

is the ways in which individuals talk about the message with their family and peers that give it meaning and momentum, and create proximal social pressure that government cannot hope to achieve. Here is the acknowledgement that citizens are active interpreters of messages, that they co-create the meaning of messages and brands.

The merit of this book is in the expertise that it captures, which combines extensive practical experience with contemporary marketing thought and theories of behaviour change. By straddling the practitioner–academic divide, this progressive book will be a valuable educational resource for teachers, students and practitioners. It will be a stimulating read for all those involved in developing public communication campaigns. It is also a rich source of case studies for teaching and learning about not-for-profit communications; there are thought-provoking lessons to be learned by contrasting these public service campaigns with commercial ones, by considering how to sell social rather individual benefits, and how to persuade people to desist from, rather than indulge, in the things that they most enjoy.

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Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation is Changing Your World

Don Tapscott (2008)

McGraw-Hill Professional, £15.99

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The introduction to *Grown Up Digital*, where Don describes his children and their innate familiarity with technology, makes me feel somewhat nostalgic as he is in effect describing aspects of my own childhood. I am towards the older end of the ‘Net Generation’ described within *Grown Up Digital*, with the very eldest reaching the age of 31 in 2008. I grew up in the days before Google and in a time where online games sites requested their users to click on banner ads to top up their play time, and these memories are ingrained in my current behaviour and media consumption. So much so that, even in formal settings, I naturally address people by their first name as this is the norm online and, after years of playing MMORPGs, I can’t play single-player games without feeling somewhat lonely.

Don’s previous book, *Growing Up Digital* (1997), laid many foundations for this iteration a full ten years on. Many of the characteristics of the Net Generation he described have since been substantiated by how society has evolved over the last decade. In 1997 Don predicted, among other things, that widespread access to digital media would redefine not only the media landscape but also politics, education and the working environment. I believe, however, that although in part these things have already happened,

society still has some way to go before allowing these behavioural changes to become ubiquitous. As William Gibson (1999) said, ‘the future is already here. It’s just not very evenly distributed.’

The examples Don gives of particularly forward-thinking schools and businesses, and how they carry out their daily functions are inspiring but at the same time frustrating. His depictions of collaborating with this digital generation instead of broadcasting at them are great illustrations of how things could be, and indeed are in some places; however, the frustration comes from knowing that those who do embrace these new ways of working and learning are still very much a minority.

Clay Shirky (2008) has told us that ‘communication tools don’t get socially interesting until they get technologically boring’, and this has been self-evident through the rise of email, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and many other examples. However, all these communication trends have grown in environments external to the archaic infrastructures of governments, businesses and systems of formal education.

The irony with this slow institutional adoption is that one of the defining characteristics of the Net Generation, according to Don, is that we no longer want to have hard divisions between personal life and institutional life. Our work should be fun, educational, challenging and rewarding, and should have room for our real lives to permeate through our working days. Facebook shouldn’t be blocked by your office because draconian rules

such as these both encourage what talent you have to look elsewhere and scare off potential new talent. An employee at Google quite insightfully points out within the book that ‘The culture is designed to help employees relax into productivity, not stress into it ... this just seems, well, logical.’ This type of working environment is what attracts the top talent to your organisation, and as I’ve been writing this, my RSS reader has just linked me to a news article reporting on Google’s top Australian engineer offering a piece of advice to Microsoft, explaining that it should ‘let the staff at the bottom of the food chain bring fresh ideas to the table’ (Holmes 2007). Google is famous for its working environment; it embodies many of the characteristics that Don’s book tells us the Net Generation crave in their working life. It is unfortunate, however, that Google is famous for it, because this in itself is proof that it is in the minority.

For these reasons *Grown Up Digital*, much like its predecessor, is still mainly exciting for the things to come rather than the behavioural shift we have already seen. So far we have experienced massive changes in how people communicate and socially interact through digital media, but we are still perhaps another decade away from Google’s working environment no longer being newsworthy.

Grown Up Digital is an interesting read for those who are a part of the Net Generation – however, tragically, I believe the people who need to read this book the most are also the least likely to read it. Those who are happy with the familiar will continue

to read up on the latest 'Monkey Management' techniques, while a wired set of influential people will be making the necessary changes within their organisations to reap the benefits that the Net Generation have to offer.

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Books that reveal China's soul

Before I landed in Shanghai in 1998, even after four years of living in Hong Kong, my world-view was 'typically American'. It's difficult for non-Americans to appreciate the sense of exceptionalism we grow up with. From Ronald Reagan's stirring references to the United States as a 'shining city on a hill' to civil studies that represented American democracy as the culmination of Western history, we were raised with a quasi-religious belief in Jeffersonian ideals – an inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness rooted in individualism – as the destiny of all mankind. For the past ten years, however, my job has been to advertise both Western and Chinese products to the Chinese. Some call me a sell-out or, even worse, an abettor of dictators.

Regardless, I quickly learned that brands must align themselves with a Chinese world-view, lest they sacrifice both revenue and profit on the altar of cultural absolutism.

While no book can replace on-the-ground experience, several have been instrumental in shaping my view of Chinese values, social structure and cosmological beliefs. For me, the most eye-opening is Jonathan Spence's *The Search for Modern China* (1991). The first chapters reveal how the Middle Kingdom's topography (i.e. the inherent instability of the Great Asian Land Mass, one across which floods, droughts and famine present constant danger) has shaped a nation's psychology. He makes the crucial point that the role of the Chinese nation has always been to ensure physical survival. He further drives home how every strand of indigenous Chinese philosophy

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