

April 2008

**PodCamp NYC 2.0; Polytechnic University; Brooklyn, New York; April 25-26**

Dubbed the “unconference,” PodCamp NYC 2.0 at Polytechnic University in Brooklyn, NY focused on the sharing of ideas and experiences with new media tools such as podcasts, videocasts, blogs, and newer platforms like the hugely popular Twitter. The conference was free and many of the sessions were heavily attended. The sessions were atypical to a conference panel or presentation. Although the sessions were moderated by industry participants, the conference attendees themselves were encouraged to speak and contribute more to the discussions. A free conference, with user generated content, paid for by advertising sponsors...talk about practicing what you preach! (See more about the trend towards free content in this issue’s “From the Deal Side” column.)

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One of the sessions was called “Capturing the vibes of large scale change events in real time with Twitter”. Twitter received lots of press last October when residents, local news reporters and fire departments used Twitter to post real time updates and public service announcements about the Southern California wildfires. When asked “How would you describe Twitter?”, one participant answered, “Instant messaging meets blogging.” This short form of blogging or “micro-blogging” allows users to post messages of under 140 characters and follow each other to stay connected to other Twitter users. Many attendees were using Twitter during the conference to tell each other which sessions were the most engaging, so news got out pretty quickly if there was an interesting discussion happening.

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Another type of short form communication on display, but focused on voice rather than text communication, was PodGlo, a web based “micro-podcasting” platform. Micro-podcasting is an easier, faster and cheaper form of online voice communication. Voice messages can be added through widgets on websites or telephones while conversations can be distributed through RSS readers, email, IM, SMS or any website. The conversations are topic based and can be tagged with key words so that users can find and follow topics that are most interesting to them.



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Lee Gibbons of Podango, an online network of podcasters, led a discussion on how to effectively apply new media tools in business. Businesses now have a wide array of tools (blogs, wikis, social networks, podcasts, videocasts, etc.) that can be used to connect with and receive feedback from their customers. JetBlue, Comcast and others are finding early successes in building an online community of engaged customers by using tools such as Twitter for corporate communication, customer service and marketing purposes.

The open forum of enthusiastic users, sharing their ideas and experiences, was certainly the appropriate format for a Web 2.0 conference, and a major theme among the products and services being showcased. Given the potential of new web-based tools such as the above to rapidly collect and share information and build loyal communities, we would expect more and more companies to explore such capabilities in their next generation of Internet presence.

By Kuni Takahashi  
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