Sure, companies have started using Web 2.0 tools, but one man says we've seen only a glimmer of the change they're going to bring to the way we do business. Andrew McAfee, a principal research scientist at the Center for Digital Business in the MIT Sloan School of Management, is author of the recently released book Enterprise 2.0: New Collaborative Tools for Your Organization's Toughest Challenges (Harvard Business Publishing, 2009).

McAfee says tools and Web sites like wikis, blogs, Twitter and Facebook are changing not only the way businesses share information, but also how employees function inside those businesses. In effect, Enterprise 2.0 is changing the way we work.

What does Enterprise 2.0 mean? Loosely, it means applying Web 2.0 tools and philosophies to different business situations. The tighter definition is the business use of an emergent social software platform. It's about building clever tools that get out of the way and let people interact as they want to.

Are employees dragging IT departments kicking and screaming into the world of Enterprise 2.0? People throughout the

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I appreciate that there are [Web 2.0] security considerations. There are legitimate concerns, but saying "no, no, no" isn't going to win you fans elsewhere in the business.

A lot of executives fear that Web sites like Facebook and Twitter are big productivity killers. Do you agree with blocking employees from using them? I don't agree that it's time-wasting. They might say, "We don't like those big public utilities, but we will give you something equivalent behind the firewall." Sticking your head in the sand and waiting for this to pass is an extremely short-sighted philosophy. There's the idea that the coolest tech gadgets are no longer the ones that the company buys for you, but that you can get for free on the Internet.

What are the best ways that businesses are taking advantage of Web 2.0 technology? They're taking advantage of it in a few different ways. They're using it to let people broadcast their expertise: I'm going to tell the organization what I'm doing, what I know and what I'm good at. I'm not filling out fields in a database. I'm doing this by blogging. That lets me narrate my work.

Combine that with decent search technology, and you can find out who in the organization would be a good colleague for you [to work with]. You can also use it to broadcast your ignorance and talk about things you need help with. If people have something that would be helpful, they're usually happy to share it with you.

Which businesses are doing a great job with their Enterprise 2.0 efforts? The BBC did something really interesting a while back. All the managers were saying their intranet search was incredibly frustrating. They realized they could refine their intranet search and make it better, but instead they formed discussion groups. You can ask anyone on the BBC network a question, and anyone can answer you. You can ask, "Where does this information exist?" Someone will say, "It's right here," and they'd provide a link or provide an attachment. It's a way to let people be helpful to each other.

Do any other businesses stand out with their Enterprise 2.0 efforts? The CIA is using [Enterprise 2.0 technology] to broadcast [individuals'] expertise to people inside the intelligence community. Before, they had no way to find people in different organizations working on the same things or who were experts in something they were working on. Now, they can reach out and find people who are valuable, not only in the CIA, but in the FBI and the NSA. There might be a colleague out there who would be useful to you, if you knew about them. Now there's an actual tie.

What's the biggest thing companies are doing wrong when it comes to Enterprise 2.0? Letting different flavors of concern or risk or fear hold them back. They can come up with a laundry list of things that can go wrong. Stuff can leap across the firewall. Someone can harass a co-worker. But when I talk to organizations that have gone the distance with this, they have not seen this behavior. If someone wanted to harass a co-worker, they didn't have to wait for blogging software to come along to do it, for instance.

Are Web 2.0 tools changing the way we do business? Not to a huge extent, yet. The adoption is not universal. It's not like you magically transform yourself overnight. Most big enterprises are aware of the phenomenon. They're interested and are trying to figure out how to proceed. It's a long, slow process. We're asking people to rethink how they think about technology and collaboration. Companies will be transformed. It will be a quiet, subtle transformation, though.

In what ways will businesses act or look differently in 10 years as a result of Web 2.0 tools? What I hope is that some part of people's jobs will be about enterprise-level colleague-ship. How are you helping out the enterprise as a whole? These tools make me optimistic, because they give people a voice inside the enterprise. In the future, it will be easy to figure out who in the enterprise can be valuable to me. I can home in on the people I need to work with, and right now that still can be very difficult to figure out.

— Interview by Sharon Gaudin