

Doug Jacquier Opening Day Speech at Connecting Up 2008 Conference

Good morning! It's great to be here in Brisbane and may I personally welcome all our delegates, speakers and sponsors, especially those who've travelled great distances and invested precious time and money to be here.

Firstly, some housekeeping.

- Can you please turn off your mobile or put it into silent mode.
- If you're blogging or logging the conference in any way can you please tag your content 'CU08' and 'nptech' so you can share your conference thoughts with the world.
- If you need any help at any time during the conference, look out for a CISA staff member wearing a red tag. The key people you need to know are Simon Gee, our Technology Information Manager and conference organiser, and Kyona Box at the front desk, who is our local conference coordinator.
- If you haven't yet booked for tonight's conference dinner, including the Community ICT Awards, you have until the end of lunch to do that.
- If you haven't yet booked for Wednesday's workshop with Beth Kanter, you have until tomorrow lunchtime to do so.
- Late changes to your printed program:
 - Unfortunately Antony Chiang from TechSoup can't be with us due to a family illness, so the session at 3-30 on Day 2 will be presented by Vyria Paselk from TechSoup, who has flown to the rescue at short notice.

For those of you attending Connecting Up for the first time, here's some brief background. Our nonprofit organisation, Community Information Strategies Australia, has been operating out of Adelaide for over 27 years and over the past five years we have been expanding our national profile in bringing information about technology to Australian nonprofits. Some of you will be familiar with our web-based ICT Resources, which you can link to simply at ConnectingUp.org where we will have podcasts, videocasts, photos and follow up from this conference.

And of course we hope that everyone here is aware of our DonorTec technology donations site, which we operate in partnership with US nonprofit TechSoup, bringing technology donations from global and local IT companies worth over \$22m to over 1500 Australian nonprofits in the past year and expanding to New Zealand straight after this conference.

This is the fifth annual Connecting Up conference and the first we have conducted outside Adelaide, as part of our continuing commitment to a national profile. Last year we also added the Australian Community ICT Awards to the conference program and we're delighted to see the number of entries double this year.

Last year we gave a lot of space to the broadband infrastructure needed for effective web use in nonprofit organisations. We were delighted to see broadband emerge as a key Federal election issue and we await with great interest the universal roll-out we have all been promised, especially for those in regional and remote areas. On the optimistic assumption that all will soon be resolved on that issue, we've themed this year's conference with the tagline of 'Online and Off to the Future', with this year's program heavily weighted towards Web 2.0 or the social web.

I've recently returned from the Nonprofit Technology Conference or NTC in New Orleans. For those of you not familiar with NTC, this is the annual conference organised by the US nonprofit NTEN. It is held in a different city each year and brings together some 1200 delegates, vendors and sponsors and is the premier nonprofit technology event in the US (note that I didn't mention government).

I came away from NTC in Seattle 2 years ago with 'RSS and tagging' as the next big thing that we needed to watch and we've had our toe in the water. Time to immerse ourselves fully.

I arrived in New Orleans as a social web watcher at best and returned a convert, if not yet a complete evangelist. All it took was a very balanced and intelligent presenter called Brian Reich from Echo Ditto and the reading of his and Dan Solomon's book, Media Rules. Remember books?

The light bulb he turned on over my head was this – digital natives (which Brian and Dan call millenials) expect that anything important they need to know will come to them – they won't be looking for it, except for expanding their networks of people that matter to them, using the technology that matters to them e.g. they certainly won't be reading your emails, your newsletters, your Letters to the Editor, or notice the story you got on free-to-air TV news etc.

We need to think this through carefully but I'm now convinced that social web techniques need to be closely but strategically integrated into our work and into our workforce. (However, please, if I start Twittering, take me out the back and shoot me. ☺)

Some years ago, Bill Clinton's campaign manager, desperate to keep his candidate 'on message', wrote in large letters on Clinton's whiteboard. "It's the economy, stupid". I now have on my virtual whiteboard:

1. It's your networks, stupid
2. It's mobile, stupid

Another speaker who provided great insights into what's coming was David Pogue, technology columnist for the NY Times.

He listed the two key technologies to watch as:

- The continuing convergence of phones and the internet into multi-function single devices
- Mobiles and other technologies that operate via VoIP (i.e. wireless internet)

He also talked about the rise of Google in the phone space, through programs like:

- Google text search – text Google with a person's name, organisation etc and get their addresses, weblinks, local weather, driving directions etc.
- Can't text? Google 800 will do the same via voice recognition.

Other phenomena to watch

- Grand Central, where you have one number and it calls all your phones at the same time.
- Voice-to-text
- Free TV online
- Audience-created video, where video makers are paid by the number of web views of their video.

So what's the key to Web 2.0, according to David Pogue? Information sharing!
e.g.

<http://www.prosper.com/> - community sharing of loans

www.kiva.org - micro finance for developing countries

<http://www.goloco.org/greetings;guest> - sharing transport

www.epetitions.net - free online petitions

Who Is Sick <http://whoissick.org/sickness/> - tracking illness in your area

So what are the Web 2.0 Challenges, according to David Pogue:

- The interface challenge for mobile devices – big fingers and small screens i.e. where will all the features go?
- Copyright
- How to teach about ethics and privacy and to be constantly aware that what you put on the web is permanent.

I also want to share with you highlights from an illuminating and moving panel presentation by three women involved in the rebuilding program following Hurricane Katrina's devastation of parts of New Orleans – Laura Crochet, Deborah Cotton and Patricia Jones. Patricia's home was in the Lower 9th ward, where all but 5 homes were destroyed when the levee bank burst and they were inundated with 23 feet of water in 25 minutes. Patricia had moved back into her partially rebuilt home only the previous week, some two and a half years after Katrina.

They talked about the role of technology and communications in the painfully slow rebuilding program, especially the role of their website www.louisianarebuilds.info
Just some dot points:

- It was 10 months before they were even allowed to enter the affected area to inspect the damage and even then it was a 'look and leave' policy with everyone out by sunset.
- When their Road Home project eventually got under way, their site became the registration site and call centre.
- When Katrina hit only 60% of residents had email addresses and only 70% had mobile phones.
- Most residents are poorly educated so they set a Year 7 reading standard for their site and a maximum of 3 clicks to core information.

So, what were the Take Home Messages from this year's NTC for me?

1. Our Connecting Up conference, like for like, matches NTC for organisation, breadth and delegate sources and we should be very proud of that. However I'm green with envy at the spread of products and services available to US nonprofits and I wish our local software developers and vendors would get off their backsides to match it.
2. We in Australia have barely scratched the surface of Web 2.0 when it is the fastest growing aspect of connectedness. If we don't move soon, we risk losing an entire generation of potential supporters and donors.
3. We should expect to increasingly deliver into mobile contexts.
4. We need to keep in mind this key principle from Brian Reich and Dan Solomon's Book 'Media Rules'
 - Media is the information, the experiences, the stuff that we consume and share - it is not the technology

5. Challenges in Personalising the Messages and Making the Connections

- The average person is exposed to 5,000 messages a day
- 1.4 blogs are created every second,
- YouTube uploads 65,000 videos every day

Despair is never the answer and we've gathered some great people here to get you on the right track for your organisation.

But let me pose some important questions to keep in your head over the next couple of days and for your planning into the future.

- How do we keep a balance between the emerging and traditional technologies so that we stay in touch with the 'digital natives' and those with limited or no electronic connectivity?
- How would your community networks operate if there was a natural or man-made disaster in your area?
- In a world where 70% of email is spam and spam filters are becoming increasingly pervasive and effective, how can we get our messages through to our networks?
- How can we differentiate our messages from others to get some clear air, especially when it comes to campaigning and fund-raising?
- How can we personalise our messages so that individuals get only the messages they want and when they want them?
- How do we effectively use but not abuse our sector's exemption from the Privacy Act and the Do Not Call Register?

And finally, some 'blue sky' What-If questions?

- What if we demanded that every politician have a social web presence so that we can 'poke' them and write on their virtual walls to our heart's content, so that even if they ignore our letters, phone calls and emails, the world knows the message we are trying to send? After all, what are Friends for?
- What if we demanded that a basic low cost broadband connection and computer, including webcam and voice activation, and free training in their use, were available to every Australian who wanted it, just like the phone?
- What if we as a sector got our act together to network a lot better, create stronger communities of interest, and campaigned more effectively as a result?
- What if we had nonprofit news sites and networks that could spill the beans in seconds on scandals and plans emanating from governments and less socially responsible businesses?
- What if we were to audio and video record all that's important that we want to communicate and create our own news services? E.g. What if we were to record our own interviews with politicians and put them on the web?

- What if we faced up to measuring the real change in the lives of others that our work has brought about for those we seek to serve? Nick Frances, in his recent book *The End of Charity*, points out that when the Melbourne charity the Brotherhood of St Laurence was set up in the 1930's, unemployment was at 80%. 70 years later, as its CEO, he could look out the window of his office to the high rise Housing Commission flats across the street where 80% of the residents were still unemployed and he decided there had to be a better way, namely social entrepreneurship.
- In other words, what if our organisations as they currently exist, existed no longer? Would they be re-invented by someone else, in part or in whole? Which bits would not survive the night on the street in the hard-rubbish collection?
- What if we decided some of our organisations are simply too small and too specialised to survive and we decided to aggregate our resources with others or even to merge to get the best results for the people we are trying to help?
- What if those organisations who don't serve clients face-to-face didn't have any full-time rented offices and worked almost exclusively on-line, with a central shared space for meetings, access to printers, etc?
- What if our organisations had no access to and/or did not pursue any government funding of any kind? Would that be a good or a bad thing?
- What if we didn't 'limit' ourselves to money alone as a capacity development mechanism for the sector? What about other goods and services, like information, management training, office and equipment supplies, employment services, financial services, and so on?
- What if we demanded that our equipment suppliers take full responsibility for the environmentally-sound life cycle of what they supply us?
- What if we asked ourselves "what is my 'value-add' as a Board member or staff member to my organisation"? Do I bring money, unique knowledge, networks, political influence etc, or do I just feel better being associated with this cause?
- And, finally, what if you committed to leave this conference with a tangible, measurable commitment to change forever at least one thing about the way your organisation currently operates and the way that you operate within it?

I'll leave you with those thoughts but remember you can get pods, videocast, photos from the conference and continue discussions at connectingup.org – we hope to generate continued networking and developments from this conference for you all.