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10 Web trends to watch in 2010

By **Pete Cashmore**, Special to CNN
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Mashable's Pete Cashmore says real-time communication, Internet TV and social gaming will be big in 2010.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

Mashable's Pete Cashmore lists his 10 Web trends that we'll be talking about next year

Sparked by Twitter, Facebook and FriendFeed, the real-time communications trend will grow

The cloud-computing movement will see a major leap forward in the first half of 2010

2010 will be the breakthrough year of the much-anticipated mobile payments market

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Editor's note: Pete Cashmore is founder and CEO of Mashable, a popular blog about social media. He is writing a weekly column about social networking and tech for CNN.com.

(CNN) -- As 2009 draws to a close, the Web's attention turns to the year ahead. What can we expect of the online realm in 2010?

While Web innovation is unpredictable, some clear trends are becoming apparent. Expect the following 10 themes to define the Web next year:

Real-time ramps up

Sparked by Twitter, Facebook and FriendFeed, the real-time trend has been to the latter part of 2009 what "Web 2.0" was to 2007. The term represents the growing demand for immediacy in our interactions. Immediacy is compelling, engaging, highly addictive ... it's a sense of living in the now.

But real-time is more than just a horde of new Twitter-like services hitting the Web in 2010 (although that's inevitable -- cargo cults abound). It's a combination of factors, from the always-connected nature of modern smartphones to the instant gratification provided by a Google search.

Why wait until you get home to post a restaurant review, asks consumer trends tracker Trendwatching, when scores of iPhone apps let you post feedback as soon as you finish dessert? Why wonder about the name of that song, when humming into your phone handset will garner an instant answer from Midomi?

Look out, too, for real-time collaboration: Google Wave launched earlier this year, resulting in both excitement and confusion. A crossover between instant messaging, e-mail and a wiki, Wave is a platform for getting things done together. Web users, however, remain baffled. In 2010, Wave's utility will become more apparent.

Location, location, location

Fueled by the ubiquity of GPS in modern smartphones, location-sharing services like Foursquare, Gowalla, Brightkite and Google Latitude are suddenly in vogue.

As I ruminated in this column two weeks ago, Foursquare and its ilk may become the breakout services of the year ... provided they're

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not crushed by the addition of location-based features to Twitter and Facebook.

What's clear is that location is not about any singular service; rather, it's a new layer of the Web. Soon, our whereabouts may optionally be appended to every Tweet, blog comment, photo or video we post.

Augmented reality

It's yet to become part of the consumer consciousness, but augmented reality has attracted early-adopter buzz in the latter part of 2009.

Enabled by GPS, mapping data from the likes of Google and the accelerometer technology in modern phones, AR involves overlaying data on your environment; imagine walking around a city and seeing it come to life with reviews of the restaurants you walk past and Wikipedia entries about the sights you see.

When using Layar, for instance, the picture from your phone's video camera is overlaid with bubbles of information from Yelp, Wikipedia, Google Search and Twitter. The challenge for such services is to prove their utility: They have the "cool factor," but can they be truly useful?

Content 'curation'

The Web's biggest challenge of recent years is that content creation is outpacing our ability to consume it: "Information overload" has become an increasingly common complaint.

In the attention economy, with its millions of daily status updates and billions of Web pages vying for our time, how do we best allocate that scarce resource? One solution has been algorithmic: Sites like Google News source the best stuff by technical means, but fall short when it comes to personalization.

In 2008, the answer revealed itself: Your friends are your filter. With the launch of its Facebook Connect program, Facebook allowed sites to offer content personalization based on the preferences of your network.

Meanwhile, Google's Social Search experiment is investigating whether Web searching is improved by using information gleaned from your friends on Twitter, Facebook, Digg and the rest. Increasingly, your friends are becoming the curators of your consumption, from Web links to movies, books and TV shows.

Professional "curation" has its place, too: Who better to direct our scarce attention than experts in their fields? I explored this possibility in a CNN article last month titled "Twitter lists and real-time journalism" .

Cloud computing

Cloud computing was very much a buzzword of 2009, but there's no doubt this transition will continue. The trend, in which data and applications cease to reside on our desktops and instead exist on servers elsewhere ("the cloud"), makes our data accessible from anywhere and enables collaboration with distributed teams.

The cloud movement will see a major leap forward in the first half of 2010 with the launch of "Office Web Apps," free online versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote released in tandem with Microsoft Office 2010.

Next year will also see the launch of Google's Chrome OS, a free, Web-centric operating system that forces us to ask: How many desktop applications do we really need?

Internet TV and movies

Is 2010 the year the majority of our television starts coming to us via the Internet? There's certainly more activity here than at any other time: Among the early-adopter set, Hulu, Boxee, Apple TV and Netflix's Roku box lead the field.

Hulu in particular has sustained remarkable growth this year, while the movie studios are getting on board with the launch of Epix, a Hulu for films.

Convergence conundrum

The outlook for devices in 2010 appears somewhat contradictory: While the convergence trend continues apace and many of our gadgets are folded into the smartphones we carry around every day, we're seeing a converse trend in which task-specific devices gain popularity.

GPS device maker TomTom recently introduced a $100 iPhone app that removes the need to buy a TomTom hardware device. Google then one-upped the company by releasing free turn-by-turn directions on devices running its Android operating system. Garmin and TomTom beware: Standalone GPS devices may meet their demise in 2010.

Also on the endangered gadgets list: Flip video cameras, which PC World declared dead upon the launch of the iPhone 3G S. Meanwhile, Apple executives say the iPhone is cannibalizing the iPod: Why carry two devices when you only need one?

Paradoxically, the e-book reader is seeing traction as a single-use device. With hard-to-read, power-hungry laptop screens proving impractical for reading, and smartphone screens proving too small, the Kindle and its competitors are gaining buzz.

However, I'd argue that the e-book reader is a fad: Carrying an extra device is never desirable, and the major factor preventing convergence is the lack of superior screen technology. Flexible, expanding low-power screens on cell phones might tip the balance.

The real power of Amazon's Kindle is its ease of use: a virtual bookstore so simple that it does for books what Apple's iTunes did for music. The devices will converge, but the "app store" model for books will persist across all devices. The technology won't be with us in 2010, however.

Social gaming

There's little risk of social gaming proving a bad bet in 2010 -- Zynga's FarmVille game on Facebook now counts more active users than Twitter, claims a Facebook executive. Meanwhile, rival Playfish was recently acquired by Electronic Arts in a deal valued at

up to $400 million.

Of growing interest in 2010, however, will be the virtual currencies these games have spawned: In the allegedly unmonetizable world of social media, virtual buying and selling may be the route to riches for some social media sites -- a concept I outlined in this column under the title "Is Facebook the future of micropayments?"

Mobile payments

I'd wager that 2010 will be the breakthrough year of the much-anticipated mobile payments market. While much of Asia has embraced the technology, the U.S., in particular, has lagged. There's reason for optimism in 2010, however: From PayPalX to Amazon's mobile payments platform for developers, the big players are seizing the mobile payments opportunity.

Meanwhile, newcomer Square, founded by the creator of Twitter, began its rollout this week to much early-adopter excitement: The company enables merchants to accept payments via Apple's iPhone.

Fame abundance, privacy scarcity

Warhol was right: Fame is now abundant. Social media has birthed a galaxy of stars in thousands of niches: We're all reality stars now, on Facebook, Twitter and all the myriad online outlets where we hone our personal brands.

We're seeing the ongoing voluntary erosion of privacy through public sharing on Facebook and Twitter, the rise of location-based services and the inclusion of video cameras in a growing array of devices.

The incredible efficiency of Web-based communication and our Google-fueled appetite to know everything about everything (or everyone) right now are combining to make Tiger Woods the canary in the privacy coal mine. Expect personal privacy -- or rather its continued erosion -- to be a hot media topic of 2010.

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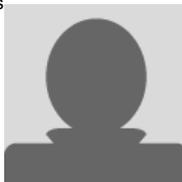
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can mix (especially for contact) with our "web p ...more
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- *mminardo*

mminardo

very well put. I would also add that the sheer volume of content will continue to increase. At some point many
thought there would be a limit or end to the web, but 2009 has solidified there is really no limit in site to the
amount of type of content which will be made available on the web. More c ...more
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- *VanessaSw*

VanessaSw

Great list -- but I would include poken!
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- *modedemploi*

modedemploi

Very interesting. I would add web applications designed to be accessed on TV screens through consoles with
innovative control systems such as the WII or Natal.
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- *NikisNotes*

NikisNotes

Great discussion, Pete. "Content curation" is a very interesting topic. As stated above, the "content creation is
outpacing our ability to consume it," which opens the door for content curators. People have always relied on
friends/family/network to provide referrals and suggestions, and sites like ...more
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    Anrkist

    What's it like to not be in touch with reality?
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- *Gilasevi*

Gilasevi

These new tech-fads or tech-trends are very much going for an overall tech-tainment direction. What I mean is
that much like movies, these websites that allow real-time sharing of nonsense (and possibly important events)
just offer people (who want spend time on them) things they can play with for a ...more
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- *Noguchistein*

Noguchistein

The future of Social Networking is people smart enough to not use it and still be successful. The SN Backlash
has begun. Infinite information even when "curated" is still infinitely confusing. Hope you live forever to use all
that valuable information. Don't miss it today!
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- *jlpeterson*

jlpeterson

nice cargo cult reference
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- *HuguesM*

HuguesM

It's amazing to think a video game company like Playfish has been sold for about the tenth of facebook's value... And I see more and more news of Zynga's game on my feed, I wonder how much they're wort.I think the future of Internet is also in the "where", as in where Internet is present. First it w ...more

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- *Powerpink*

Powerpink

I Love Social Media! I Love to connect,share stories,or just plain talk.I think we are all so caught up in tech stuff,that we don't have time to stop and smell the roses.Life is short,connecting with people is a lot of fun, but don't you think everything is so fast pace? We need to enjoy life and co ...more

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- *KillerMike*

KillerMike

Cloud computing is HIGHLY overrated. I have used a beta version of Google OS on my computer and I can say with a lot of certainty that "Google Apps" simply cannot compete with traditional desktops applications like Microsoft Office or Adobe Photoshop. While I may understand how the "casual" computer ...more

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- *Blurf*

Blurf

Come on...it's "real time." "Real-time" is an adjective.

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- *branchs*

branchs

I agree a good list - what about Second Life?

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- *ScottMonty*

ScottMonty

In the future, we'll all have 15 minutes of privacy. ;-)

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- *kissmet*

kissmet

Now, if we can only translate all these into job, jobs, jobs we'll have a better time using all this technology.

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- *muellj16*

muellj16

Great article! Additionally I believe that with apps like Qik which allow you to live stream video using your cell phone camera will further strengthen the demise of the Flip.

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