

Web 2.0 in 2008



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Applications manufacturers today offer tools that allow companies to reap all of the potential benefits of Web 2.0. Behind most of these initiatives lies a simple yet very promising idea for the corporate world. Without installing “in house” software (that is under the *cloud computing* format), companies can capitalize on these free on-line services for a series of activities requiring coordination or collaboration. These include organizing meetings, sharing contacts and documents, and creating communities. Furthermore, integration with social networks allows companies to get to know their clients and their preferences better in order to choose the ideal candidates. In this sense, it seems logical to assume that Web 2.0 will undergo a strong new surge due to its commitment to mobility, and specific applications are already coming out on the market.

In general, Spanish companies have been slow to jump onto the bandwagon. There are a few exceptions, though. One of the most noteworthy of these is Actibva, the Web 2.0 platform launched by BBVA that is designed to inform users about the evolution of financial markets and foment relationships among parties interested in savings and economic topics from the viewpoint of markets as well as the personal finances. BBVA’s team of specialized journalists selects news according to completely independent criteria and offers its own views in the Actibva blog. As such, users can vote on news items and introduce their own commentaries.

Beyond this example, there are a few interesting Web 2.0 initiatives gathering force among younger Spanish companies. One of them is meneame.net, a portal to which users can send news items and vote on their meaningfulness. The company has just celebrated its third anniversary since opening and now has 1.6 million unique users per month. Of these, 90,000 are registered and generating

over 17 million website views per month. Another good example is Wikiloc, a portal containing 42,000 routes and 56,000 images and videos of these routes sent by users. Google gave official technological recognition to this concept in 2006 when it chose Wikiloc as the best Google Maps mashup. As a result, its routes have been included in Google Earth since mid-2008. iBicing is another interesting initiative. It was created by Mi Mundo iPhone to improve the efficiency of Bicing, Barcelona's shared biking system. With Bicing, any citizen of Barcelona can obtain a personal identification card at very low cost in order to use one of the company's bicycles parked at convenient stations throughout the city. These bicycles can be picked up and dropped off at any point within the city network. This very successful service is used by thousands of people per day, but it relies on a prior knowledge of where the nearest pickup and drop off stations are located. iBicing was developed to solve this problem by using the geo-positioning system on the Apple iPhone to show the exact point of nearby stations along with the number of bicycles and free spaces available at any given time.

Blogs as ports of entry for Web 2.0

There are hundreds of corporate blogs in Spain that are quickly becoming Web 2.0 ports of entry for many Spanish companies. A good example of this is the blog created by Spain's Telecommunications Market Commission (CMT in Spanish) after finding that it was easy to reach specialized journalists but not so easy to reach telecommunication end users. The three commission professionals who maintain the blog meet every Friday to choose the contents to which day-to-day updates will be added. It uses WordPress, a free open code tool, along with a Premium account to store limitless image and video content in the wordpress.com servers. The CMT wanted to control this content directly rather than share it via other services such as You Tube or other similar platforms. Still, the budget for technological infrastructure does not surpass 100 euros annually, including the domain. The reader response has been better than expected, with an average of 800 daily visits.

It is likely that the current crisis will not affect the Web 2.0 initiatives in terms of the number of end users. Users will continue to multiply, although broad-based adoption of the most ambitious corporate projects may take more time than

expected. On the other hand, the same crisis may prove to be a good opportunity for companies and the administration to decide to use social Web resources both for improving services and reducing costs.