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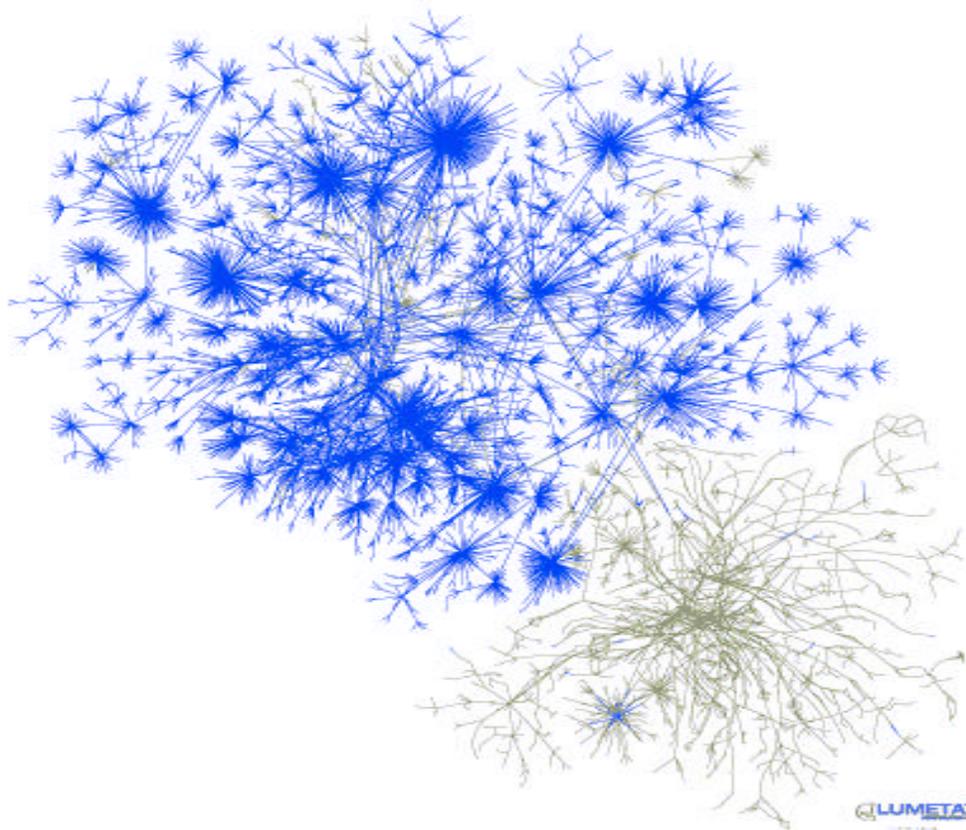
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When Spiders Mate, New Worlds are Spun

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The above image shows a company intranet in gray. The gray lines illustrate the dialogues and information flow occurring **within** a company's borders. The larger internet is represented in blue, and reveals the broader public conversational networks.

You'll notice there's not much connection between the two. Only a few strands of gray that venture out into the blue landscape and almost no blue dialogues infiltrating the gray space.

Our present economy would be radically transformed if the blue and gray spaces began to merge, intermingle and blend into colors that are beyond what either is alone. We believe this is precisely what is beginning to happen.

Imagine what would happen if the gray spider networks were set down smack in the center of the blue spider web. The corporate dialogue and the public dialogue would become involved with each other in deep, imaginative, meaningful and unpredictable ways. This would be very good news for anyone concerned about corporate responsibility, accountability or promoting new values in the business landscape.

Here are just a few examples of why we believe this scenario is about to occur.

Consider the free downloading of music that is rampant in the blue space. Napster was shut down and hundreds of peer to peer platforms rapidly rose up in its place. Unable to stop these peer to peer sites through legal avenues or encryption, the record industry resorted to guerilla tactics such as dropping phony files into the network that are either noise, a promo piece or worse yet, a virus.

Did this stop free downloads? *No*. Trusted user groups began to form so that exchanging files became safe again. Backlash occurred towards the musical groups who participated in these tactics. So after many years of attempting to squash the free exchange of music, the record industry is finally exploring how to creatively join in on what is happening in the blue space and to discover a way to be relevant again.

Napster-like events are brewing in almost every industry.

- Linux, the free open source operating system run by an unpaid, passion driven community of programmers is beginning to give Microsoft a real run for their money. For years the handheld devices gravitated to the price and freedom of open source platforms; now business servers and even PC's are catching the bug in a big way.
- In other cases, the connection between the corporate space and the public dialogue is being actively courted. EBay, never uses the word *customer*; instead the people who use their services are called *members* and treated that way. EBay is relentlessly devoted to supporting any valuable idea a customer may have and in turn their members act as salespeople recruiting new members, offering research and development and helping to educate, train and police their community.
- Jeff Bezos of Amazon fame, just cancelled a 50 million dollar advertising budget, because he decided the money would be better spent in customer benefits, since word of mouth is so essential in this domain. In other words, he decided *dialogue* is more meaningful than ads.

- Or consider the fact that there are now more than 1 million bloggers actively pursuing vital grassroots journalism. Growing numbers report that blogs are their main source of news and mainstream journalists often use these sites to scout out stories. Google is about to connect these sites to their search engine, which will dramatically elevate their influence on public information channels. This means that when the average person searches a topic, for the first time they will be able to locate relevant blog sites and alternative sources of information.

The next event we describe may at first seem to be a rather frivolous. But you will see that the implications are more profound than how it may at first appear.

Thousands of teenagers in Japan, mostly girls, showed up to hear Matt Damon speak about his latest movie. As Matt walked in front of the crowd, the teenagers held one hand up in the air. In that hand was a cell phone streaming a live video feed of the event to their friends at home.

You might be asking yourself, “pretty cool, but what does that have to do with the future of business?” Perhaps you are thinking, why in the world should I care about what these star crazed groupies in Japan, now called the thumb generation, because of their tremendous expertise in using their thumbs to type text messages to each other at staggering rates approaching 100 words a minute.

Let’s take this live blogging event apart step by step. In our view this event, like so many other comparable developments in the digital dialogue space, could offer the ground of a new economy.

Here’s the first layer. Before the mobile blogging/ video streaming capacity of these teenage girls, Matt Damon’s publicist would only pay attention to the media representatives offering press releases and interview opportunities to the privileged few.

Now they have to consider something very interesting. Not only are these teenage girls serving as a grassroots broadcast station, but their audience is the kind of “*early-adopting- buzz- generating individuals*” that tend to generate the tipping points, a la Malcolm Gladwell, that can cause small events to become major trends. These teenage girls are reaching a targeted population that is **more** critical to this movie’s success than the generalized readership of the mainstream teenage magazines. These teenage girls now have as much or more power than the mainstream teen magazines representatives sitting in the front row.

Here’s the second layer. These phone casting teenage girls gain status from being at the live event. They become cool if they can be more effective in designing these live stories. Anything Matt Damon’s publicist can provide to elevate these teenagers ability to tell a story, will in turn elevate Matt Damon’s image in the world. This means they will begin providing behind the scenes footage, customized information and exclusive interviews to these trend makers.

The next layer is still in its embryonic stages. It also has the most potential to reframe our current economic models. These teenage broadcasters are developing and nurturing *trusted user groups*. These circles of individuals tend to hang out together on line and share highly passionate interests. They have a tendency to exhibit self-organizing properties (which means over time they get smarter and more complex.)

In other venues, such as music, trusted user groups are selling concert tickets to each other, distributing bootlegs of live events, organizing paid house concerts, experiencing streamcast concerts online and participating as bands birth, compose and fine-tune their music for an upcoming CD. These Japanese teenagers could easily rep tickets for Matt Damon's movie and other product lines that their audience would be interested in. Naturally they would negotiate for preferred tickets and product prices.

Take away the fact this was a Matt Damon event, and insert a live streaming video feed of a public hearing on genetic engineering, covered by key individuals with larger constituent bases who have developed trusted learning, teaching and sharing communities. Suddenly the capacity to reshape what people know about, care about and how they spend their money becomes very well organized.

The key principles underlying this socio-economic transformation are:

1. Whenever a dialogue space is transformed, all the power relationships are also transformed.
2. Whenever power relationships are transformed, new gatekeepers are generated.
3. Whenever information flows through new channels, then goods and services have the capacity to flow through these new channels as well.

To belabor our Matt Damon Movie Product Metaphor just a bit further, this means the studio of the future will develop customized press releases for these teenagers, offer them preferred purchasing channels and will have to listen to their opinions. Suddenly information flow, economic clout and values systems become integrated and powerful; a force to which corporations will pay attention.

A series of emerging social trends are rewriting the rules of economic engagement: from trusted user groups to socially conscious buying clubs, from advanced associate programs to collaborative work spaces, from Google's new ability to offer easy access to Blog sites to open source strategies that are deconstructing ownership as we now know it.

These are paving the way for more decentralized strategies for exchanging information, values, services and products. Those who understand these underlying trends will create the most compelling solutions.

Author Biography:

Mikela and Philip Tarlow publish a free bimonthly newsletter called Shapeshifter News. Upcoming topics include Multi-dimensional Hyperstories, Grassroots Economies, and The Influence of The Creative Class.

To receive their newsletter or to contact them go to Tarlow@digitalaboriginal.com or visit www.digitalaboriginal.com

They are also authors of a book title Digital Aboriginal: The Direction of Business Now– Instinctive, Nomadic and Ever-Changing (Warner Business) which charts four key socio-economic trends: the dissolution of ownership as we now know it, the collapse of traditional advertising and the rise of more authentic storytelling, collaborative work spaces and new models of leadership.

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Notes from the Publisher:

Whether it be the diffusion and implementation of appropriate technologies or the accessibility of biological information for design, the roles of information and cross-discipline collaboration are becoming increasingly important in the realm of sustainability.

Many forums currently exist to address issues of bio-design and sustainability. One such forum is Thinkcycle. “**ThinkCycle** is an academic, non-profit initiative engaged in supporting distributed collaboration towards design challenges facing underserved communities and the environment. ThinkCycle seeks to create a **culture of open source design innovation**, with ongoing collaboration among individuals, communities and organizations around the world.

ThinkCycle provides a shared online space for designers, engineers, domain experts and stakeholders to discuss, exchange and construct ideas towards sustainable design solutions in critical problem domains. **Join the ThinkCycle Community** and make a difference!” (www.thinkcycle.org)

You may view past BioInspire issues and are encouraged to participate in a conversation about BioInspire and related topics by posting your ideas and comments at: http://www.thinkcycle.org/tc-space/tospace?tospace_id=41303

For instruction on how to use Thinkcycle, visit: http://www.thinkcycle.org/tc-filessystem/file?file_id=42534

Recent Thinkcycle Highlights:

“The connection between natural solutions and effective solutions in human-made endeavors seems strong. On the other hand, the actual step-by-step process of purposely designing a system is a little less obvious. It seems like there's a lot of work in researching a number of potential natural analogues: how are the decisions made on which ideas to pursue? Collaboratively? By the hired-on biologist? If the decision is made by someone other than the biologist, how does the decision maker come to an adequate understanding of the issues in order to make an informed choice?”

Jeff Burnham, February 23, 2003

“I think that in the future we will find that once an efficient infrastructure is put in place to allow the free movement of biomimetic ideas- the diffusion of designs like the sharkskin swimsuit to the coating of an airplane will occur frequently.”

Derek Esposito, February 25, 2003

“...What is going to overcome the natural resistance of designers and engineers to take that leap of faith and try a new approach to design, especially when the risks are high? Most designers and engineers do not have the in-depth knowledge of nature, and it is not clear how we can quickly and effectively pair them up with the biologists and researchers who do...”

Norbert Hoeller, February 27, 2003

Much Needed Peace, John Mlade

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ABOUT THE PUBLISHER:

John Mlade is a green building professional researching and teaching biomimicry at Colorado State University and is a research assistant at the Institute for the Built Environment (www.ibe.colostate.edu). He is also a member of the Biomimicry Guild. Visit www.biomimicry.net for more information.

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