Interactions UTC

This one reads the future via social Networking

Alain LE BERRE, a graduate engineer from UTC, co-founder of Linkfluence, which is a recent start-up specialised in finding integrated solutions for cartographic problems; monitoring software and sociological analyses of the Internet. But more than this, Linkfluence has in less than 6 years become a self-standing research institute.

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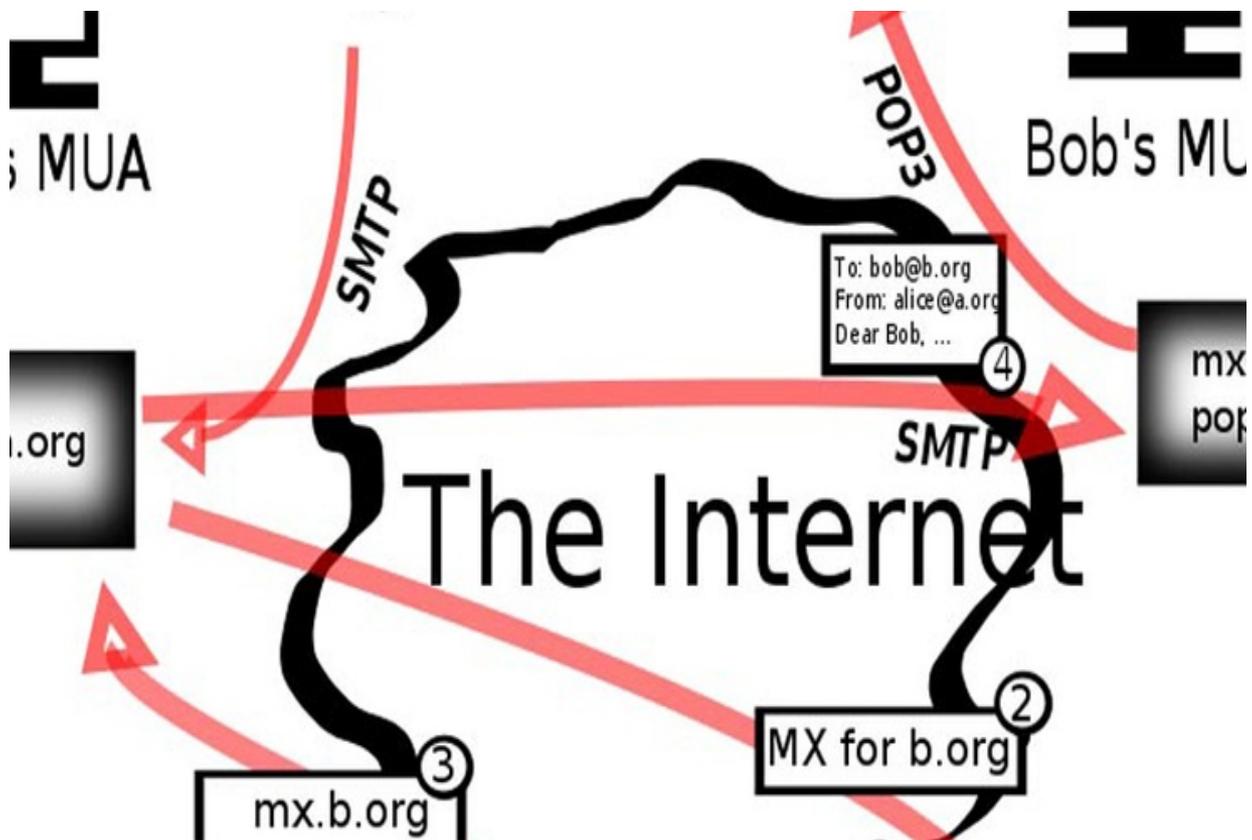
How would you define Linkfluence, in its role as a recognised "2.0" research institute?

Linkfluence firstly represents exploration, analytical, web site visualizing technology with the capacity to analyse structures and content, and where cartography is only the visible part of the iceberg. But Linkfluence is also and opinion polling and marketing company with special software named Radarly offered as a 'software as a service' (SaaS), which is a platform to manage social media for community managers and enterprise leaders alike.

How could studying exchanges via the Internet, seeking to interpret and understand varied political opinions, have become relevant through time, even

inescapable?

If we are seen today as pioneers of social/political web site traffic, this only represents a fraction of our activities, somewhat seasonable since our methodologies allow our clients to follow up opinion trends at a national level. In contradistinction, analysing spontaneous speech exchanges (chat) between Internauts in order to allow companies to "position" the speakers, to optimise their products or communication has today become an inescapable method used to better understand public opinions or market trends and represents the main-stream part of our business activities. Outside electoral periods, we continue to work on people's opinions and assess public policies, thereby getting a feeling for territorial specifics through the way the communicate (digital voice-prints). In this way, after studying the Picardie Region on behalf of the Regional Authority, or the city of New York in 2010, we shall soon be investigating web patterns and trends in Greater Paris, in the framework of the DynamiCité Project. This project, moreover, will be conducted in a partnership with UTC Compiegne and Xerox Lab, with financial support from the bank Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations.

Among your clients, you have several ministries and major industrial groups, backing traditional opinion polls, panels and focus groups. Do you think the future can be read in social networking?

A good experience to have a foresight look is to google "2050". That brings up the future or rather a list of events programmed for that particular year, along with a number of predictions, some of which a shade "nutty", or "over the top", you might say! Beyond the real-time factor of the web - which consists of understanding and representing a given situation and providing to tools to react

appropriately - our work lies more in the diagnosis and the prospective approaches. The idea is to make an accurate status report at time T or to identify trends, low level signals or to draw from a mass of opinions collected via the Internet those points of singularity or determining factors which, when compared with market aspects, or job criteria, will reveal deep-reaching trends in behaviours or in the way we forge our opinions and trends. This is the truly strong area of Linkfluence, even if we are interested in studying the modelling of long-term trends, such as the way information will travel through a network, for example.

What is the innovation strategy of Linkfluence, 6 years after it as launched?

Well, firstly, our innovation strategy consists of consolidating our position in the market-place by integrating all the know-how we have accumulated and assimilated over 6 years in all our products .It is more through an innovation in the way people use technologies that will help the analytical work carried out by our personnel and that of our clients at every level. In parallel, we are working on increasing our capacity and processing power to handle very large amounts of data. It is our intention to multiply our performance figures, in terms of the volume of data handled, tenfold over the coming 6 months.