How to use del.icio.us to take over the world

By Mike Stopforth   9 Mar 2007

The value of del.icio.us - a social bookmarking application - is often misperceived, and its potential underestimated. You see, just being able to store your WWW bookmarks remotely is not sexy enough. Being able to share them with millions of other users, and in turn being able to interrogate the collective bookmarking efforts of those millions of other del.icio.us users in a very powerful way, is.

Let me explain it this way. Imagine Einstein was alive today. Chances are he'd use the Web. Chances are he'd have found his way to del.icio.us, using it every day to record his Web surfing patterns - all the information he finds interesting, thought-provoking, inspiring, innovative and most significantly, of high quality.

Wouldn't you do anything to get your hands on that pile of information? Einstein's thought resources delivered to your door?

Filter for personal consumption

del.icio.us allows you to see the bookmarks of any other del.icio.us user on the planet that they choose to share. It also allows you to filter all that collective bookmarking discovery and effort to find the most significant, relevant results for your personal consumption.

The genius of del.icio.us, as with many social media technologies, lies in the indexing potency of tags. TAGS? What the heck are those? Well, quite simply, tags are defined as (from the del.icio.us homepage): a word (or words) you use to describe a bookmark.

Unlike folders (or prescribed categories), you define your tags. The result is a better way to organize your bookmarks and a great way to discover relevant and related knowledge on the Web. [Wikipedia has a very comprehensive article on the subject if you want to dig deeper…]

So let's get to the good stuff. I want to show you how an ordinary user can create an extraordinary library of content with del.icio.us.

1. Create an Account

Load http://del.icio.us in your browser – no www in the address. (Yeah, I know it looks busy, confusing and not very pretty. But neither was Einstein). Click on the 'register' link in the top right hand corner. You'll see this…

click to enlarge

Fill out the necessaries and click 'register'. You'll need to verify your email address and then you're ready to rock and roll.

Now most people simply use del.icio.us, as I mentioned earlier, to record and categorise bookmarks. But I want to show you how to build up a knowledge fountain before you bookmark a single thing by leveraging the power of the existing del.icio.us user/knowledge base.

2. Build Your Network

Every del.icio.us user has a unique URL (or Web address) for their account. My personal one is http://del.icio.us/mikestopforth. My company's one (the one I just created with you), is http://del.icio.us/cerebra. On that page we can currently see nothing. Neither will you on your account home page.

click to enlarge

This is because you will only start to see bookmarks here once you begin to manually add them. And this, friends, is where most user's experience of del.icio.us ends - realising the schlep of getting into the habit of bookmarking with del.icio.us instead of using browser bookmarks and as a result, they chuck the concept out the window.

What they don't realise is that you can build a mountain of potent info resources before ever adding a single bookmark yourself. The first way to do this is to grow your del.icio.us network (mine: http://del.icio.us/network/cerebra). The network concept is really simple - find other del.icio.us users who you trust, or believe will read quality content, or are thought leaders - add their names to your network and with a single click of a button receive all of THEIR bookmarks in your networks section. Wow!

More secrets for how savvy marketers can use del.icio.us in their take-over-the-world strategy will be found in Part Two.

ABOUT MIKE STOPFORTH

Mike Stopforth is a Web 2.0 entrepreneur, writer and speaker who also co-produces www.amplitude.co.za, a podcast discussing the best and the worst of new marketing in South Africa each week.

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