The complex today
How the internet has changed and how we’re stumbling with our own feet
By Markus Sandelin
The steam engine sparked the industrial revolution.
It was people who improved and built upon that technology, who really made the revolution happen.
We have become lazy in thinking that we are technologically advanced and that we know how to use new technologies efficiently.
The Internet was first and foremost a technology for improving communications and it did that extremely well.
15 years ago the world wide web surfaced, which was just as paramount of a change than the steam engine.
It was just one application to the technology of the internet.
I think the majority of us does not understand how complex the web has become.
From 360 to 365
The web used to be nothing more than a digital dead end.
However, think of how much the web has changed our lives. We handle our banking, communicate with our friends and families, file our taxes, apply for jobs, do our shopping, look for relationships and even order our pizzas online.
The largest library and encyclopedia in the history of mankind is in the web.
We use the web every day. Still, we design the majority of the web like it’s a digital poster.
Or at least they seem to expect it to cost that or less, since it’s only digital.
The people expect to have their needs served online - their time is worth more than the service the companies are providing.
Why aren't companies investing in the opportunity to the end users them help themselves every day of the year?
From common to individual
When is the last time you have used a website that did not ask for your information, registration or other personal information?
When was the last time you actually gained any value from giving out that information apart from social media?

TOMORROW IS ANOTHER CHANCE
We are still using personal information just to identify.
Not to serve them better or to deliver more meaningful usability, but just to separate one user from each other.
Online banks could earn so much more by just analyzing their CRM data and delivering something more relevant to even two groups of people (e.g. rich and poor).
We have enough data to be hyper-relevant. To individualize the experience.
Amazon has been doing this for 10 years. That’s why they’re leading the race. It is not difficult, it’s just complicated.
Are companies really taking users and their data, behavior and personalities into account in their online experiences?
From still to dynamic
The web used to be a static collection of data based on the designer’s preferences and assumptions.
Then came the forms.
They usually just sent e-mail to some mailbox no one read.
Then some smart person made an interactive form, that could react to the data you just gave and the data we already had. Databases became available for everyone.
Now we could update our own information in a service.
This was a huge leap for the internet.
Users were able to produce data to sites.
We called it web 2.0 - quite fitting.
Companies seem to forget that the more users give data, the more they want in return.

$$1+1=3$$
People expect functionalities and ability to affect data - at least their own. They assume the site has a reason of existing, a purpose.
What is the purpose of your site?

Everything happens for a reason

(American Proverb)
From simple to complex
The change from simple to complex happened both slowly and quickly.
The tools came out quickly, but using them has been growing slowly. The need has always been there, but maybe companies didn’t know they could do things like this.
Even approaching 2012, companies assume that the web is much simpler than it really is.
Companies still invest in it like it’s a poster.
The major problem is that companies assume all data can be accessed through a single user interface.
Yes, even if they would scale or be responsively designed.
Each different use scenario usually requires either different data or differently prioritized data.
If you use your web bank on Saturday evening from home on your computer or Tuesday morning from your smartphone, I would assume your need is quite different.
The internet already has more data than we can handle.
What web sites are today are just filters to access that data.
Is your site taking into account different use scenarios and not just formatting your data differently?
From one to many
If the internet has become so complex, how can we fix it?
It’s very simple in reality, Mark Twain said it a long time ago.
“The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one.”
Instead of one massive system, that has become too complicated even for your own technical guys - build several smaller ones.
This allows you to focus in one thing and do it well.
People won’t get “lost” - the relevance of information is the landmark they will use for navigation, not a hierarchy for random data.
Our industry used to laugh at web portals for being too complex, and now we are building sites that are larger and more complex than those portals ever were.
Scale it down a bit.
This will not only save time and money, it will create a better internet for us all.
An internet our grand-parents and children know how to use.
Thank you

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