

Foreword

The content of this book is timely and highly valuable due to the growing importance of the Web 2.0 business economy and its implications on individuals, organizations, and societies in an ever-growing competitive global marketplace. Today, the outreach realized through information and communication technology is magnified based on state-of-the-art tools and techniques in both the marketspace and marketplace. Time and distance barriers are gradually diminishing, providing an invaluable strength to network effects and its multiple and associated influence on different constituents. Web 2.0 clearly represents the impact that collaboration and teamwork can achieve. It is the most recent evolution of the information and communication technology industry caused by the growing role of the Internet as a platform for business and societal development. The role of people in such a platform is integral in its effectiveness and success. How people contribute, collaborate, compete, and capitalize on information and communication technology is a prerequisite to the realization of the potentials of Web 2.0. The different online models available vary in their success; however, they are all changing, learning, and adapting, and are on course to enable a growing market of users worldwide to benefit from as well as grow and excel given the potential benefits expected from the digital economy.

Web 2.0 is gradually contributing to the massive knowledge repository that is growing online and made accessible to over two billion Internet users worldwide. Blogs, Wikis, enterprise applications, and social networking are all contributing to a flat platform for collaboration and knowledge exchange that help in smoothing all the barriers while supporting in developing, implementing, and institutionalizing cutting-edge applications that can have positive impact on the individual, organizational, and societal levels. It is a great pleasure to see the publication of this book, which sees the production of 16 different chapters reflecting applications, tools, models, cases, and processes related to Web 2.0 from around the world with many lessons learned for future research and implementation. The content of these chapters is important for different constituents of the Web 2.0 ecosystem linking industry, business, and academia as well as blending educational content with business and industry needs demonstrated in real-life market practices and emerging concepts

and trends. Web 2.0 is all about creating value and demonstrating how businesses and customers interact, which automatically provides a venue for emerging business models that are adaptable to market changes and transformations. In many ways, Web 2.0 is a demonstration of what Alvin Toffler called in the 1980s “prosumers,” where each one is a mix of do-it-yourself producer blended with his natural setting as a consumer.

User-generated information and knowledge is at the core of Web 2.0 leading to changes in market forces, educational platform, and industry interactions amongst other collaborative settings. Individuals previously known as observers are nowadays actively engaged individuals. Groups online learn from each other and extend the collaboration irrespective of the geographic location, which at a minimal cost, if any, scales up the outcome and expectations of Web 2.0. For a few decades, the literature addressing the potential of online collaboration in developing and emerging economies had witnessed minimal coverage. This book provides a new direction of the potential of Web 2.0 in transforming developing economies and societies amongst others. This has been already realized in the case of a few companies in the emerging world but also in the socioeconomic and political platform. It is clearly demonstrated in the transformation taking place in a number of countries in the Middle East, such as Egypt, with a clear and effective role being played by Web 2.0.

The book combines a variety of chapters that address opportunities for entrepreneurs created through technology applications; platforms for civil society collaboration; eGovernment application; societal transformation; social networking; educational development; corporate performance; innovation; social marketing; eLearning; and eHealth. One of the most important aspects of the book is its broad coverage of challenges and opportunities involved from around the world. Some of the elements addressed reflect the business thinking, strategies, and implementation tools and techniques that can help Web 2.0 have its potential impact on society. While information was power in the past, sharing it today makes its holder more powerful and increasingly profitable. Web 2.0 is a platform for scalability, diversity, and inclusion. The inputs accumulated are usually a reflection of different yet collaborative analysis of ideas and issues that are of growing interest to a large global population. The Internet generation, irrespective of age, background, and expertise, blends different experiences leading to an outcome that is at the core of Web 2.0 and expected to yield exponential growth in the years to come as the technology and its acceptance among a wider community is well diffused and properly utilized.

Communication and internetworking have always been the mechanism for knowledge transfer and exchange across time. Today, Web 2.0 is providing a newly innovative technique to address that knowledge component, create it, amend it, adapt it, and adapt it in a way that can cater for the changes taking place on a constant basis. People are building new ways of connections that are timely, efficient,

and effective. The clusters of people created through Web 2.0 are linking expertise that otherwise might not have connected to each other. In addition, such connection is being made faster, easier, and less costly leapfrogging most, if not all, other communication channels. The more platforms created through Web 2.0 becomes mature, the more benefits and rewards the beneficiaries across different constituents will feel from the opportunities presented. The world is becoming all about competition in a timely fashion. Time to react is minimized, and Web 2.0 extends the competitive knowledge advantage with the possibility for reaching out to different constituents and delivers the expected outcome in a mobile and remote way. Viral growth of Web 2.0 will increase in the years to come to address different sectors and industries. This book demonstrates through its different chapters the extent of the effect that Web 2.0 could have on business and industry in the years to come. In addition, the value the different users will be able to generate by sharing and exchanging basic information and knowledge will be shared by a growing group of people and the acceleration and speed of the impact will be constantly growing as more people become increasingly interested in collaborative tools, techniques, and applications that are enabled through Web 2.0. All these elements will not only help create the expected ecosystem but also improve and leverage the competencies of its different stakeholders. Web 2.0 is a reflection of an invaluable mindset that will have remarkable impact on different sectors in the years to come as we move into the next decade of the 21st century, and that is innovation and creativity. Web 2.0 is all about innovative tools, innovative communication, innovation collaboration, and innovative thinking, and this book provides an important contribution to the growing literature addressing innovation and creativity aspects such as Web 2.0. I would like to seize this opportunity and thank the editor, authors, reviewers, and everyone that was associated in the preparation and publication of this book for their invaluable contribution to the body of knowledge of emerging and innovative information and communication technology tools and applications.

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