

# What's wrong with the web?

**The web has transformed business, but where do we go from here?**

**The journey from now to the next generation.**

## Introduction

The web has been hugely successful for business, or has it? We are all aware that the web has truly transformed the world. The number of people now with internet access makes it one of the most efficient ways to reach any audience. It is a tremendous potential business asset. But as the internet matures, has it really delivered the benefits businesses were expecting?

The over-hyped expectations of the "dot-com" boom are, with a few very notable exceptions, never going to be realized. It is not against these expectations that today's business measures the effectiveness of their web initiatives. Instead they have set much more reasonable goals however they generally remain disappointed at the outcome. Why are these businesses disappointed? To understand this we must look at several different causal factors:

## Scale

The very strength of the web, its global reach and scale are part and parcel of the problems for business. The business user naturally wants access to this valuable community but in so doing they must plan for significant external load on their web applications. This takes him deep into the realm of today's IT competence.

They must be built on a strong scalable technology platform, with the flexibility to adapt to meet the challenges of consumer usage and capable of managing high volumes of rapidly changing content. Such applications are in the realm of the IT experts. The business user is consequently dependent on technologies he does not readily understand nor control to realize his objectives. He is similarly dependent on skilled and expensive IT resources to deliver his applications.

## Complexity

Today's business web applications are not typically straightforward "brochureware" sites publishing static content. These sites have largely disappointed as businesses typically find the content they were publishing is not static and the consequent web content management burden is time consuming and costly. Furthermore these web applications do not achieve much more for the typical business than ensuring they are found through the common search engines. This is not good enough for today's business.

The business user wants to achieve much more than this - they have to leverage all of their internal and external content to power fully functional web applications through internet, intranet and extranet sites in order to achieve tangible business objectives. But these types of applications are not easily created or managed by the typical business user; they are most commonly the domain of the IT staff. IT typically addresses these applications as projects to build, deploy and hand over to the business user for subsequent management.

This is not in tune with the business need. The business needs solutions which will mould to the style of the user, creating a technology to fit the business rather than the business changing to fit technology. Such applications are living, dynamic applications needing to develop to remain valuable. Such complex applications are typically difficult to change and inflexible without considerable IT resource. The technical nature of these solutions is contrasted by the off-the-shelf

## Ownership

tools offering business user control, however lack the sophisticated results produced by more industrial strength applications.

The creation and deployment of these applications often leads to the inevitable frustrations of remotely delivered projects for the business user and has, in many instances, lead to cost and time over runs. Similarly, much rework can ensue as the business user specification is not typically of sufficient accuracy in the first instance and secondly, changes during the course of the project.

Business users commonly feel powerless during this project phase as they are excluded from participation or understanding by the lack of the technical skills necessary to engage. To date no real business tools exist to enable the business user to participate in the design, creation, presentation and management of enterprise strength web applications or their subsequent evolution to meet ever-changing business requirements.

## Budget

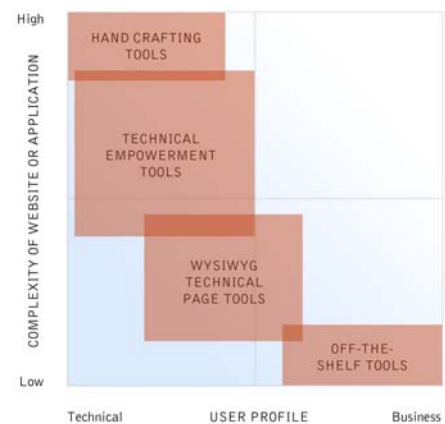
The final factor is money. The realization of significant web applications in today's world is expensive. The reliance on IT resources and the lack of high level business focused tools means that large amounts of highly skilled and expensive technical resources are required not just to create and deploy the web applications but also to manage them.

Only businesses for which the web is of extreme importance or organizations of sufficient scale have been able to afford to develop these web applications. SMEs have the same business requirements but sometimes cannot afford to undertake the projects. This is ironic as the cost of managing their content relative to their turnover is in fact greater.

## The marketplace

Understanding the needs of the business, the task is to find an application to fit. The current marketplace offers four principal groups of solution answering, to varying degrees, the requirements of a business web solution.

From the complexity and customization of hand-crafted tools to the rigidity and ease of use of the off-the-shelf tools, no singular application satisfies the breadth of characteristics demanded to realize business objectives with absolute success.



## The new paradigm

To start with we must recognize that in order to enter into the next generation of Web Content Management, applications vendors will need a secure foundation on which to start from. Vendors who are to succeed in this next generation will need to have developed tools to deploy scalable and secure web applications today. Unless they have a deep understanding of the challenges inherent in such applications they will be unable to realize their capabilities through new tools leaving users stranded in the worst of all worlds with non-performing, non-scalable web applications driven by unfriendly, non-functional tools.

Mediasurface has the pedigree of many years of successful experience building and deploying fully functional scalable web applications for many of the world's largest organizations.

The next generation of web enabling technologies aimed at the SME marketplaces will need to address these issues if they are to succeed. They will need to be able to deliver to business the

## Business users

power to create, deploy and modify scalable web applications for themselves. This will be required so that these businesses can take advantage of all of the potential benefits of such applications without huge budgets or disproportionate IT resources. These tools will need to be put in the hands of the typical business user.

Business users are used to tools that relate to their needs in everyday working. One need only think of the Microsoft® Office applications to understand this. The tools are very visual and targeted at the specific task at hand. These smart client applications leverage the power of the desktop environment to provide near immediate response and functionality to the business user. They are not typically web delivered in themselves as they provide a more immediate, flexible and powerful user interface than can be achieved with browser-based applications alone.

The content management software market will have to build tools that need to be graphical, immediate, powerful and flexible just as in the office example but uniquely will have to be fully multi-user. They should be no more difficult to use than, say, PowerPoint, yet should be capable of being deployed amongst hundreds of users working simultaneously on one web application.

Pepperio is uniquely positioned to deliver against these dual objectives of quality content management and smart client management tools. With Mediasurface's history of many years of successfully providing core content management server technology to power industrial-strength web applications for some of the world's largest organizations the SME business does not need to worry about the heritage of the Pepperio product.

With Pepperio, the power of these web applications is brought to the business user. Through a graphical, immediate, powerful yet flexible multi-user application business users are able to build and run complex web applications with the need for minimal external resource.

## Pepperio

Using Pepperio, the business user is presented with a familiar working environment using metaphors he can readily relate to. He is empowered with control of the navigation, presentation and content of the web application as well as being provided with user-friendly contribution tools.

Pepperio is but a start on the paradigm shifting move into the era of business empowerment for web applications. Pepperio is leading the way into these next generation SME products and will continue to provide the user with ever increasing power and control.