

## **PROMOTING INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING THROUGH VLOGGING (VIDEO BLOGGING)**

Anyone who spends some time on the web cannot have failed to notice the new wave of opportunities and to a lesser extent threats. The web is basically being used in different ways to reach out to people of all kinds and it is intriguing the way things are going. It makes the Web look and feel flat.

The evolving Internet has led to the continuous fall of the dot com craze and replaced leading to the next generation of web applications. YouTube is a classic example of how the next generation websites have taking over the Internet. It was founded in 2005 and in less than two years Google bought it for a staggering \$1.64 billion.

With Facebook, MySpace, Flickr, Twitter, Blogs and YouTube, you can expect nothing but a new world of reaching out to people and hence a way of sharing knowledge to both the deprived and people who can afford. This new web experience is what Tim O'Reilly termed as Web 2.0 in 2004. Till today, there has not been a clear definition for this phenomenon that has come to stay until we see the birth of a new one. Because of the complex nature this new phenomenon of sharing knowledge, it became very difficult for everyone else to agree on one definition for Web 2.0.

The Wikipedia defines Web 2.0 as “perceived second generation of web-based communities and hosted services – such as social networking sites, wikis and folksonomies – which facilitates collaboration and sharing between users.” This may be the best ever definition of what Web 2.0 is. One of such next generation web applications is Video blogging. Video blogging are just another innovative way of using the blog. Blogs are defined as the published text of an author’s thoughts, with entries displayed in a reverse chronology. Readers can subscribe to it, link to it, post comments and share links.

The Ghana Information Networks for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS) has been using this technology as a leverage to share knowledge to its audience with considerable success. Founded in December 2002 by a group of 15 in partnership with the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD), the Ghana Information Network for Knowledge Sharing (GINKS) aims at creating a platform for institutions and individuals to dialogue and share experiences in order to maximize the potential of ICT tools for socio-economic development. Until its inception ICT professionals, decision makers and advocates in Ghana had very few options for linking up with other colleagues to share best practices, lessons and network with each other to dialogue on pertinent issues that pertain to the evolving ICT industry in Ghana. GINKS has brought together individuals and groups interested in ICT4D and has helped fill the vacuum for knowledge sharing by creating both online and offline space where discussions can be held, lessons can be shared and best practices transferred to promote ICT for development in Ghana.

GINKS currently has an up-to-date website (<http://ginks.org>) which provides accurate information on ICT4D in Ghana; and in partnership with BusyInternet, GINKS implements a monthly ICT4D series called cyber series. Additionally, the GINKS dgroup

with over 430 subscribers offers a platform for engagement irrespective of physical location. The network also publishes the IconnectGhana newsletter, which remains the topmost media devoted to news on ICT4D in Ghana. Furthermore, with its regional nodes and thematic nodes, GINKS offers innovative ways for information and knowledge sharing among professionals and decision makers on ICT4D across the country.

GINKS membership has doubled from approximately 200 during the official launch in October 2003 to 430 members in December 2007. The membership of GINKS is currently very broad; it is an open forum for all interested in ICT4D in Ghana. However, it encourages targeted discussion to meet the needs of particular groups. For example, through its regional nodes and thematic nodes notably the GINKS-Tech forum and the GINKS-Women&ICT4D the network has created specialized space for members with common interest to share experiences across the country

This article will share some of GINKS success stories and state some of the challenges of using Web 2.0 tools.

The first part of this article shall seek to define what vlogging is all about and discuss the processes involved and the equipments needed to build a successful video blog. It is also very important when discussing such a topic to remember to mention the important role vlogs play as a tool for sharing knowledge. GINKS has been at the forefront of popularizing the concept of video blogging and has become imperative that a sections is devoted to best practices by the organization in using video blogs. This part will mainly focus on how the network has used vlogs as a leverage to disseminate information to members of the group while not failing to look at the capacity required of a vlogger and the tools GINKS have used. Challenges of using vlogs shall be covered fully in this article and finally we shall be looking at the future of using video blogs while highlighting some recommendations for future growth.

### **What then is vlogging?**

Like was discussed above, a blog is a “web page” on which an author can publish text of his thoughts, with entries displayed in a reverse chronology and with the intention of sharing information with viewers of the page whiles hoping that people would comment on the posts and share more ideas with other viewers. Video blogging is of the same philosophy. The term Video blogging or Vlogging may mean making videos and posting them on the Internet with the intention of getting a response from viewers.

Before the value or importance of vlogs are explored, it is very important to say that one requires very little in terms of cost and training to be able to develop a video blog. The minimum set of tools one needs to do a video blog are video Camera/Camcorder, a computer with video editing software installed, an Internet connection, a blog account /space and an online video account/space.

It is important to note here that you have to be passionate about vlogging on a particular issue to do a creative vlog. This is so because it makes you think about all the creative

possibilities of doing a perfect vlog that conveys well the information you are about to post. This will then lead us to explore the processes involved in creating a vlog.

To do a video blog the first thing that comes to mind is to get a video of an individual or group telling a story or doing an illustration. At GINKS, we mostly encourage individuals to share their experiences with the network. The raw video is then edited using various video editing software programs such as Apple's iMovie, Final Cut Pro and [Windows Movie Maker](#). With these editing programmes it is easy to edit your videos by giving them titles and doing other changes that make your video very interesting. It is important to allow a third party to check the video to make sure it is interesting and good to post.

The next thing to do after editing the video is to upload it onto a video site on the Internet. Some of the common sites for hosting such videos are google video, YouTube and [www.blip.tv](#). From these spaces, you can then share your videos with [the public](#). On your blog, it is imperative to transcribe the video you have just uploaded into text to give it meaning. At GINKS, we make sure to announce the video link on our network or to individuals to access.

### **The Value and Importance of Vlogging**

There are no doubts several benefits to be gained from vlogging. It is interesting to note that Vlogs provide an accurate media for presenting otherwise long stories or presentations in very simple and attractive manner. This is very important because there [are](#) lots of very [interesting](#) information out there and so makes it readable when the story is cut short and interesting. Short videos have an added advantage in that the visual component helps promote deeper understanding of stories, especially for people with less educational background and or for people who do not have a reading habit.

Also, video blogging has the power to reach an unlimited audience with minimal cost which is interesting indeed because it gives the opportunity to the poor to also tell their story. The Vlogging process furthermore requires no specialised expertise and can be easily controlled by any non-technical person meaning it is technologically simpler and cheaper to maintain than a website.

Videos are interactive medium often encouraging readers to post comments regarding their experiences in relation to the videos being shared. The GINKS blogspot has increased the participation of members in the activities in GINKS. Even more important is the fact people are now more interested in using Web 2.0 tools. It simply means that people relate to Web 2.0 applications more than the traditional websites because of their interactivity. These underscore the power and ability of Vlogs (Web 2.0) tools as a means of sharing information and knowledge.

### **The GINKS Experience**

The experience of GINKS in using Vblog and the importance of the tool in promoting Information and knowledge sharing has informed the network to extend the use of the

tool to capture some of the interesting experiences from a two year Research project the network undertook with a community in Rural Ghana in collaboration with the International Development and Research Center (IDRC). This was on how to enhance Information and knowledge sharing among underprivileged communities in Ghana by defining mechanisms and tools to generate and disseminate relevant local content using appropriate and acceptable ICT formats.

Fortunately for GINKS, there is no special capacity required for video blogging. It can be easily done and controlled by any non-technical person so we have [been](#) able to carry this out without problems. However, there is the need to be very innovative and creative about it because that will be your only trump card to luring people onto your blog.

Anyone interested in becoming a video blogger only need to follow the processes described here in this article to become a great video blogger.

With the GINKS experience, we use a digital camera or sometimes a mobile phone which has a camcorder, to take a video normally five minutes or less. We download the video onto a laptop and do the editing using Windows Movie Maker and then upload to it GINKS [www.blip.tv](http://www.blip.tv) space from where we share the video with the GINKS blog at <http://ginks.blogspot.com>.

### **The GINKS Challenges of Vlogging**

We find that the challenges of vlogging are interlocked. The major challenge is connectivity or access of a key resource like the Internet. In the developing world, this is one of the main hindrances to sharing information and knowledge. Where there is access, it is too expensive for the ordinary citizen to buy.

There is also the challenge of getting people to share Information and Knowledge they have. People naturally shy away from sharing what they know and this is affecting our ability to access valuable information.

Lastly, equipments used for this even though should be affordable, it is still like a luxury for most people in our kind of world. It is not common to see people with digital camera around and those who have may not have access to unlimited Internet access to be able to do this successfully. One of the key ingredients that thrives Web 2.0 is the availability of Internet connectivity. In the absence of that, Web 2.0 and for that matter Video Blogs do not exist.

### **The Future of Vlogging**

From my own stand point, Web 2.0 tools are important and even more important because of the deeper impact the tools could have on marginalized societies, even if these impact are not immediately felt.

Many more rural communities have stories to share with the larger public and voices to amplify. Web 2.0 tools will definitely serve as a perfect answer to project the voices of the rural poor in the future and to achieve our aim of bringing information and knowledge to all.

The benefit of this tool to the rural poor who form the majority much depends on the issue of connectivity and access.

The question I ask is “how do we solve the problem of rural connectivity in order to extend the benefits of Web2.0 tools much wider beyond the scope of the cities”.