that the use of Web 2.0 tools indeed makes sense.

But not the other way around.

## 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.



<http://www.facebook.com/marcb254>



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



<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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