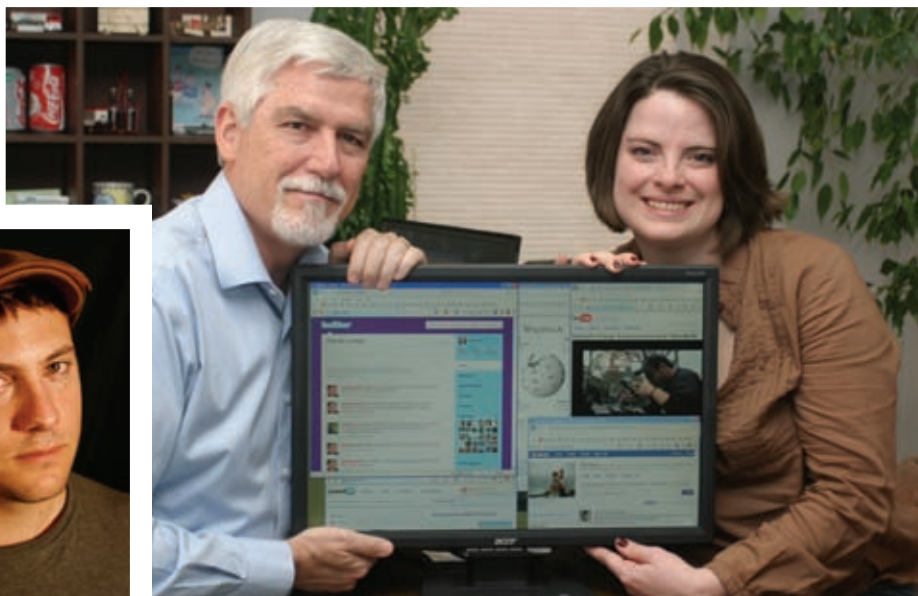


Contributors



PATRICK JONES is a native Atlantan who has lived with his wife, son and two dogs in Cary, N.C., for the past decade. His work has appeared in *Arnold Palmer's Kingdom Magazine*, *Luxury Living*, *New Jersey Life*, *North Carolina Magazine*, *GolfStyles* and other U.S. and regional publications. He has previously profiled such notables as comedian Jeff Foxworthy and professional football quarterback Dan Marino.

His favored writing specialties include business, golf, profiles, real estate, travel, and, in general, any assignment that offers an exceptional challenge along with at least one free meal.

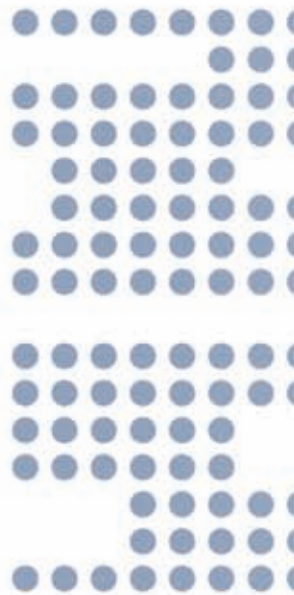


HUNTER HOLCOMBE is a freelance journalist and a former managing editor of *Smart Meetings* magazine. Previous to his work in the global meeting and event industry, he was editor of a San Francisco-based technology startup and a political and ghost writer.

Born and raised in Seattle, Hunter eventually fled to the (relatively) sunny skies of the Bay Area, where he was one of the last graduates of the award-winning journalism program at the University of California, Santa Cruz. In addition to writing about meetings, he contributes to such magazines as *Virtuoso Life*, *Sunset* and *SOMA*. He now lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where writing, Malbec wine and steak consume much of his attention.



The father/daughter team of **JEFF RASCO, CMP**, and **CHRISTINA RASCO ADAMS** are partners (along with son and brother, respectively, Layton Rasco) in *Attendee Management Inc.*, a registration services company based in Wimberley, a small Texas Hill Country hamlet outside of Austin. Running a company that specializes in online systems, they spend their days with noses pressed to computer screens working in the manic world of the Internet. Always looking for ways to gain efficiencies, effectiveness and customers, they stay on the lookout for new technologies and ways of intelligent application to the global meeting and event community. They have both previously covered tech topics for MPI publications.



2.0 411



Dip a Toe Into Some Hot Technology

BY JEFFREY W. RASCO, CMP, AND CHRISTINA RASCO ADAMS

Graduated to Web 2.0?

Lose you already? Whether you “tweet” on a regular basis or have never used “google” as a verb, let’s get your feet wet and discover how to effectively use the Web’s latest offerings.

Here’s a quick lesson: The first era of the Internet was all about sending and getting information from one source to another. Sending e-mail, chatting with pals, surfing the Web, shopping—a user searched for information and communicated in a linear way. While these things remain integral parts of daily life, today’s Internet introduces a collaborative feel to the way we communicate and exchange information. The Web has evolved into a place where we not only get and pass along information, but we also contribute.

A complete guide to these trends and applications would fill several volumes and require updating on a daily basis—the goal here is to review the most active Web. 2.0 components that, when used well, can increase efficiency in your professional and personal life, create buzz for your business and events and innovate the way you meet, communicate and network.

TWITTER

Twitter says it is a service to communicate and stay connected through quick, frequent answers to one simple question: “What are you doing?”

6:15 PM Feb 3rd from web

Of all the 2.0 apps, Twitter seems to raise the question, “What is it good for?” most often. Some correspondents are not terribly kind.

7:38 PM Feb 3rd from web

Admittedly, Twitter seemed the least attractive of social networking sites. It seemed so “all about me” and non-collaborative.

8:02 PM Feb 3rd from mobile

Something the kids were doing, but not a professional vehicle. Some of the messages are inane. Who cares?

9:30 PM Feb 3rd from Facebook

Then we started digging, and began following a few posters (guess we shouldn’t call them twits) who shared items of interest.

5:00 AM Feb 4th from web

During a recent hurricane, our local paper used Twitter to report on the devastated areas. With no power, it was some of our only news.

5:09 AM Feb 4th from web

Then we started seeing industry pals advertising that they were on Twitter, and we signed up to “follow” their “tweets.”

5:42 AM Feb 4th from web

In Twitter, a tweet is a posted message of fewer than 140 characters, short and sweet—perfect for an SMS message.

5:43 AM Feb 4th from Facebook

When you set up your Twitter account, you need to choose how public you want your updates

BLOG IT UP

If you look solely at coined dates, Weblogs (blogs) are really a predecessor of the Web 2.0 movement. Blogs started appearing in the late 1990s as essentially a journaling tool to document thoughts, descriptions and commentary on events and post pictures, videos and graphics. More recently, blogs have morphed into forums that reach well beyond the personal diaries they were initially perceived as.

The uses are endless. Blogs can be private or public, can restrict contributors to a single person or be open to anyone to post content or comment on material and can take on any look or layout imaginable. Families and friends use them to stay connected, news services use them as means for outreach and opinion forums, corporations utilize blogs both internally and externally and recent elections

exhibited how blogs could be used effectively to engage supporters.

The platform is an easy and effective way to garner interest in events and keep attendees, prospects, speakers and planners updated. Posting updates about the event, such as session topics and event promotions, may be easier via a blog than altering an event site. Blogs can even allow speakers to collaborate and connect with attendees in order to better develop their sessions to meld with attendee interests.

Here’s a way to get active in the blogosphere.

1. You can install blog software on your Web site (the links to your blog entries from other bloggers are good for search engine visibility). It requires a bit of techie knowledge, but it’s not a big project for your webmaster. An even simpler way to enter the blogosphere is through a blog application. These make it easy to get

your ideas out to the world. There are several blogging programs available, so first you will need to choose a provider. Any search engine will return numerous possibilities, so poke around and select one that suites your needs. For a recent family blog we put together, we chose Blogger (www.blogger.com), a Google product.

2. Create an account. Supply a few pieces of pertinent information, and you’re official.

3. Create the look and feel of your blog site. Depending on your proclivities, this could be the easiest or most difficult part of the process. (Don’t worry, you can always change it later.) There are a multitude of template selections, or you can design your own. Of course, if the blog is tied to an event or business, stick with those styles and branding requirements.

4. Most blogging programs offer settings to help control privacy levels. For our family blog,

we chose to make the blog private, which limits access to the site to only approved members and restricts postings to only those set to “author” status. These settings can be manipulated to varying levels depending on what is needed.

5. Click on the “post” link, and now you’re ready to start posting! Most will take you to a WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) editor, which will help you type and format your message. Submit it, and you’ve entered the world of blogging.

While step No. 5 is technically the final step to your first post, it should not end your blogging career. Blogs can easily get outdated, and outdated blogs are worthless. Keep your blog current with regular posts. If you are relying on a group of contributors to add to the blog, remind them regularly or create a posting schedule.

(tweets) to be. It's not a contest.

5:47 AM Feb 4th from Facebook

If you don't select "Protect Your Updates" anyone can follow you. It might fit your plans perfectly, or you might want to be more selective.

5:50 AM Feb 4th from web

There are three main ways to find people on Twitter. Search Twitter using names or locations, send e-mail invites or search other systems.

5:54 AM Feb 4th from web

Twitter can search your Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail or other address books and invite anyone it finds.

5:58 AM Feb 4th from web

Look closely, and you'll start seeing "Follow Me On Twitter" everywhere—in e-mail signatures, Web sites, blogs, Facebook, MySpace.

6:13 AM Feb 4th from web

Search.twitter.com lets you look at all tweets trending toward a specific subject. This can lead to some great people to follow.

6:25 AM Feb 4th from web

As you choose to follow other Twitterers, you opt to receive their updates on your cell or not—they'll be on your personal page anyway.

8:02 AM Feb 4th from web

You can always decide not to follow someone later. Those that really add to the conversation we've added to our list to send text messages.

11:35 AM Feb 4th from mobile

Make sure you're adding to the conversation, too. Answering "What are you doing?" is OK, but "What matters to you?" is a better question.

11:38 AM Feb 4th from mobile

Other account options let you change Twitter's looks. You can add/change a picture and select from several backgrounds or design your own.

11:54 AM Feb 4th from mobile

Truly, Twitter is a very simple micro-blog. We keep looking for the bigger picture, but the whole thing is just a bunch of snapshots.

12:02 PM Feb 4th from mobile

You can expand on it, but that's not necessary. We connected it to our RSS feed and Facebook site, so those are all synched.

10:59 AM Feb 5th from mobile

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) allows you to aggregate information from many sites through subscriptions to "feeds."

6:31 PM Feb 5th from web

By adding the Twitter "feed" we can view those posts, along with

other blogs, mainstream news and even Facebook entries in one place.

6:58 PM Feb 5th from web

Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn and Plaxo, some of the most popular social networking sites, all ask "What are you doing?" Twitter-style.

3:49 AM Feb 6th from web

And Twitter has millions of subscribers sending tens of millions of tweets weekly, so they must be onto something. Beware...it's addictive.

4:24 AM Feb 6th from web

(By the way, if you're wondering about our choppy prose in this section, each entry is a tweet limited to 140 characters.)

5:20 AM Feb 6th from web

How tweet it is!

8:36 AM Feb 6th from mobile

CONTINUED ON PAGE 84

IT'S TIME FOR THE POCONO MOUNTAINS



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 69

WIKIS

Even if you don't know it, you are probably familiar with wikis. When was the last time you pulled one of those lettered encyclopedia volumes off the shelf? Can't remember? In the Internet age, we tend to head to Wikipedia instead. Wikipedia is one of the best-known and most-used examples of wikis. As defined by Wikipedia (how appropriate), a wiki is a page or pages that enables visitors to contribute or modify existing content. According to its Web site, there are hundreds of thousands of visitors making hundreds of thousands of edits to articles and contributing new ones each day.

Don't let the size of Wikipedia intimidate you. It is a massive example of a concept that can be used effectively in much simpler contexts. The platform creates an open environment in which users can add and edit the pages' content within a simple, easy-to-use interface, making it an effective tool to allow groups to collaborate.

In his video "Wikis in Plain English," Lee LeFever offers the example of a group of friends planning a trip. Rather than trying to coordinate through a barrage of e-mail, the friends utilize a wiki to organize the trip on one cohesive space they can all visit and contribute to.

The Meetings Industry Wiki (found in the Resources section at www.mpiweb.org) exhibits how wikis can be used to share information among a large group of people from across the globe. All members are able to add articles or edit existing articles with the click of a button. With no

programs to download, the only pause is to enter your username and password.

It's simple to create your own wiki. In fact, one wiki program touts that you can create your own in under 60 seconds. Read on.

1. Like other Web 2.0 trends, there are several applications you can use to build your wiki. Do a little research and choose a provider, then create your account. While larger wikis may incur fees, many of the providers do not charge for moderate-size wikis. We tested Wikispaces (www.wikispaces.com) and PBWiki (www.pbwiki.com) and preferred PBWiki, although both are fairly straightforward.

2. Next you'll name your wiki. The name you choose will be incorporated into the domain so the URL to your wiki will look something like <http://yourwikiname.wikiprovidername.com>.

3. Seconds later, you will be on your



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wiki. Click the edit button and the page will become editable. You will be able to add text and images and format the page.

4. Hit save and your page is now part of the wiki world. Invite others to your site to view and contribute.

MEDIA BROADCASTING

Being able to put video presentations quickly and easily online is very cool. It has extremely practical applications, too.

Audio podcasts have been around forever (in Internet time), but until fairly recently, video was far less common.

Video streaming has been available but required significant resources to house and feed the files on demand. Four years ago that changed with the birth of YouTube. Also, Apple's popular iPods gained a video viewer, and the popularity of podcasts grew into another medium. Suddenly, anyone could be a media broadcaster, potentially

reaching millions on their computers, media players and mobile phones.

At first, self-posted videos were quite often of poor quality—amateurish productions that were simple, silly pleasures (think water-skiing squirrels). Today, YouTube and its sister video hosting services provide educational, promotional and every other imaginable variety of video in environments that are simple (and free) to use. One of the features that makes them most attractive from our perspective is the ability to post a video and instantly have the HTML code necessary to embed the video in your own Web site, blog or social networking page, or to simply send the link to your audiences in an e-mail.

To get started, you usually need to set up an account with one of the services. Some of the most popular are YouTube, iTunes, Blip.tv, Revver, Digg, Mevio and Crackle. Interestingly, Google (which



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Finally, consider lighting and location. You are a great presenter, and you've written a killer script, but if the image is muddy or washed out, viewers can become distracted. A well-lit subject against a neutral background allows the viewer to focus more on what's important: you and your message.

owns YouTube) also allows subscribers to upload and share videos. If you already have Google e-mail, blogs or any of its other services, it is easy to move around between the applications. Social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook also offer simple solutions for video uploads.

Once your account is established and

you are in the program, browse your computer for the file you wish to share, name it and provide a description. You may also be asked to provide a genre (business, special interest, comedy) and select whether your video is available for the public or will be for private use. Most files that you record on a digital camera, or even your cell phone, will be in a proper format, but

check with the service for preferred file types. YouTube likes H.264 compression in MPEG-2 or MPEG-4 formats—most of which are standard.

If you plan to produce your video to promote your meeting, property or services or for other professional purposes, you will want to record with the best possible quality. Select a good camera, and consider one that can record in high-definition digital format. If you use tape, it can be converted, but that's an additional step. Many people feel the audio component is even more important than the video quality. Although you can use the microphone built into the camera, for the best overall production you will want your camera to have an audio input so you can hook up an external mic for optimum quality.

Finally, consider lighting and location. You are a great presenter, and you've



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written a killer script, but if the image is muddy or washed out, viewers can become distracted. A well-lit subject against a neutral background allows the viewer to focus more on what's important: you and your message. You can rent or purchase tungsten studio lights, or take advantage of outdoor locations and natural light to produce professional-looking clips.

Your show may be one continuous take, or you may want to break up the video with extra shots for emphasis or explanation. Editing software such as Windows Movie Maker or Apple iMovie are probably already on your computer, but others such as Apple's Final Cut or Podcast Producer, Sony's Vegas or Yahoo's JumpCut may offer the more sophisticated options you seek. Any of these allow you to weave together different shots, audio and graphics for an effective videocast.

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Web 2.0 focuses on what we're dubbing the three Cs—content, collaboration and connections. The components of this generation of the Internet transform the way we use the Web, but in simple ways that are accessible to all users and opening up a world of creativity.

Not long after you start tweeting, blogging and wikiing, it's easy to see the need for one more C—coordination. Take a look at your inbox and you'll see that the last thing you need is to be inundated with more stuff to sift through, particularly when half those tidbits are 140 character reflections on someone else's life. Not always efficient, nor effective.

Never fear, the trend toward integration is moving at the same 2.0 break-neck pace. Social networking sites have applications to connect your Twitter and

other accounts to their pages. Spots such as MyYahoo or Google Reader allow you to follow news blogs through RSS feeds, monitor Facebook and check the weather and sports scores from a single vantage point. Additionally, mobile phone technology is allowing even greater access (drivers beware). As these technologies develop further it will become even easier for us to enjoy the Wonderful Wide Web and utilize all four Cs. **one+**

JEFF RASCO, CMP, and CHRISTINA RASCO ADAMS are partners in Attendee Management Inc. based in Wimberley, Texas.



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