Opinions Libres
le blog d'Olivier Ezratty

Leweb 2009 – Gurus and illustrious speakers

Let's talk a bit about these "TED moments" from Leweb, when speakers really shake the audience and create a strong emotional connection. In most cases, it was with substance. There were at least 4 to 5 such occasions at this year's Leweb.

It's always amazing to watch the differences of communication styles between speakers. Corporate speakers tend to care about every word they say, keep a stable voice, and they avoid to hurt anybody as if their legal department was hiding behind the black stage curtain. Some were even reading their speeches, huh oh. On the contrary, good speakers move, shake hands, speak loud, use common sense, and they make a hit. Could you have both? I wish Corporation could. In the long run, they'll have to. Otherwise, fireside chats with Loic were fine.

So, let's look at the main session speakers in a decreasing impact order:

- **Gary Vaynerchuk**, writer of the book "CrushIT", brand consultant and creator of a $70m wine business, did deliver the most amazing performance. You got to **see this,** and it's bad luck that such video doesn't run in slow motion. He basically explains in plain words how word of mouth replaces traditional marketing and how companies should care about users. He also explains how he spends a lot of time learning on what people write about him. That he answers all messages he receives and that corporations should do the same. At the end, he wonders why there's no Q&A in Leweb session? Actually, Gary was already at **Leweb 2008**, but I didn't see him.

- **Violet Blue** did a **speech** on the future of sex. It was a strange one, delivered in a low key tone, but quite interesting. It's kind of a follow-up to last year's talk on the biology of love. I wondered whether she was

in a need for this future of virtual sex and sex with robots. Or just describing it as an observer. Looks like she's connected to sex libertarians from the San Francisco area. All this and "instantaneous on demand orgasm" relate somewhat to the "real time web". Her talk shows a clear split between sex and love. She didn't mention "love" once in her talk. Look at her **own feedback** on the reactions she got after her talk.

- **Chris Pirillo**, founder of blog aggregation site Lockergnome, did a good presentation on communities. The most interesting message is that communities can't be built artificially by corporations. "*They've got to come from people on their own. Consumers belong to several circles of communities. Community just happens, no matter the tool. It's about the culture. You may not like Apple as a company but like the culture of the iPhone. Apple being out of MacWorld doesn't matter much. You just need to interact with other Mac users. It's all about the culture that surrounds the products. Companies shouldn't try to control reactions on their products. Control is bullshit*". That speech should be watch by all Corporate marketing and communications managers who want to understand how to get involved with communities.

- **Christopher Sacca**, founder of Lowercase explains that douchebags will disappear and that the world and the web will become better. Quite optimistic. He also describe the mass amount of available data on the web as a form of "porn". "*Data is porn. We have more data than ever*".

- **Queen Rania** did a good 14 mn **speech** on how social networks can change the world. She's probably the only Queen in town using Twitter (@QueenRania) and broadcasting about what she's doing and her involvement in NGOs. Some snipets of her speech: "*Developers and bloggers are ... a new field of digital anthropology*", "*Online activism can change the offline world*", think about "*How the death of Michael Jackson changed the course of the green revolution in Iran*" (with reducing its impact). "*Social network could solve social problems*". "*Real-time is the new prime-time*". She cares about the kids who are out of schools, particularly little girls and wants to drive good quality education to increase average income. At the beginning of her speech, she asked for her written notes to Loic but was never looking as she used two teleprompters. After her speech, she had lunch with the top web guys like Jack Dorsey from Twitter and also Julien Codorniou from Microsoft. Oh, and you guess, how beautiful she is. A heaven for a photographer as exemplified below!

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- **Fabrice Grinda surprised me**. The guy, native from Nice, France, now speaks a perfect English. He founded the auction site Aucland in France in 1999 and sold it to QLX in 2002 and left France. He's now the co-CEO of OLX an online locals company established in many countries outside the US. It a successful "rest of the world Craiglist" with $1m a month in Google Ads. He invested in 30 companies. His sites generate 100 million uv/month and are big in Latam and South East Asia.

- **Yossi Vardi** is now a regular speaker at Leweb. He's using sarcasm, analogies, absurdities, humor and a wealth of YouTube videos and Flickr pictures to make his points. Just **watch it** on your own and have fun, although it was not related to the "real time web".

- **Nathalie Kosciusko Morizet**, France Minister of State responsible of Forward Planning and of the Digital Economy did **talk in English** after warning she may not be able to do it. She went through all the stuff the French government does with the Internet. The part of the economy recovery plan invested in web 2.0 and serious gaming innovations. The "investment loan for the future" that includes 4,5 billion Euros for the digital economy (2 for broadband access in all underequipped parts of France and for FTTH and the rest for new applications, RFPs, and subsidies/loans for innovative companies). Her main point: *"I' feel I'm more the Minister of Digital Society"* (than digital economy).

- **Timothy Ferriss**, author of "The 4 Hour Workweek" explains how to create a book phenomenon for less than $10K. 200K books are published every year in the USA. Only a few succeed and for a short period of time due to the length of their TV ads campaign. He invested on Google ads, reached out blogs related to his priority customer segments. Data is king and he uses a lot Google Analytics to optimize his marketing and blog posting times. This is a lot of good basics but worth listening for any Corporate marketing person. And a motto taken from Warren Buffet: "*Think about it when you are in the side of the majority*". Real time web? Not really.

- At last, **Tony Hsieh**, CEO of Zappos.com, acquired for $1.2B by Amazon talked about community and culture. Beforehand, he created LinkExchange and sold it to Microsoft. His company philosophy is to invest all his marketing money on customer service and drive good word of mouth. **Watch it**.

There were other good speakers but not as memorable.

Otherwise, Leweb hosted many roundtable panel discussions. I don't like it usually and I didn't like it either here. In the last two ones (European Gang and Gilmore Gang), with about the same folks as last year, we heard again and again about the differences between Europe and the USA. Nothing really new nor linked to the real time web. So I'll skip it in this report.