

PROVIDING CUTTING-EDGE  
KNOWLEDGE TO  
GOVERNMENT LEADERS

# The Blogging Revolution: Government in the Age of Web 2.0



E-Government Series

David C. Wyld  
Maurin Professor of Management and  
Director of the Strategic e-Commerce/  
e-Government Initiative  
Department of Management  
Southeastern Louisiana University



IBM Center for  
The Business  
of Government

2007

E-GOVERNMENT SERIES

# **The Blogging Revolution:** Government in the Age of Web 2.0

**David C. Wyld**

Maurin Professor of Management and  
Director of the Strategic e-Commerce/  
e-Government Initiative  
Department of Management  
Southeastern Louisiana University



IBM Center for  
**The Business  
of Government**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Foreword</b> .....	4
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	6
<b>Part I: The Rise of Blogging in the Public Sector</b> .....	9
<b>Introduction</b> .....	10
Moving Toward Citizen Engagement in a Virtual Age .....	10
You!.....	11
<b>Blogging in the Public Sector</b> .....	14
Preface .....	14
Blogging Options for Public Officials .....	15
Congress Blogs .....	16
The Current State of Blogging in Government.....	18
<b>Case Study in Organizational Blogging: STRATCOM</b> .....	29
Say ‘Yes, Sir’ to Blogging.....	29
<b>A Guide for Public Sector Bloggers</b> .....	31
Overview .....	31
How Do I Blog?.....	33
Lessons Learned from—and in—the Blogosphere .....	33
10 Tips for Blogging by Public Sector Executives .....	38
<b>A Final Thought on Public Sector Blogging</b> .....	40
<b>Part II: Blogging as a Social Phenomenon</b> .....	41
<b>The Rise of User-Generated Media</b> .....	42
A Second Generation of the Internet .....	42
Enter Web 2.0.....	43
Social Networking .....	43
<b>Blogging 101</b> .....	49
A Brief History of Blogging .....	49
The ‘Next Big Thing’ or an ‘Internet Wasteland’? .....	49
Touring the Blogosphere .....	51
Why Blog? .....	52
<b>Corporate Blogging</b> .....	56
Introduction.....	56
The Blogging CEO .....	57
Blogging and Internal Communications/Operations.....	59
Monitoring the Blogosphere .....	62
Employee Blogging .....	62
Blogging Policy .....	65
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	66

<b>Part III: Future Research on Public Sector Blogging</b> .....	67
<b>Directions for Future Research</b> .....	68
Blogging Research Overview.....	68
The ROI of Blogging.....	68
Blogging Behavior Research .....	69
<b>Appendix: Glossary of Terms Used in Blogging and Web 2.0</b> .....	71
<b>References</b> .....	77
<b>About the Author</b> .....	90
<b>Key Contact Information</b> .....	91

Please note that the online version of this report contains hot links to each of the websites discussed or listed in the report. Due to the nature of online publishing, links may have changed or become inactive in the time since this text was authored.

## FOREWORD

On behalf of the IBM Center for The Business of Government, we are pleased to present this report, "The Blogging Revolution: Government in the Age of Web 2.0," by David C. Wyld.

The revolution of social networks and blogging is finally coming to government. Since the dawn of the 21st century just seven short years ago, how we communicate as a society has begun to change rapidly. Over 60 million individuals maintain a blog—a user-generated online journal updated regularly by the author of the blog.

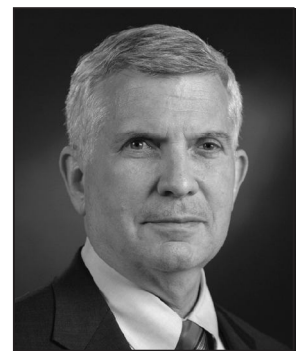
Even more participate in social networks such as Facebook, MySpace, and Second Life, which all allow interactivity among their users. Government, however, has been more cautious in entering this new world. This report describes what the author terms "blogoneers," pioneers in the use of blogs in government.

Dr. Wyld examines the phenomenon of blogging in the context of the larger revolutionary forces at play in the development of the second-generation Internet, where interactivity among users is key. This is also referred to as "Web 2.0." Wyld observes that blogging is growing as a tool for promoting not only online engagement of citizens and public servants, but also offline engagement. He describes blogging activities by members of Congress, governors, city mayors, and police and fire departments in which they engage directly with the public. He also describes how blogging is used within agencies to improve internal communications and speed the flow of information.

Based on the experiences of the blogoneers, Wyld develops a set of lessons learned and a checklist of best practices for public managers interested in following in their footsteps. He also examines the broader social phenomenon of online social networks and how they affect not only government but also corporate interactions with citizens and customers.



Albert Morales

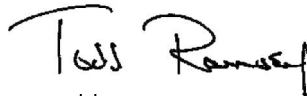


Todd Ramsey

We hope that this report both informs and inspires public managers across government to consider ways of engaging in the new world of Web 2.0 to improve citizen access to public services, as well as to enhance democracy in our society.



Albert Morales  
Managing Partner  
IBM Center for The Business of Government  
albert.morales@us.ibm.com



Todd Ramsey  
General Manager  
IBM Global Government Industry  
ramseyt@us.ibm.com

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There can be no doubt that the Internet has profoundly changed our work, our lives, our entertainment, and our politics. Now the Internet itself is undergoing perhaps its most radical change ever, as we are seeing what many experts have coined the development of “Web 2.0.”

With Web 2.0, there is a sea change occurring wherein the web has become a truly participatory media; instead of going on the web to read static content, we can more easily create and share our own ideas and creations. The rise of what has been alternately referred to as consumer- or user-generated media (content) has been hailed as being truly groundbreaking in nature. This ability to create web content by simply typing words and pointing and clicking, without having to know *anything* about computer programming, has been touted by Tim Berners-Lee, the developer of the World Wide Web, as being much more in line with the original vision of what the web should be. From the perspective of Jeffrey Cole of the Center for the Digital Future at the University of Southern California, these new tools are nothing short of revolutionary in that they “let anyone distribute their ideas potentially to tens of millions of people. It’s totally reversed the whole history of mass communications” (opinion cited in Kornblum, 2006, n.p.). In fact, in December 2006, the editorial staff of *Time* magazine named “you” as its “person of the year.” The magazine recognized that the collective efforts of millions of individuals were fast reshaping the Internet and the way we live our lives.

As of 2007, we are still likely in the early stages of the development of what will become Web 2.0. However, blogging is certainly at the forefront of Web 2.0 technologies. In a nutshell, a blog can be differentiated from a website in that it is a web

vehicle that is easier to create and update, typically by simply typing into a preprogrammed interface. From a definitional perspective, a blog refers to an online journal that can be updated regularly, with entries typically displayed in chronological order. While blogs now encompass not only text but video and audio as well, it is generally accepted that if the individual posts, items, or articles cannot be linked to separately via a permalink (rather than just linking to the whole site), then the site in question is not a blog. Blogs are also commonly referred to as a weblog or web log, with *blog* used as the short form of these terms. *Blog* is also a verb, meaning to write an article on such an online journal.

As detailed in this report, blogging is an activity that is increasingly moving from the fringes to the mainstream, with intense interest in both corporate America and public offices as to how to join the conversation. There are currently 60 million blogs in existence as of April 2007, and the blogosphere (the sum of all blogs) is growing at a rapid rate, with everyone from teenagers, CEOs, and, yes, politicians—from the halls of Congress to city halls across America—joining in the conversation. In the end, blogs may well become, as AOL Vice President Bill Schreiner described them, an “oral history” for our times (eMarketer, 2005c). Thus, it will be incumbent upon public sector leaders and private sector executives to stay abreast of the development of the blogging phenomenon.

In this research report, the author examines the phenomenon of blogging in the context of the larger revolutionary forces at play in the development—or redevelopment—of a second-generation Internet. In the first part of the report, the state of blogging across the American public sector is examined,

seeing how pioneering leaders (let's call them "blogoneers") in the public sector are making use of this new technology to foster improved communications both with their constituencies and within their organizations. Blogging is fast becoming a new tool for promoting online *and* offline engagement. The author provides a comprehensive assessment to date of the blogging activities found across all levels of government, including blogs from:

- Members of Congress
- Congressional committees and caucuses
- Governors and lieutenant governors
- State legislators
- City managers and mayors
- Police and fire departments
- College and university presidents

This report includes a case study of the experience of the U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM), which has led the way in using blogging to transform the culture and flow of information, prompted by the need for speed in fighting today's challenges. Public officials are encouraged to engage in blogging in the honest, open, and consistent manner that is required to promote civic and organizational engagement—and ultimately to succeed—in this exciting time in the history of our democracy. To facilitate this for the reader, the report examines the lessons learned by these blogoneers and presents a series of tips for public sector bloggers, based on an analysis of the best practices available today.

In the second part of this report, the rise of blogging and user-generated media is examined as a wider social phenomenon, which many are now commonly referring to as Web 2.0. In  *Blogging 101*, an overview of the history of blogs and the growth and diversity of the blogosphere is presented. The report then examines how blogging has taken hold in the corporate realm, and how leading firms and innovative executives and companies are entering the blogosphere. Blogging is also examined as an effective mechanism for improving internal communications and for managing knowledge, projects, shifts, and even the corporate culture. The potential downsides of blogging, in terms of both the personal productivity and employment issues as well as the

security and liability concerns, are examined. The importance of monitoring the blogosphere for what is being said about you and your organization is discussed.

In the third part, a research agenda for studying the impact and effectiveness of blogging and for developing usable metrics for assessing the utility and return on investment (ROI) of blogging in the unique environment of the public sector is presented. The report distinguishes between blogging for political campaigns and for administration of government, and thus there needs to be a great deal of research as to how the two interact and provide synergy as well as conflict. The report also looks ahead to future directions in both technology and democracy. New Web 2.0 technologies that are emerging (such as "Second Life," which is already drawing political interest) are examined.

Writing in *Public Opinion Quarterly* in 2003, Jennings and Zeitner observed that any attempt to assess the impact of the Internet on the American public and public life in America "involves shooting at a moving target" (p. 311). Thus, this report stands at best as a snapshot of the early advance of a tide of changes that will be coming about in all aspects of our lives, including government and governance in the age of Web 2.0.

### 10 Tips for Blogging by Public Sector Executives

- Tip 1:** Define yourself and your purpose.
- Tip 2:** Do it yourself!
- Tip 3:** Make a time commitment.
- Tip 4:** Be regular.
- Tip 5:** Be generous.
- Tip 6:** Have a "hard hide."
- Tip 7:** Spell-check.
- Tip 8:** Don't give too much information.
- Tip 9:** Consider multimedia.
- Tip 10:** Be a student of blogging.