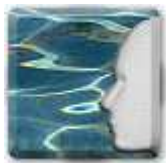




2008 trends that bring no added value, still might be fun to do | The Xpragmatic View



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Well, this is the first View of the new year, so lets take it a bit easy and not too serious. And what can be less serious than some projections for the coming year? So, here we go with our own version of the trends of 2008 that will bring no added value, still might be fun to do.

Internet trends for 2008

With the start of the new year, most media have their own version of the 2008 trends to watch or to expect. So does [Merrill Lynch](#) with its "Top Internet themes for 1H'08". We do not know whether this document is really public content, but you can download it from the blog of Guy Kawasaki.

Well, this is certainly an interesting piece of reading, especially when you own some stock or plan to own some of the big shots such as [Google](#), [Yahoo](#) and other [Ebay](#)'s. Of course, the document is not a general 2008 forecast and is essentially focused on the stock evolution of these companies as the result of the anticipated evolutions and trends in the market.

Still, this also allows for some more down-to-earth reflections on the importance or the non-importance of these evolutions for the more traditional organisation. So, here we go with our own version of the trends of 2008 that will bring no added value, still might be fun to do.

Trend #1. The business model is ads

Not data, not information, not knowledge are driving the Internet economy. The Internet economy exists by the virtue of ads. Looooooots of ads.

Already for some time, search engine results (and especially Google's) are polluted by ads and ad-driven websites. So, unless you are looking for some really weird subject such as strange matrimonial rituals of south-Polynesian tribes in the thirteenth century, the outcome of your search will be sponsored links and lots of worthless pages that carry lots of ad links.

"Ads by Google" is now the Internet version of "Intel inside". With Intel, they still were only inside the PC. With Google...?

Another interesting aspect of this ad-model is the information inequality. While the Google's and the Yahoo's of this world have a clear visibility on their return on investment, the companies that place the ads do not. Still, they have information about the number of "views" and the number of "clicks", both worthless expressions of consumer interest, but at least, there is something to measure and to report upon.

A huge progress indeed.

So, our projection for the coming year is that an increasing number of companies will increase their spending on Internet- and mobile-based ads, with a decreasing return on investment (0,8 probability). Unless of course, they have invested in stock of Google or Yahoo, which might be a better strategy than running their own business.

Trend #2. The business platform is no-wire

Mobile business is hot. Ever since the mobile industry discovered that even the ergonomically worst nightmare such as the SMS can be a great success, ruthless attempts have followed to put even more nonsense on a square inch screen. We agree, it reduces the readability of such nonsense, so this is not all that bad.

As for an organisation, mobile communications give the absolute guarantee that nothing will be organised. Everyone can reach anyone at any time at whatever location for whatever reason, so there is no longer the need to plan, to prioritize, to think in advance. You simply call. Mobile communications are reactive business at its best.

Preferably, mobile communication is used during business meetings, highlighting that the meeting itself adds little value and that the really important people were not invited anyway.

So, our projection for the coming year is that an increasing number of companies will increase their spending on mobile communications for internal purposes and for consumer ads, with a decreasing return on investment (assuming of course that there has been some return on investment previously) (0,8 probability).

As an illustration of the value this will generate for corporations, last week, we received the first commercial SMS from our dear bank. It was a nice reminder telling us that we have to speed up with our move to an alternative.

Trend #3. Enterprise 2.0 becomes mainstream

And of course, there are social networks and social tools.

As never before, social networks are becoming mainstream and therefore, even more boring. In addition, social networks will be fully adhering to the above mentioned trends. The recent upheaval regarding the Beacon advertising system on [Facebook](#) and the under-the-cover introduction of ads on the [Xing](#) platform are only minor wrinkles on the all-is-good feeling of socialising.

As for 2008, our projection is that an increasing number of companies will increase their spending on social software and social approaches such as wikis and collaborative tools in order to improve customer relationships and knowledge sharing (0,9 probability).

As before, very few of them will be able to articulate the reason for doing so, let alone how they will measure the return on investment of these initiatives. Some companies will include the social network membership fees as part of the offered compensation package (without knowing that there are many social networks, of course) (0,7 probability).

As with other productivity tools, the use of social networking tools will not change/improve the behaviour of employees, but will only highlight the differences in capabilities of employees (1,0 probability), which of course is a valuable input for the next performance review cycle.

Social networking tools will neither change the intelligence nor the behaviour of the management team, giving us the comfortable feeling of stability and that all is good in the business universe.

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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