

Women Fueling the New Internet Boom



Hugh Forrest

While we may struggle to produce a specific definition of Web 2.0, few can argue against the underlying message of this omnipresent buzz-word. Believe it or not, the excitement of the Internet economy has returned with a

vengeance. By almost all objective indications, 2006 is a lot like 1997. But with a lot bigger and better revenue models.

Many of the players in the current re-boom are veterans of the late 90s dotcom explosion. Sobered by the hard realities of the bust, these players have learned that success depends on more frugal spending habits. They promise that their experience will enable them to make wiser decisions with how they manage this round of exponential growth.

I generally believe the sincerity of these promises. But there's another equally important factor that should make us feel better about the future. This factor is the increased presence of women in positions of power throughout the web industry, which should help make for a more stable landscape of long-term prosperity.

More women in positions of power throughout the web industry? From my perspective, this is definitely the case. As the Event Director of the South by Southwest (SXSW) Interactive

Festival in Austin, Texas, I have a front-row seat to the newest trends in this space—and the trends we are seeing are very female-friendly.

Consider, for instance, the gender composition of SXSW speakers. These are people whose creative thinking and cutting-edge ideas are powering this next generation of innovation in this industry. In 2006, more than 120 speakers at our event were female, which was an increase of more than 100% over the number of female speakers in 2005.

On the one hand, this jump in female participation reflects our concerted effort to achieve a more balanced panel program. On the other hand, these organizational decisions don't happen in a vacuum—we pursued more women speakers because it was clear

that more and more women were assuming positions of power in this industry.

Among the most impressive female speakers at the 2006 SXSW Interactive Festival were the following

- Known to millions of readers as “dooce,” Heather Armstrong is one of the world's most

popular bloggers. Popular enough, in fact, that she is now able to support her family via advertising revenue on her website. She discussed the triumphs and pitfalls of her newfound profession in a special “Keynote Conversation” at the 2006 SXSW Interactive Festival.

- A PhD student at California Berkeley, Danah Boyd has established herself as one of the world's top experts on identity in “public” online environments. More specifically, she has conducted extensive analysis of the MySpace phenomenon—and her opinions on this topic have appeared everywhere from major newspapers to the Bill O'Reilly Show.

- Elisa Camahort, Jory Des Jardins, and Lisa Stone are the three co-founders of the innovative web community BlogHer. Their two-day convention occurs July 28 and 29 in San Jose, California. At SXSW, BlogHer helped organize four panel sessions and were instrumental in bringing more high-profile women into the event.

- Molly Holzschlag has authored more than 30 books on web design and markup. At the 2006 Festival, she helped organize two very popular panels regarding web standards. Aiming to achieve a set of standardized best practices for designing web sites, this movement affects the growing maturity of this industry.

- More than 700 people attended an amazing presentation titled “Creating Passionate Users” at the 2006 SXSW Interactive Festival given by Kathy Sierra. An author and co-creator of

the bestselling Head First series of technical books, Sierra is an expert in how the brain works and how to exploit it for better learning and memory.

- Mena Trott serves as the president of Six Apart, the company that created the blogging software Movable Type and TypePad. Her company is on the forefront of this personal publishing revolution, which allows individuals as well as businesses to connect directly with millions of readers (and potential customers) across the Internet.

These women—and hundreds similar to them—are helping to propel the growth of the Web 2.0 boom. Moreover, their presence helped SXSW Interactive achieve record attendance in 2006. While male pundits offer some very worthy advice, the female perspective is equally important in crafting an industry that achieves focused and sustained growth. ●

Hugh Forrest has a unique perspective and constant pulse on the technology industry and related trends, serving as the Event Director for the South by Southwest (SXSW) Interactive Festival since its founding in 1994. Hugh has also held similar positions with other SXSW-managed events in Portland, Oregon, and St. Louis, Missouri. When not helping to organize conferences, Forrest has served as a freelance writer for numerous publications ranging from the Austin Chronicle to the Seattle Weekly.

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Self Coach

Conversations with Yourself



Dorthea Winston

The power of negative inner conversations can be devastating. All of our actions are fueled by what we say to ourselves internally. But how do we identify which of these conversations is keeping us from being successful

in business, getting a promotion, getting out from under the glass ceiling or getting the acknowledgement we think we deserve?

What often happens is that after reaching a particular level in our work, we realize that we are capable of performing at a greater level. Yet something either keeps us from going for it or we hesitate because previous attempts may not have not been fruitful. We may have been or are in therapy and cannot manage to break up the recurrent pattern of our day-to-day lives. We understand our habits—may even understand the history behind them, yet all this self-knowledge has made no difference in our ability to break them down or eliminate them in order to heal ourselves.

Western women are generally committed to learning, to changing by working on themselves. We do have the historical background and competence needed to proceed. What is missing? What can one do or uncover that will allow us to breakdown the walls that prevent us from making our dreams tangible and real?

Early childhood conversations are the root source of the entire scope of our recurring adult

inner conversations. Most people live unaware of these root conversations, although they are truly the key to current actions. How to access them and deal with them is the question.

One needs to access these early conversations as a first step. Once you have reached them, you are in a position of choice. The choice to rid yourself of this baggage opens up possibilities for creation and invention. The next step is to create a replacement for these conversations by working with a professional specialist to assist and guide you in discarding encumbering conversations, creating replacement conversations that are appropriate to who you are today. This will allow you to function effectively and powerfully within the context of your changing life.

Story of a VIP executive

I was asked to consult with an executive at an international corporation. I agreed to listen to her concerns and assess the possibility of guiding this individual to a major shift in her life. Her issue, in her words, was boredom, coupled with repeated job resignations in search of a life beyond that satisfied her work and profession.

A very committed, loving person, she was very concerned with everyone's well being, especially those around her in the company. In the beginning there was some resistance caused by her interpretation that the “understanding” of the situation was sufficient to change her actions and reactions to them. Fortunately, her intense personal dissatisfaction produced a commitment to learn and to practice listening to her inner negative chatter, eventually freeing

her from the intellectual knee-jerk habit.

She reluctantly and slowly became the detective of her inner hidden chatter, letting herself speak her real response to the linguistic and abusive environment she worked in. She began cautiously replacing the familiar, recurrent, inappropriate compassion-driven habit with her newfound truths. She practiced sleuthing through the expected conversations, learning what circumstances triggered them. She accepted their repetitive characteristic, trashed them, and followed up with the appropriate replacement. She used each breakdown as the screen onto which she was able

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to observe her historic responses. She practiced correcting each one with self forgiveness and commitment to her Self. Each breakdown became the gift, the eye opener, often painful, and embarrassing. They were the very walk she had to walk to experience the power and impact each one had in her life.

The final, the most powerful discovery that this woman made about herself was her love of art, her love of selfless service and her courage

to practice both. She gave herself the ultimate permission to be fearlessly self-expressed. She left the international organization by her own choice, not as the victim of her circumstances. She freed herself from the shackles of the suffocating historic inner chatter. She is now a successful professional photographer. She also derives great satisfaction from her valuable work as a volunteer with the elderly. She is happy with her new life, successful in her relationships, having fun, feeling physically good in her body and peaceful in her mind.

We all have an expiration date and we do not know when that is. It is imperative that we take time now to listen to whether we are walking around in old, unacknowledged and painful conversations. It takes a fierce commitment to oneself to get rid of all the unnecessary negative feelings caused by these persistent old conversations. This path has as the prerequisite to work as hard on ourselves as we do at our jobs and to do it without delay. We need to put ourselves first because if we are not in shape, nothing can be in shape around us. Healing ourselves is essential! ●

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