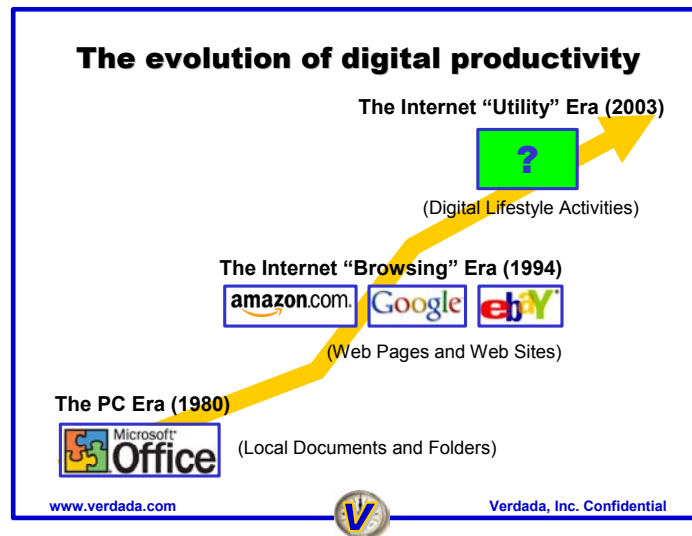# VERDADA "SOS": POWERING THE INTERNET UTILITY ERA
Why saving, organizing and sharing is integral to the Internet's next chapter

Overview: This short paper introduces an innovative new product called VSOS™ (Verdada SOS – the "SOS" stands for save, organize and share). Included in this short paper is our vision for the next chapter of the Internet, which we call the "Internet Utility Era." Also included is why we think saving, organizing and sharing is integral to the Internet's next chapter, and how VSOS goes about addressing that need. Finally, three key requirements of a robust SOS solution are identified and discussed:

- **An "actionable" listings model**
- **Extensible list management**
- **Email based sharing to extend reach and clicks**

The Internet Utility Era: A new era in digital productivity begins

History has shown that in each computing era a central metaphor emerges that drives user productivity. Moreover, the industry players that best address user requirements become industry standards bearers. In the PC era, manipulating local documents and organizing them into folders was the primary metaphor, and we know how that worked out with Microsoft Office. By contrast, the past ten years have largely been focused on web pages and web sites, with Amazon, Google, and eBay emerging as the bellwethers of the Internet "browsing" era. But now, we think we are moving into a new period, where technology ceases to be cool or compelling for its own sake, and the Internet's value is gauged by the utility it provides individuals to actually getting things done. As such, we call this nascent era the Internet "Utility" Era.

The evolution of digital productivity

The Internet "Utility" Era (2003)

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(Digital Lifestyle Activities)

The Internet "Browsing" Era (1994)

amazon.com   Google   eBay

(Web Pages and Web Sites)

The PC Era (1980)

Microsoft Office   (Local Documents and Folders)

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Each era has its own set of rules that define industry requirements

Activities like researching and buying products, planning nights on the town, travel planning, getting married, having babies, and finding out about the latest fitness, fashion and diet trends are all examples that touch multiple web sites, email and web content, different products, businesses and people. This reality presents a basic dilemma to the typical online user; namely, "How exactly do I connect the dots between all of this disparate information?"

What's at stake for the solution providers who satisfactorily address this pain point is a big market, touching the more than 50 million people online today who, according to industry analysts Aberdeen, are looking to be more productive in planning, researching and managing their recurring digital lifestyle activities:

- **Product nuts**: Amazon has 30M+ unique customers; eBay has 50M accounts
- **Travel planners**: 250M pleasure trips planned each summer; 40M frequent business travelers
- **Active lifestyles**: Everybody goes out
- **Life milestones**: Every year, 4M weddings/first babies born; 37M people move; millions change careers
- **Health/fitness/fad chasers**: 20M+ subscribe to health/fitness/fashion publications

And into the same mix, you can add the countless millions using the Internet in an ad hoc fashion to do research, manage projects, market products or services online, meet people through social networks and build up their own personal sandbox of online memory.

Many of the industry's incumbents comprehend that this sea change is occurring, which best explains why a search company like Google comes out with a toolbar—Googlebar 2.0—that supports popup ad blocking, auto forms completion and blogging. Google understands that targeting and enhancing an ever-growing portion of a consumer's utility sandbox is integral to becoming an indispensable online companion. No less telling is the fact that millions of users that have downloaded the toolbar are vindicating this approach, adding further credence to the nascence of an Internet Utility Era.

Solving the "SOS" Problem

A basic premise of the Internet Utility Era is that as the Internet evolves from a medium of intermittent connectivity and islands of functionality to one that's always on, integrated and persistent, the ability to "save, organize and share" (aka "SOS") in a systematic, reliable fashion becomes the online glue necessary to tie all the pieces together. While the foregoing is intuitive, less obvious is the "right way" to effect such an outcome, given that the type of information relevant to an activity can range from web pages and emails to free form notes to highly structured information listings.

Further, as anyone can attest who has grappled with the question of whether to save a given piece of information in a desktop folder, email it to themselves or bookmark the information (in the case of web content), the process is decidedly ad hoc. Moreover, once the destination of a given piece of information has been chosen, reusing that piece of information for a different topic is akin to getting a dog to stand on its hind legs—it can be done, but it isn't pretty.

Finally, there is the question of how much intelligence is needed to disseminate between the various types of information being saved and the different actions that can be taken when that item is subsequently organized and shared.

Consider the example of an individual researching digital televisions, with a goal of purchasing one as the foundation for his or her home theater. Here, the SOS process touches online buyer's guides, specific product listings from favorite commerce sites, pricing comparisons, product manufacturer's data, notes taken specific to the pros and cons of different television sets, and a medley of reviews and firsthand opinions from web sites and via emails from trusted individuals. With so many different sources and types of information, two key questions stand out. One, how best to shortcut the product research and buying process, while making the right "buy" decision? Two, is there a way to encapsulate and share the knowledge gained along the way so that the individual's friends and associates can benefit from his or her experience?

Enter the Actionable Listing

Actionable listings are built on the premise that people are defined (and define themselves) by where they go, what they buy and whom they know and trust. Therefore, an extensible SOS model explicitly supports three types of structured information listings (corresponding to the above defining behaviors):

- **Products**: What I buy, am planning to buy, or considering purchasing down the road
- **Businesses**: Where I buy from, businesses I frequent or trust, places I would like to go to
- **People**: Who I know and trust and/or consider especially knowledgeable in a given category

Two primary parameters differentiate an actionable listing from other forms of online content. First, is the actual structure of the listing itself. Whereas, a captured web page may provide additional information, such as an URL or a title that allows it to be further organized, a product listing, for example, corresponds to an actual product, and as such, has a "skeleton" that defines it: the type of product it is, its price, technical specifications, manufacturer, places to buy it and consumer perspectives/experience regarding same. If properly structured, a product listing can be organized according to any or all of these parameters, product similar products to can be found, and a number of actions can be taken with it. While having different unique properties, business listings and people listings follow a similar underlying logic.

Assuming that such product, business or people listings are properly structured, the second aspect of realizing their full SOS potential is making them actionable. Actionable listings, by definition, are designed to allow you to do "something" or better yet, multiple things with them—beyond getting and forgetting them. For example, an extensible SOS application that utilizes actionable listings allows you to:

- "Push pin" business listings into maps
- Add products to wish lists, and businesses & people to rolodexes
- Attach sticky notes to such listings
- Associate relevant and related web/email content with listings
- Email entire groups of listings or user-defined subsets to a friend
- Print any combinations of the above with formatting and output options

As a result, actionable listings provide greater context and relevance than ordinary search results and especially paid keyword searches – a $2 billion a year business – since a user knows exactly what they are getting when they click on them. Instead of a link that may take them to a top-level site, a specific deep link or potentially re-direct them to an unwanted site, they get a structured listing of a specific product, business or person. If you are looking for red Nike shoes, for example, knowing that you are getting a product listing for red Nike shoes allows you to quickly assess if that's what you are looking for, before you click.

Similarly, because the listing is actionable, its context can be enhanced in terms of how it's organized, associated and presented relative to other information items. For example, actionable listings enable a trip planner to build a rolodex of the hotels they want to stay at, the places they want to eat, the sites they want to see. Furthermore, the articles that inspired them in reaching their conclusions are automatically connected to the appropriate listings. With a single click, this same information can be re-factored as a day planner or turned into an interactive pinned map, and just as easily shared as an email-ready web page.

There is one important caveat. To deliver immediate benefits without unacceptable "adoption costs," the system must be non-disruptive and complimentary to the tools people know and are comfortable using online. This is critical because potential users have already built up a legacy base of information, both from a leverage and barrier to adoption perspective. Needless to say, we all use email, and many of us have thousands (if not tens of thousands) of emails stored locally, with another 10-100+ emails sent and received daily. And we all browse the web, in the process having favorites sites and favored styles of finding the information we need. The system introduced in the next section is highly complimentary to these endeavors.

Verdada SOS: A better way to research products and plan activities

Verdada SOS (VSOS) is designed for people looking to more systematically plan, research and manage their online activities and buying decisions with respect to products, businesses and people. VSOS accomplishes this with a patent-pending design that delivers three core capabilities:
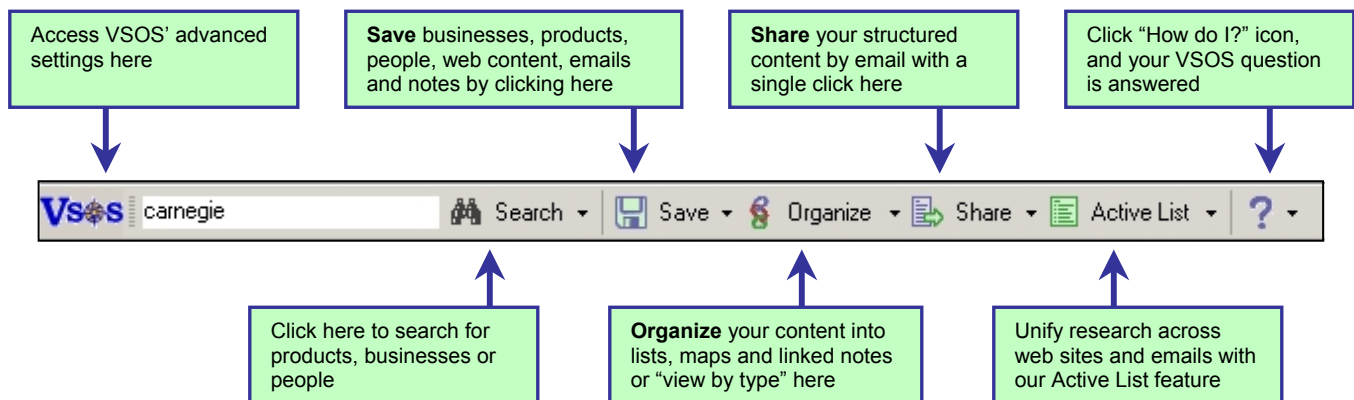
- **An "actionable" listings model**: This means that ANY web page (i.e., not just specific partner sites) or email can act as a call to action to access VSOS listings and content. We call this "discovery mode" (as opposed to search mode) and are the first company to deliver such a capability. The reason we built this is that you are only explicitly searching for something less than 10% of the time. Discovery mode is designed to make you more productive the other 90% of your click steps.

- **Extensible list management**: This is the ability to save and organize relevant listings and content locally, including related web pages and emails. It increases the context, relevance and lifecycle of your content, translating into more aggregate usage per VSOS item. Plus, because the information you save is stored locally, it is more secure (savvy Internet users are well versed on the horrors of personal information being stolen when web sites are hacked), more reliable (because its local, your

information is always available—online or off—whereas a web site might be down or painfully slow at unexpected times) and scales better (storage space is limited to the size of your hard drive, as opposed to a web site's arbitrary storage limitations, and searching local content avoids the inherent bottlenecks in network-based search and retrieval efforts).

- **Email based sharing to extend reach and clicks**: In VSOS, half the fun of creation is sharing the fruits of your efforts with others. Scroll over the items specific to a topic of interest – web pages, products, businesses or people of interest, lists, pinned maps, whatever – and VSOS turns them into an email-ready web page that virtually any email application can receive, including Hotmail, Outlook, Outlook Express, Eudora, Yahoo Mail and AOL. VSOS also integrates with your email address book, removing a key barrier to spontaneous sharing. Also, if the recipient is a VSOS user the underlying items themselves can easily be imported into VSOS for subsequent use. Put another way, for every one enthusiastic planner of going out/travel activities, there are an additional 10-25 enthusiastic recipients of such content, exponentially increasing views and clicks created by your VSOS-enabled content and listings.

VSOS at a glance

VSOS consists of two toolbars: one that runs on top of your email software (initially, Microsoft® Outlook®) and another that runs on top of your web browser (VSOS requires Internet Explorer). The toolbars are virtually identical, and leverage a common data store, a consistent UI, and the shared ability to pull web/email content in and push it out of the VSOS environment in a friction free manner. This approach allows VSOS to act as a kind of meta-layer that, in addition to actionable listings, mediates between and manages your email and web content. This is what the VSOS toolbar looks like and how you access its various functions:

Access VSOS' advanced settings here	Save businesses, products, people, web content, emails and notes by clicking here	Share your structured content by email with a single click here	Click "How do I?" icon, and your VSOS question is answered

VS⊛S carnegie   🔍 Search ▾ | 💾 Save ▾ 🐾 Organize ▾ 📇 Share ▾ 📋 Active List ▾ | ❓ ▾

Click here to search for products, businesses or people	Organize your content into lists, maps and linked notes or "view by type" here	Unify research across web sites and emails with our Active List feature

Based on significant consumer feedback and multiple iterations of our usability and workflow model, VSOS works the way you work. For example, sometimes, you are in search mode looking for something specific. Other times, you are passively reading email or browsing the web, discovering nuggets of inspiration along the way. In terms of enabling the former, VSOS compliments traditional search engine types of searches by adding the additional contexts of being able to search for specific products, businesses and people. By contrast, email and web browsing discoveries can be acted upon by right-clicking or scrolling-over the item of interest and clicking the search button, in which case VSOS opens a special window outside your email client or web browser window, corresponding to a business listing, product listing or user profile view (below):

| **VSOS Business Listing**	**VSOS Product Listing**	**VSOS User Profile**

Working with VSOS

To understand how you can move to the next level of utility by creating your own VSOS sandbox, known as "My Verdada," let's take a real world example of planning a trip to New York, as it showcases VSOS' use of product, business and people listings, web pages, email content and notes of interest in a unified fashion.

Using VSOS, you could begin at a favorite travel site, such as Fodors, and review different articles on great hotels, eateries, sites to see and prospective itineraries based on different trip durations. As with any web site (when using VSOS), when you find a web page of interest, you can click the Save option on the VSOS tool bar (or right click to save it), and VSOS will capture the content locally, adding it to My Verdada. Similarly, as you are reading an article that mentions an interesting restaurant (e.g., Carnegie Deli) that you want to add to My Verdada, you can simply scroll over the business name, click on the Search businesses option, and VSOS will simultaneously add the Carnegie Deli business listing to My Verdada and the web content that inspired the addition (the Fodors article in this example).

Moreover, VSOS uses a powerful information organization model known as an association to automatically, reliably maintain the linkage between the business listing and the article. The way this works is that if you are viewing the listing, and want to see what other VSOS content is connected to it, clicking the view association option under Organize in VSOS will reveal all content associated with the listing. Combined with VSOS' real time filtering capabilities, this can be really beneficial in finding both "needle in the haystack" information and everything associated with the "needle." Now, if you only remember that a Fodors article you read inspired you but don't remember what actions it inspired you to take, you can simply start typing F-O-D-O-R-S, and with each letter typed, My Verdada will filter down to the content items that match what you've typed. Find the article, choose the view associations option, and the business listing (or listings) that it inspired you to add is now in plain sight.

In addition, all items within VSOS are automatically time stamped according to when they were added, when they were last updated and when they were last viewed, making it easy to find information based on time-based road markers ("I know I updated that note yesterday but I don't remember what it was called.") Plus, all items are organized by type (list, product, business, people, web page, email, note and map), making it easy to limit a view to 'products only' or all items in a list, such as "NY Trip."

Returning to our scenario, after visiting different travel sites, getting feedback from friends by email and plugging in favorites from past visits (if they exist), you now have a list of all of the information pertaining to your forthcoming trip to New York. Because the information contained within this list includes actionable listings, you can simply click on the NY Trip folder, choose the 'create pinned map' option, and VSOS will generate a map similar to the one viewed below.
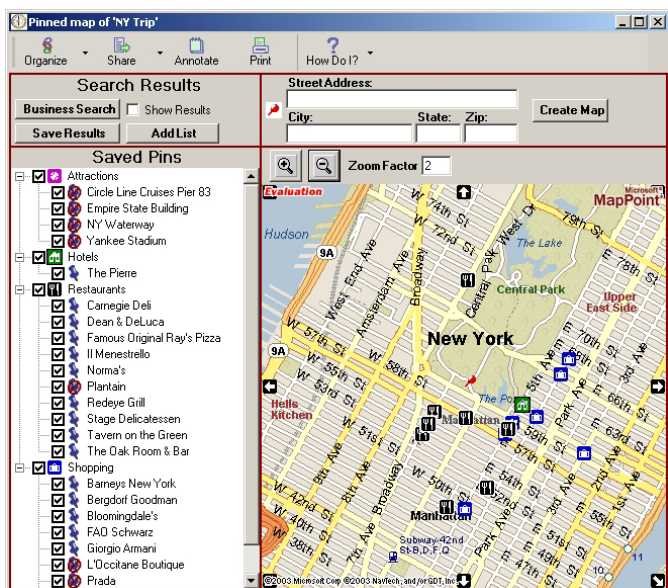
Convert lists of information into personalized, interactive maps in a single click

In addition, because the items pinned into the map are actual listings, you can click on any of the pins, opening the business listing view corresponding the pin. This allows you to read more about the business, remove pins of businesses that you don't want on the map or iterate the map further. You can iterate the map by adding additional lists to it.

Or, you can search on specific types of businesses within the map's geographical view. And because the map it self is dynamically created, scrolling to and zooming in on a specific portion of New York allows you to see only the businesses local to that area (or to search for businesses within that limited area).

After creating a pinned map, you can send it to a friend as an email ready web page, view it or print it out as a day planner.

A brief summary of the benefits of VSOS

Though by no means exhaustive, some of the benefits of VSOS are:

- The ability to work in discovery mode turns every single web page and email into a potential call to action, a benefit both to you as a VSOS user and to potential advertisers, who have a greater impetus to get you context-enhancing information.

- By reducing the number of click steps required to research a product or business, and capturing the salient data points (reviews, price comparisons, product listings, articles) that drive a buying decision, you can make the right (buying) decision for you more quickly and more predictably than in the past. Similarly, since VSOS saves the actual content, your research effort can serve as a best practice for subsequent research.

- Because VSOS is client based, it can provide richer ways of organizing, presenting, filtering and finding the information relative to a given topic of interest. Plus, because your information is stored locally as opposed to on a web site, the amount, type and source of information that you choose to save is limited to the size of your hard drive and the depth of your imagination. And unlike web site based approaches, your information is reliably accessible, secure and private.

- Recognizing your reliance on email and the web, VSOS' shares a common data store across both environments, leverages a common user interface and renders the decision of whether to bookmark, email to self, or save to desktop moot.

- VSOS is completely spam and popup free, running in parallel but outside the email and browser sandbox, meaning that only you control the information you choose to save, organize and share.

- The ability to send to a friend with a single click is a very viral way to extend the reach and clicks of your research efforts. If you are a maven, who likes creating topics, this is very satisfying. If you are an Amazon Associate, who is looking to monetize your efforts, this can be very lucrative. If you are an advertiser looking to leverage the power of word of mouth, there can be no better way than this.

(For a more detailed overview of VSOS features, benefits and use cases, download the VSOS Overview document by clicking HERE.)

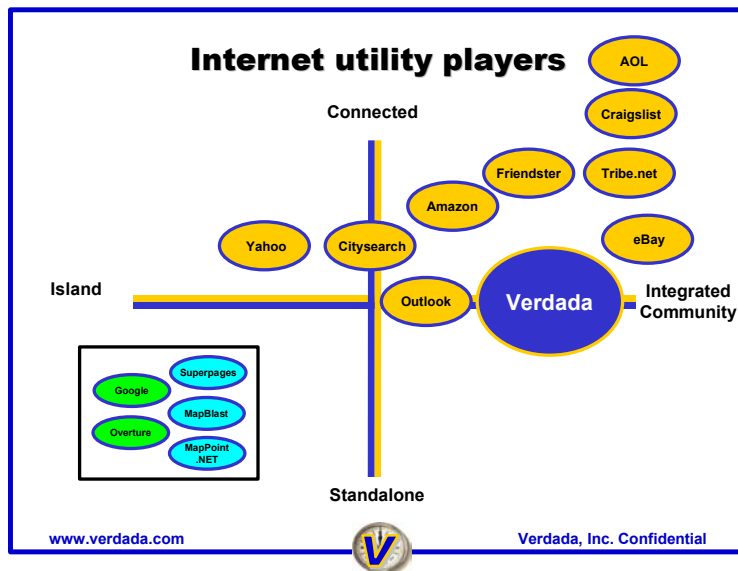## Why does VSOS need to be a download?

In building VSOS, we asked ourselves whether there was a "good enough" way to do what VSOS does as a web site. We concluded that the answer was no, and the reasoning follows. Our solution domain touches email, multiple web sites and a dynamic listing base. It provides automatic association of contextual information and supporting mechanisms to integrate and filter that information in real-time. And when used as intended, VSOS users accumulate lots of information over time. Add in a rich workflow and the need for "My Verdada" type of information to be reliably available, and a web site just doesn't cut it.

Plus, with broadband connections (30M of them and growing), download is a non-issue. The real issue is delivering true utility, productivity and enjoyment. As referenced earlier in this paper, several million users have already downloaded Google Toolbar (including one million within the first 90 days of its release). For the early adopters most likely to use VSOS, download is only a barrier if the value proposition is non-compelling, a reality that keeps us focused on the customer.

Understanding the Internet Utility market

In assessing the market, and where we needed to be positioned to deliver more Internet utility to you, we came up with a set of axis's (see graphic below) to define the problem domain that we are addressing.

The horizontal axis looks at whether the functional pieces of the application are islands until themselves or integrated communities, implying both information integration and linkages to "like minds." Each of the industry players on the graphic has its own relative strengths and weaknesses, but suffice it to say that we have put a lot of energy into designing VSOS to become an integrated community—since people are defined by where they go, what they buy and whom they know and trust. Towards that end, VSOS' user profile model makes it easy to find like minds according to product, business and people relevant parameters – and we are committed to continuing to iterate towards that vision over time. The vertical axis looks at whether the application is designed to operate in an independent standalone fashion, or even offline, or in a predominately online fashion. Noteworthy here is the fact that VSOS' primary counterpart is Outlook, since virtually none of the other apps is designed to run well in a local, standalone or offline fashion.

Internet utility players

AOL · Craigslist · Friendster · Tribe.net · Amazon · Yahoo · Citysearch · eBay · Outlook · **Verdada**

Connected · Island · Integrated Community · Standalone

Google · Superpages · MapBlast · Overture · MapPoint .NET

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VSOS is uniquely positioned, leveraging systematic integration, community, broadband and Moore's Law

A final note aside, the box in the lower left quadrant of the graphic above speaks to two driving industry trends in green (the power of search integrity and searchable contexts) and in blue, a new value chain that is emerging around web services (the example shows how a mapping API built around .NET gives rise to a mapping service, with map-enabled search as a parallel track). VSOS is designed to leverage these trends.

About the company

As a team, Verdada's founders have been associated with eight startups in the areas of real-time computing, consumer Internet appliances, web services, public Internet access networks and communications infrastructure. Our hallmark is a clear vision, but one that is balanced by the tactical discipline needed to ship products in predictable time frames. We're also pretty good at hearing our customer's needs and iterating until we hit the user requirements bulls-eye. Towards that end, we embrace the adage that the ultimate test of solving the right problem is customer adoption.

VSOS, an online productivity tool for the always-on generation, features a patent-pending architecture, and is currently in public beta. If you would like to participate in the public beta, point your browser to: www.verdada.com/download.html, or contact us the following ways:

> **Verdada, Inc.**
>
> Email: talk@verdada.com
> Web: www.verdada.com
> Tel: (415) 771-3594