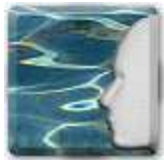




Aphorisms and Enterprise 2.0 | The Xpragmatic View



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Already for some time, Enterprise 2.0 is a hot item on the agenda of management teams. Only, the confusion remains. Does it really exist? Does it work? And, if so, can someone please tell us what it really is?

Aphorisms and other oversimplifications

March 6, there was a short posting on the [blog of Andrew McAfee](#), Associate Professor at the Harvard Business School, titled [Sorry, Was That an Aphorism?](#)

While preparing a meeting he would have with some senior executives, McAfee was struggling with the problem of explaining the difference between Web 2.0 and Enterprise 2.0 in one concise message.

So he came up with the following statement (emphasis by McAfee):

*You **cannot** greatly influence Web 2.0.
 You can **greatly** influence Enterprise 2.0*

But apparently, he was not completely sure about this result, so he asked *"Is that the right message for senior executives, or did I greatly oversimplify or steamroll an important distinction?"*

Well, to some extent, he is of course right and at least, it is a message senior executives will understand. However, will they understand the correct thing? We fear not.

Indeed, putting things the way McAfee does also carries two additional, yet very dangerous messages:

- There is indeed something such as Enterprise 2.0
- Enterprise 2.0 is something good, something you will want to have

Both messages are at least partly incorrect.

There is no such thing as Enterprise 2.0

First, let's make this very clear: ***there is no such thing as Enterprise 2.0.*** Period. Forget about it. You might want it, you might hope for it, but it will not come. Never.

The reason for this is quite simple, but nobody seems to see the obvious fact:

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.*

In previous Views such as [Organisations and ecosystems](#) and [The ant business - Show me the money!](#), we already discussed a number of reasons why some of the mechanics of Web 2.0 will not work within the enterprise context, but there are many more. They all boil down to the simple reality that an enterprise is something quite different from the social cloud that is called the Internet and an employee is something quite different from the individual who lives his personal virtual life on the net.

Different worlds, with different rules and possibilities. It is unfortunate, yet it is a simple reality. Try to live with it.

Enterprise 2.0 is not necessarily something you want

However, while we might not be able to reap all the benefits of the Web 2.0 dream of collaboration, networking, sharing, user-driven content, etc., it neither can be avoided that Web 2.0 tools, approaches and culture will make inroads into the enterprise.

As some respondent to McAfee's posting argued, *"Enterprise 2.0 is unavoidable since Web 2.0 acceptance by employees will translate into a desire to use/deploy the same concepts within the organisation"*.

This is correct. Employees will take it for granted that they are able to grab the tool they want to make their daily life easier. Employees will take it for granted that they have immediate access to information when they want it, wherever they want it. Employees will push the peer-to-peer mentality of social networking into the organisational structure of the enterprise.

It cannot be avoided.


Therefore, we can only hope that there is some truth in McAfee's statement that *"You can greatly influence Enterprise 2.0"*. We hope so. You will need it.


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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