



## **Collaborative platforms and rules of conduct**

The phrase "Web 2.0 "has been proposed to describe what is perceived as a revival of the World Wide Web. The evolution qualified for both the technology used and uses. In particular, it calls Web 2.0 interfaces to enable users to interact with both the content of the pages and also between themselves, making the Web 2.0 an interactive web community. [1] Today there are over 1.6 billion Internet users worldwide, including 402.8 million in Europe [2]. The exponential growth of Internet users demonstrates the rise of collaborative platforms, which makes appearances increasingly sophisticated, allowing users not only easy to use services but also allows them to be an integral part of these communities and create or edit their content. One aspect of these platforms are blogs. There are 133 million . In addition, about 900,000 articles are posted every day on these blogs and in 2008 recorded 329 million of posts (articles) [3].

### **Importance of Web 2.0 (collaborative platform) for health**

Health is becoming a topic of concern to more and more users. The query "Health Forum" gives 7'250'000 results in Google and the "Health form" 49'370 on Pubmed (figures of September 2009). Sensitive issues that affect the personal sphere of the public, like sex, are favourite themes for collaborative platforms. Indeed, they allow the exchange of experience and direct contact between users, such as mutual support for people with an illness. This gives rise to two major problems, namely confidentiality and transparency of the author of these articles posted on blogs or forums. Thus, regulation is necessary. The article 'HealthTrain, The Open Healthcare Manifesto' [4], published in October 2006, incorporates the principles of the HONcode and discusses the concept of "HONcode 2.0". There is also a proposal for self-regulation as a charter for patients [5].

### **Position of HON through the collaboration with the French High Authority of Health**

In respect of this development, in June 2008, HON, with the support of webmasters, developed a first draft of additional guidelines tailored to the needs and characteristics of Web 2.0 sites. The High Authority of Health (HAS) partnered with us and helped to develop a needs assessment. For Web 2.0, we propose the following rules in addition to the HONcode application for Web 1.0.

#### **1. Authority - Supplement Web 2.0**

Indicate if the platform is moderated or not, the credentials of the moderators, how messages are deleted or edited and how users are banned.

#### **2. Privacy - Supplement Web 2.0**

Provide a warning that a message can be read and used by all included and quoted in other messages, indicate whether or not users are able to delete or edit their own posts.

#### **3. Attribution - Supplement Web 2.0**

Identification of sources of medical information posted if they do not come from personal experiences. Dating of posts is automatic.

#### **4. Justification - Supplement Web 2.0**

It should be stipulated that all users of the platform undertake to disseminate information that is true and correct to the best of their knowledge.

#### 5. Transparency - Supplement Web 2.0

It must be stated whether the moderators are volunteers (or not), and if not, their funding sources.

#### 6. Honesty in advertising and editorial policy - Web 2.0 Supplement

It must be established if the users of a collaborative platform have the right to publish advertisements, and if so, in what ways.

### **Facts and figures:**

- 10% of English language sites certified are forums, blogs and "wikis" (platforms whose content is editable by readers themselves)
- A first draft of 6 new rules for the application of Web 2.0 was prepared in June 2008 and used in a test for the certification of collaborative platforms in English to ensure feasibility.
- 24% of certified sites in France have blogs and forums (197 of 803)

### **Call for comments and discussions**

In the spirit of the HONcode certification, site managers are recognized to be key players. This is why we have developed a survey to better assess their needs and especially to verify if these rules are adaptable complementary applications to the management of Web 2.0 sites everyday. Furthermore we encourage and request users to comment on our proposals through our site.

In the survey conducted from January 26, 2009 to March 27, 2009, amongst webmasters of sites certified in France, we asked among others, the following questions:

- Do they themselves have a collaborative platform?
- What do they think of establishing rules for these platforms?
- What is their opinion of those proposed by HON?

We received 140 responses to the questionnaire circulated in France from 1166 which were sent and 59 replies to the questionnaire in English out of 4531 which were sent, a total of 199 responses from Webmasters.

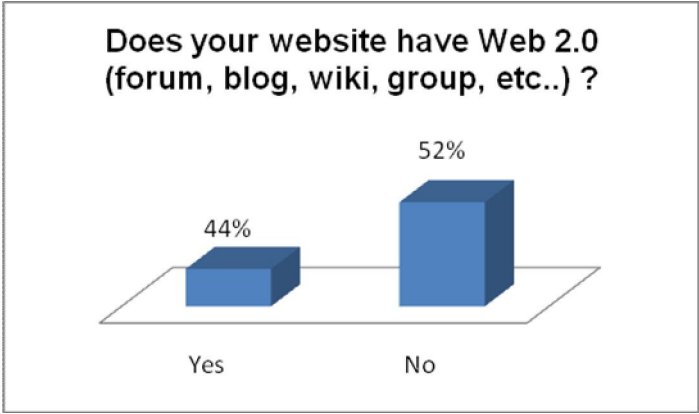
Survey results

French version :

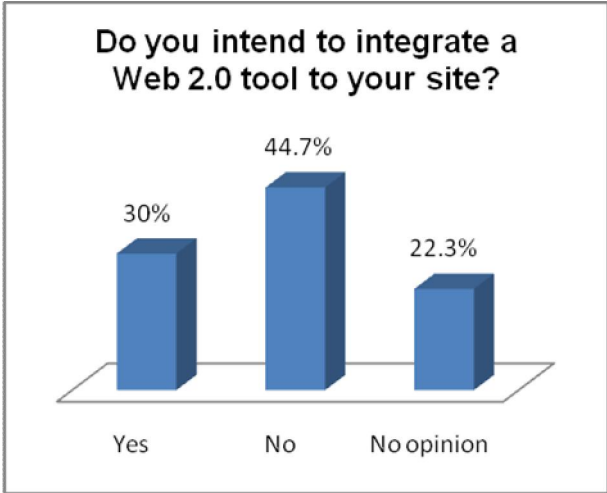
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English version :

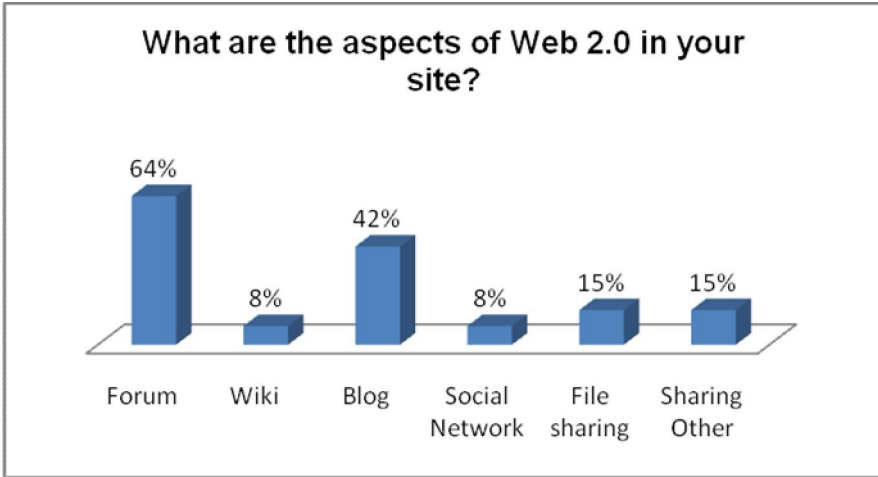
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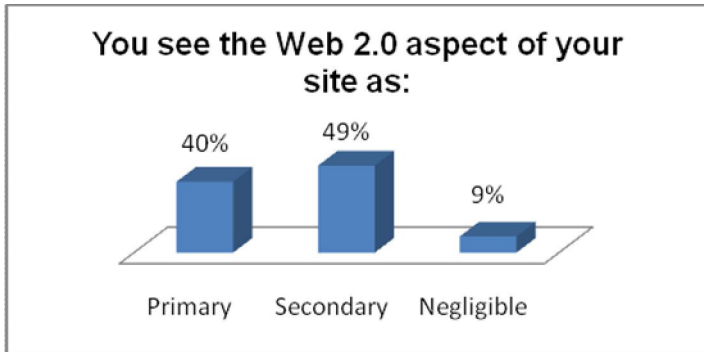
Nearly 1 out of 2 webmasters have a Web 2.0 section on their website. .



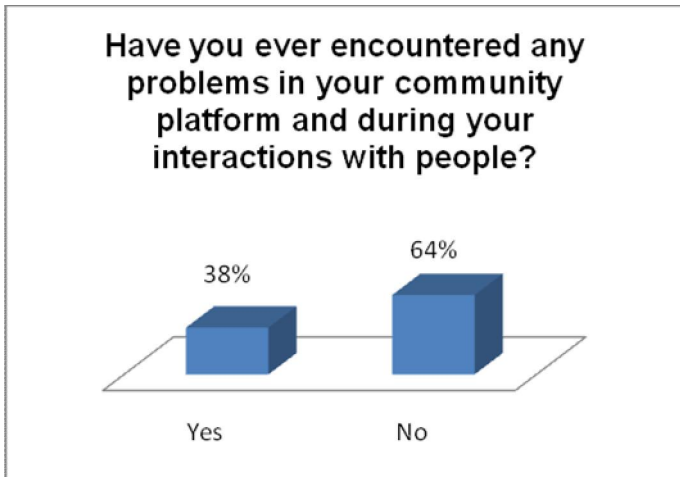
The majority of webmasters who do not have a Web 2.0 section are not conducive to having one on their site. However, 1 / 3rd will incorporate Web 2.0 into their website.



Forums and blogs are the most commonly found collaborative tools on sites, with nearly 64% for the first and 42% respectively.

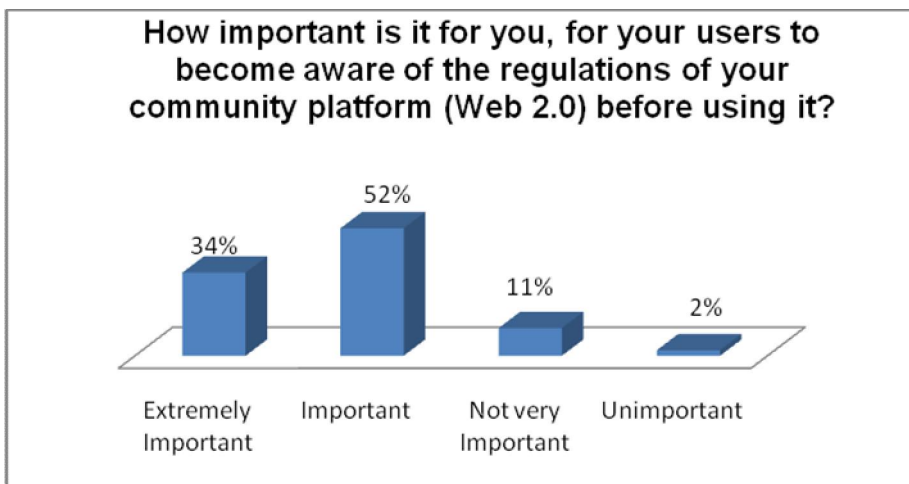


40% of webmasters consider the collaborative aspect of their site as important. This means that the integration of platforms such as a forum or a blog attracts visitors.

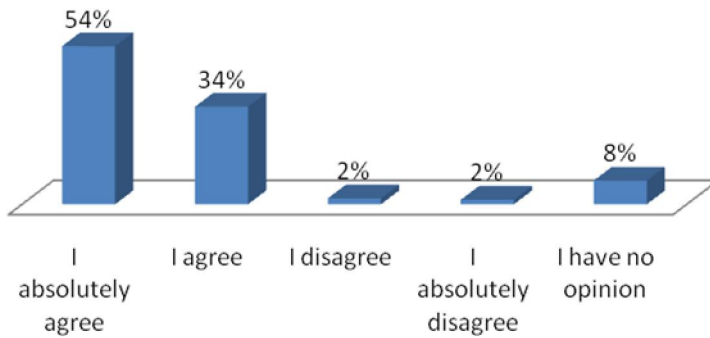


Just over 1 / 3rd of webmasters have already encountered problems with their collaborative platform. The main problems are:

- Erroneous Medical information on forum;
- No participation after setting up a wiki
- Advertising hidden in comments.



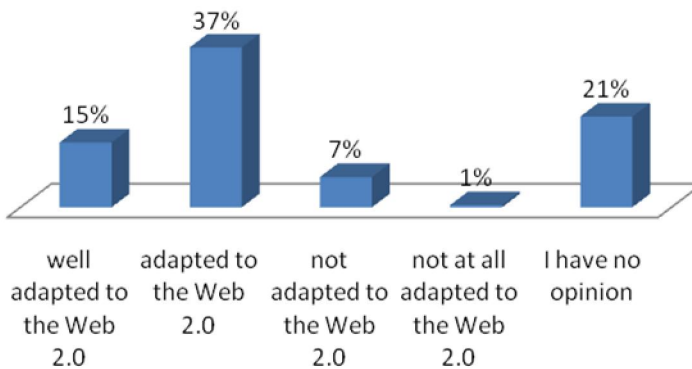
**2. It is necessary to establish rules for the community platform (Web 2.0):**



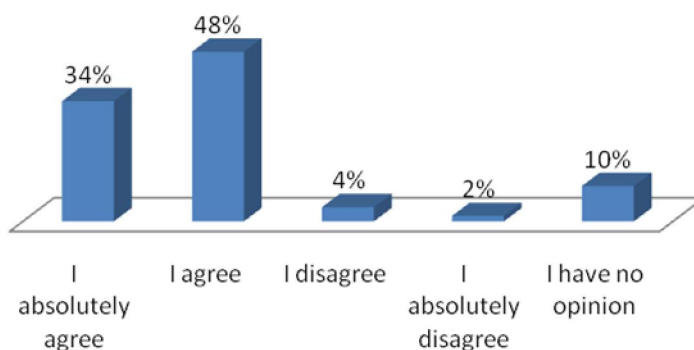
86% of respondents think it is important that users become aware of the charter before using their platform and 88% find it necessary to establish specific rules for collaborative platforms. Thus, there is an awareness among the webmasters, of the impact of such tools on the Internet.

Webmasters reluctant to approach this fear that the rules are too cumbersome to implement and the charter of the site may be too long and therefore not read.

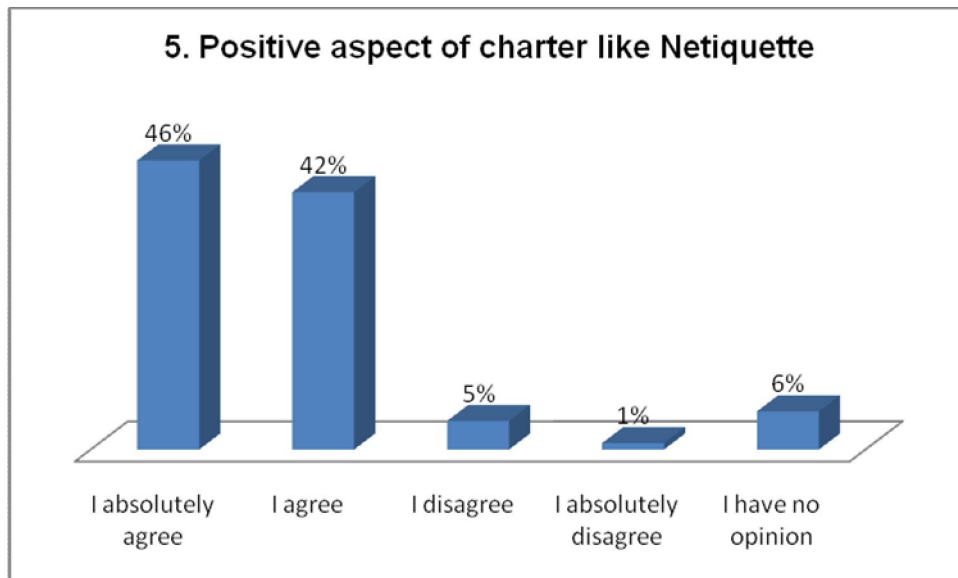
**These guidelines are :**



**Rules governing community platforms are**



The additional guidelines for Web 2.0 in the context of HONcode certification are useful and appropriate.  
82% of webmasters agree that these guidelines, which are complementary to the HONcode, are useful.



88% of respondents were aware of the positive impact of a charter of good conduct for collaborative platforms.

### Conclusion

This survey has highlighted the increase of collaborative platforms worldwide. In fact nearly 1 in 2 webmasters responding to the questionnaire have already incorporated a collaborative tool on their health website. Out of the other half, 30% will be incorporating such a tool on their website soon. 86% of webmasters agree that the guidelines complementary to the HONcode are useful. Therefore, the ethical principles of the HONcode charter address the issue of Web 2.0 using add-on application guidelines. These rules of application must meet the additional challenges of site collaboration and help in the daily management of Web 2.0 sites.

### Thanks

The High Authority of Health and the Health On the Net Foundation thank the site managers who took the time to answer the survey presented in this document.

### REFERENCES

1. [http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web\\_2.0](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_2.0)
2. <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>
3. <http://technorati.com/blogging/state-of-the-blogsphere>
4. HealthTrain, The Open Healthcare Manifesto, Dimitry Kruglyak, 2006.
5. Une chartre des listes de discussion entre patients : proposition pour une autorégulation, Cécile Méadal, David Oziel, Volume 37, numéro 12, pages 1809-1816 (Dec 2008).