

## Revolution 2.1

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The second Internet revolution has clearly started to take shape. Remember the massive changes forecast by hundreds of tech-writers, including myself, for the past two years? While slower in coming than expected, the last critical stage for their mass adoption of these changes, their introduction, appears to have begun. Welcome to Revolution 2.1.

Revolution, according to one definition offered by [Princeton University's WordNet](#) is, "a drastic and far-reaching change in ways of thinking and behaving."

Revolutions come in stages, generally brewing for long periods before overwhelming the traditional order with the weight of massive social adoption of new ideas, tools and methods. They almost always stem from increased social or technical knowledge and require the support of a prosperous middle-class majority to fully succeed.

In this case, that majority is the Internet users themselves. The search engines are providing the tools forged by in-house and third party software developers whose creativity formed the framework for the coming changes. Underpinning the revolution is the virtually universal access to broadband, high-speed connectivity in North America and most of Western Europe, Oceania and Asia.

The last thing a successful revolution requires is the need to have one in the first place. Unless a society or economy is horribly oppressed, revolution really is a lot of bother and hard work. Why go to the trouble of establishing a new way of doing things if the old one works?

The current Internet economy works just fine, at least for those who can exploit opportunities in or around it. A vast improvement on personal empowerment from the socio-economic order of the post WW2 corporate-economies, the Internet has provided tens of millions of people the essential tools to become entrepreneurs and add value to their lives and their communities.

Add the emergence of two billion new users and developers from India and China to the mix, along with the hundreds of millions in other parts of Africa, Asia and South America who are also finding easier access to the Internet and the need to alter our traditions becomes that much more apparent. Issues ranging from language and translation support to the legal differences between jurisdictional areas are suddenly on the table.

The Internet as we know it today is actually a massive hodgepodge of applications, common and conflicting protocols, and clunky client-side software strung together by an amazingly versatile and efficient routing system. The ability to collaborate between artificial and human driven intelligences is phenomenal but, as originators such as Vint Cerf and Bill Gates have said, what we see today is only the tip of the iceberg.

Yesterday's quiet but deliberate unveiling of Microsoft's [Windows Live](#) marked the true beginning of a new phase in Internet development as the software giant follows rival Google in presenting a host of online

services and server side software for registered users. One giant following another through a virgin forest will certainly open a very wide path for others to follow.

In a nutshell, Windows Live has copied Google's personalized search portal ([google.com/ig](http://google.com/ig)) though its layout and functionality is very much different. Oddly enough, the release and functionality of Windows Live is not in itself an important milestone. Their contribution to Revolution 2.1 is the adoption of a user and/or group influenced personalization of information retrieval by the major search entities. Being the second to offer registered users the ability to create their own info-portal home page, Microsoft is pretty much ensuring that, assuming users go for it; others will follow the model in the future.

Microsoft also released [OfficeLive](#), a major and important step forward in Revolution 2.1. OfficeLive marks a renewed mission for Microsoft in the development and distribution of server-side software. According to Microsoft chief technical officer Ozzie Smith, "Internet users have come to expect services that are fast, easy-to-use – and, in many cases, free. Access to personal information from any PC or mobile device is becoming expected, making more users willing to store their personal information on the servers of companies such as Google than their own PCs."

Google has supported the development of much of the software that will power the coming changes. Over the years, the alliance between Google and the open source community has been widely known. Soon, Google is expected to be involved with the release of Open Office as server-side software on demand.

Google and Microsoft are not alone in their contributions to Revolution 2.1. The largest tech-driver of the coming changes is the ability to feed user-created information via [RSS](#) or Real Simple Syndication.

Yahoo recently took a radically different but equally revolutionary path with the citizen-publisher focused Yahoo Publisher Network.

The [Yahoo Publisher Network](#) is a massive initiative in grassroots publishing that Yahoo hopes will be adopted by citizen journalists and commercial publishers. YPN is an amalgam of what will eventually be dozens of Yahoo features and services with the ability to create and mass-distribute blogs. Yahoo leads the search field in the provision of in-house and user generated content for bloggers through the YPN. It also offers advertising distribution incentives similar to Google AdSense for YPN publishers.

Over the past ten years, two general types of information have emerged from the Internet. One type is academic or social in focus and the other is commercial or politically focused. The first wants to learn and share, the second to lead and sell. Up until this point, both have existed in tandem, pretty much treated equally by search engines and Internet protocols. Quite often, at least in the realm of general search, the commercial side has exploited this equality, (SEOs and SEMs can insert a polite but self-effacing cough here), sometimes pushing quality but non-commercial information lower in search results than it ought to be.

Concurrently, a new generation of software engineers grew up. Unlike previous generations, this new bunch has always had computers and the Internet as functioning parts of their lives. These teen and early 20-somethings relate to the Internet differently than their parents and even their older peers do. Like 30-something Gen-X'ers and their love-hate relationship with PR, mass marketing and advertising, today's younger net-user doesn't necessarily trust everything he or she sees online. Unlike previous generations however, this young set can immediately do something about it.

Necessity is the mother of invention and frustration is often the muse of innovation. The Internet gave these teen and 20-something innovators the platform to build better mousetraps on and the ability to do so almost instantly. That's what the hype surrounding Web2.0 is all about.

What they have created is a set of extremely interesting social networking and communication devices that rely on the input and acceptance of Internet users. On the academic front, the [Wikipedia](#) provides one of the best examples. Built upon articles and entries written by registered users, the Wikipedia has rapidly become the unofficial encyclopaedia of the Internet. Quality control is an ongoing issue however the size and attention of the community contributing to the project makes the editorial project virtually organic. In the commercial realm, the newsletter or publication this article is written in could stand as basic but rapidly evolving example.

As technology and the wealth necessary to use it has advanced so rapidly over the past decade, tools that make information distribution and retrieval simpler have emerged. In other words, some clever inventors have found ways to make search simpler. At the same time, advances and innovations in grassroots technologies (such as RSS enabled blogs mixed with a/v production to host podcasts) push the search industry to broaden the horizons available to users. The major search engines didn't start the revolution. Their function is to popularize it as they exploit emerging revenue streams.

The changes I've dubbed Revolution 2.1 will have an enormous impact on Internet and search marketing.

The first thing we SEOs and SEMs need to realize is that the search sector is expanding rapidly to include specialized, regionalized, and personalized search tools. Each of the major search engines and literally dozens of smaller search tools offer a widening array of search options. Learning the new methods of treating and feeding information to search engines is critical for continued success in the search marketing field. For instance, we recently had an opportunity to perform SEO services on a podcast a client in a highly competitive field wanted to produce. We took a pass on the project as we felt we didn't have the skills or tools necessary to do the job. Having been alerted to a gap in what will be a growing field, we hope to be able to service such requests in the future. Our survival literally depends on it.

Next, we need to understand and help our clients understand social and business communication tools such as RSS feed readers, photo-sharing applications, and group-networking sites such as [Friendster](#), [Tribe.net](#), [MySpace](#), [XuQa](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Lastly, we need to start adding features such as Yahoo's MyWeb button or Google XML sitemaps to client sites to aid in their transition to the new web being weaved in Revolution 2.1.

The funny thing about revolutions, especially ones that get played out without a coherent plan that has the full consent of the people, is that unexpected developments happen. The Internet as we know it today is a prime example. Back in the late 1970's and early 1980's, nobody could have predicted the massive social and economic changes brought about by the rise of the public Internet.

Flash ahead thirty years to today. Anything can happen and the web that comes from today's changes will be far more functional. It will incorporate traditional media such as TV and newspapers and allow users access to tools used to create traditional programming. The revolution has been brewing over the past two years. Ever since a functioning business model based on paid-advertising turned tiny contextually delivered three-line ads into pure profit, software designers have been churning out a series of "killer apps" hoping the suddenly super-wealthy search engines would buy them or futures-hungry

venture capitalists would fund them. For those who were successful in the development and those of us about to benefit from their success, the next Internet revolution has begun.