



How Best Buy is Using The Semantic Web

Written by [Richard MacManus](#) / July 1, 2010 6:00 AM / [5 Comments](#)

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Yesterday we wrote about the increasing usage of [Semantic Web technologies by large commercial companies](#) (http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/w3c_pleased_with_semantic_web_adoption.php) like Facebook, Google and Best Buy. The [Semantic Web](#) (<http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/semantic-web/>) is a Web of added meaning, which ultimately enables smarter and more personalized web apps to be built. In this post we explore how a leading U.S. retailer, [Best Buy](#) (<http://www.bestbuy.com/>), is using a Semantic Web markup language called RDFa to add semantics to its webpages.

This is not just an academic exercise for Best Buy. As we will see, semantic technology has already led to increased traffic and better service to its customers. We spoke to [Jay Myers](#) (<http://jay.beweep.com/>), Lead Web Development Engineer at BestBuy.com, to find out how.

Myers told us that the primary goal of using semantic technologies was to increase the visibility of its products and services. And with data such as store name, address, store hours and GEO data being marked up using RDFa, search engines are now able to identify each of those data components more easily and put them into context.

A quick refresher on the terminology: just as the lingua franca of the Web is HTML (Hypertext Markup Language), RDF (Resource Description Framework) is commonly thought of as the primary language of the Semantic Web. RDFa is a kind of 'lite' version of RDF, which adds metadata to HTML (or XHTML) webpages.

The process of adding RDFa to Best Buy's webpages began two years ago, when the company began to look for ways to get more visibility to its stores on the Web. "At that time," said Myers, "it was difficult for users to find basic store information like store location and hours."

To solve this dilemma, Best Buy gave each store its own blog.

306
tweets

retweeted

ReadWriteWeb's Guide to The Semantic Web:

1. [It's All Semantics: Open Data, Linked Data & The Semantic Web](#)
2. [The State of Linked Data in 2010](#)
3. [Top 10 Semantic Web Products of 2009](#)
4. [ReadWriteWeb Interview With Tim Berners-Lee](#)
5. [Semantic Web Patterns: A Guide to Semantic Technologies](#)

My Account | Order Status | Customer Service | Español

Weekly Ad Store Locator Outlet Center Services Gifts cart

TV & VIDEO AUDIO CAR & GPS CAMERAS & CAMCORDERS COMPUTERS MOBILE PHONES & OFFICE MUSIC, MOVIES & BOOKS VIDEO GAMES & GADGETS HOME & APPLIANCES

Search All Categories Keyword or Item # GO Credit Cards Reward Zone

Best Buy - Carbondale [store name](#) Print

1270 E Main St [address](#)
Carbondale, IL 62901
Phone: 618-351-1700 [phone](#)
GEO: 37.732719, -89.192314 [geo](#)

Local Selections
Check out these special product selections at our store.

Customer Reviews: [review data](#)
☆☆☆☆
Be the first to write a store review.

Maps & Directions | Weekly Ad

Store Hours [store hours](#)
Mon: 10-9; Tue: 10-9; Wed: 10-9; Thurs: 10-9; Fri: 10-9; Sat: 10-9; Sun: 11-7;
4/4 - 4/10, 2010
Mon: 10-9; Tues: 10-9; Wed: 10-9; Thurs: 10-9; Fri: 10-9; Sat: 10-9; Sun: Closed

Events [event data](#)
Avatar Midnight Release!

Local Selections
Open Box Items (25)

At This Location

- Geek Squad: Computer setup & services, plus home theater, appliance and car installation.
- Geek Squad: Get informed advice from noncommissioned mobile phone specialists.
- Small Business Solutions: Featuring Professional Series products and trained staff to help with small business needs.
- Apple Shop: Mac, iPod and more at this Apple store-within-a-store.
- Electronics Recycling: We offer electronics recycling at this and all other U.S. stores.

Posted by: [Dr. Thorner](#) | [July 1, 2010 6:09 AM](#)

2. @Dr. Thorner They have nothing to do with a consumer or even public market at that. This is great news because it is being implemented on the open web, and in a consumer orientated way. It is fundamentally changing the way we engage with retailers. If the secret service opened their data on the open web, well, they wouldn't be much of a secret service :)

Posted by: [Jim](#) | [July 1, 2010 6:31 AM](#)

3. I don't see the benefit - how does RDFa make it easier for users to find info on Best Buy's website. Seems like the only payoff was in SEO (nothing to sneeze at), but I was hoping for more. I work for a manufacturer that produces over 300,000 standard SKU's. We are looking for a way to help users pick the product that is exactly right for them - seems the semantic web could help....

Posted by: [tmadel](#) | [July 1, 2010 1:02 PM](#)

4. Dr Thorner, as Jim noted the key thing here is that it's a large commercial implementation.

Tmadel, the main benefit is that it enables search engines to find data like store locations and surface that better to users. But also over time I think you'll see Best Buy use the product relations data to recommend things to users and offer more personalization. That's where it may be useful for your company?

Posted by: [Richard MacManus](#) | [July 1, 2010 1:23 PM](#)

5. tmadel -- if the ease of finding the right product with these interoperable languages isn't obvious, your company hasn't invested sufficient time studying the issue -- this use case is a no brainer.

Ad for Thorner's comment -- it's true that the intelligence agencies were among the first to deploy ontologies, they have a poor track record in data governance-- particularly between essential partners, and are just beginning to accept the low hanging fruit of assistance from the public, which is where the consumer semantic web could help-- 8 years after I recommended same to senior level decision makers in the U.S. Gov't.

All large organizations need a logical operating system for the entire organization, aka semantic enterprise, but to date the walled gardens of primitive systems have been very slow to be replaced.

We've been working on a series of use case scenarios for organizations and multi-organization environments that may be of interest: Semantic Scenarios for the Intelligent Enterprise

Story telling format light on marketing and heavy on functionality

Scenario 1: Maya and the global parcel delivery business(Innovation, meritocracy, alignment, product, project, competition, recruiting, profitability)

http://www.kyield.com/images/SCENARIO_1_Maya_in_the_global_parcel_delivery_business.pdf

Scenario 2: Diabetes and the American Healthcare System (New: Kyield Healthcare Platform; Patient Health Management)

http://www.kyield.com/images/Kyield_Diabetes_Use_Case_Scenario.pdf

Scenario 3: Roger the electrician at the hydro dam (homeland security, counter terrorism, military, defense, law enforcement)

http://www.kyield.com/images/SCENARIO_3-_Roger_the_maintenance_man_at_the_hydro_dam.pdf

Regards,

Mark Montgomery
Founder & CEO
Kyield

Posted by: [Mark Montgomery](#) | [July 3, 2010 9:00 AM](#)