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CW Bulletin is the e-newsletter supplement to *CW* magazine. Sent each month to all members, every issue of *CW Bulletin* presents articles, case studies and additional resources on timely topics in communication.

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Social Media Is Changing Everything

by Anders Gronstedt

When Sun Microsystems CEO Jonathan Schwarz needs to communicate with the world, he doesn't necessarily call a press conference, issue a press release, or even convene a webinar or videoconference. He blogs.

His online diary (<http://blogs.sun.com/jonathan>) gives him an unfiltered channel leading to the employees, customers, analysts and resellers who represent the first wave of perception formation regarding important company products and service initiatives. With some 300,000 visitors each month, it's a direct channel that bypasses traditional media. And he wants all his employees to blog. Almost 3,000 Sun employee blogs can be accessed at <http://blogs.sun.com>, dissolving boundaries between the company and its ecosystem of stakeholders.

Sun is leading a transformation of the communication profession, as the Web transitions from an information repository to a platform of collaboration and community building. Call it "Web 2.0," "participative media" or "social media," the implication is clear for communication professionals: Instead of talking to customers, employees, investors and opinion leaders through advertisements and media relations activities, communicators need to begin talking with them using social media. Forward-looking communicators are making smart use of emerging tools such as blogs, peer-to-peer networks, video and photo sharing sites, collaborative wiki platforms, viral worlds, and podcasting to facilitate real-time conversations.

Power is shifting from company leaders to the edges of the company's community, where a completely new breed of game-savvy, socially networked people are entering the market. These people would not dream of reading flat pages on a screen. Instead they steer their avatars to the

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Consumer creation is all the rage in today's online world, but how can we find all of these materials, scattered throughout a multitude of personal blogs and media accounts? Enter hundreds of promising Next Net businesses, devoted to organizing uploaded content and making it available to a wider audience.
- **The Growth of Social Software**
The growth of social software means that the Internet is becoming the social space where the majority of our interpersonal interactions take place. Here are 10 major cultural implications of this trend.
- **Social Media Marketing**
Consumers' behavior online has a direct effect on your bottom line.

Sun Pavilion in Second Life to attend a virtual press conference in 3-D. (If you have no idea what that sentence means, read the accompanying article in this issue of the *CW Bulletin* on Second Life and check out this [video](#).)

They are "digital natives," individuals who were born after the PC revolution and who want to be engaged, in control, and part of the storyline. Sixty percent of trendsetters and 33 percent of mainstream 14–34-year-olds have a social networking page, and an Edelman survey suggests that no fewer than 68 percent of this demographic group rate "a person just like yourself or your peer" as the most credible corporate spokesperson. That number has tripled since 2003. Wikis, Flickr, eBay and Amazon's custom reviews are just some examples of how citizen journalists, citizen reviewers and citizen pundits are expressing themselves online.

Some people subscribe to feeds from some of the 100 million blogs that have been created to date. Others might share videos with the 38 million monthly visitors to YouTube, or talk with their friends on MySpace or both. With 140 million monthly users, MySpace has rocketed to the number one U.S. web site in terms of page views, growing at a clip of 10 million users per month. During the time it took you to read this paragraph, 150 new members signed up on MySpace. And just as we're learning about Web 2.0, the brave new virtual world of Web 3-D is upon us.

Phenomena like MySpace, Facebook, Second Life, Flickr and YouTube aren't just web sites. They are platforms of collaboration, where sprawling and vibrant communities socialize, innovate, transact and learn. This isn't just a new set of tools to aide and complement existing approaches. Communicators who fall back on their tired old playbook, packaging and delivering an unending stream of numb monologues, deserve every tomato thrown their way by an unforgiving new workforce. Companies that innovate and transform communication, on the other hand, will be pioneering the way to a sustainable competitive advantage.

That's bad news for their competitors.

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