

What would Google Do?

Jeff Jarvis—2009

New Publicness

- A happy customer can sell your products.
- When Dell started offering discounts to users of Twitter, who passed the word to more users, the company added \$500,000 in sales in no time.
- TV ad campaigns but through word of mouth from one satisfied user to another.
- But you may have great customer service and that's what people talk about. "Customer service is the new marketing,"
- "Listening to our customers is actually the most perfect form of marketing you could have,"

New Economy

- But Buzzmachine is what got me appointed as a journalism professor at the City University of New York Graduate School of Journalism (worth not quite six figures a year) and consulting and speaking gigs (worth a few times that in good times) and the contract for this book (worth about double those gigs). So over a few years, my weblog is easily worth seven figures. My cost: \$327 a year for deluxe internet hosting. There are bloggers who make—and whose blogs are worth—much more. But Buzzmachine is big enough
- Prime slots such as Thursday nights—when studios advertise weekend movie premieres—sell out at ever-higher prices even though the audience watching broadcast TV is getting ever-smaller (and, goes the reasoning, scarcer). Just as nobody gets fired in technology for buying IBM, according to the old business rule, nobody gets fired in advertising for buying TV. Agencies' willful ignorance of new ad economics is a product of their own economics: They are paid a percentage of the advertising money they spend. The scarcer the ad time. The more it costs; the more it costs, the more agencies spend; the more they spend, the more they earn. That is not a virtuous circle. It's a deathtrap.
- Any company or institution could use a platform like this. Governments should use it to gather citizens suggestions

New Business Reality

- Amazon has also created the infrastructure for an on demand workforce called Mechanical Turk (named after a phony chess playing automaton from 1769 that had a human chess master hidden inside). Companies post a repetitive task to be done and anyone can earn money—as little as one cent per task—by verifying the address in a picture, for example, or categorizing content.
- So how do you get to free first?

New Attitude

- Trust is more of a two-way exchange than most people—especially those in power—realize. Leaders in government, news media, corporations, and universities think they and their institutions can own trust when, of course trust is given to them.

- The first answer is to listen before you speak. Many times, companies have told me they're going to blog to start conversations. Hold on, I tell them. Read before you write. Use search tools to find the conversations already going on about you and then join them. Look at every bit of data you have about how your constituents behave to learn more about their desires—and figure out what new data you can collect.
- Flickr brings out not just the wisdom of the crowd but also the aesthetic of the crowd and displays that for all of us to see

New Ethic

- Fake news anchor Jon Stewart is one of the most trusted newsmen in America because he calls bullshit. Howard Stern is the king of all media in the U.S. because he's honest. The tagline of Stern's personal news service on satellite radio: "No more bullshit." Shouldn't that be every news organization's tagline? Every company's?
- I've been a fan of Stern's since I reviewed his show for TV Guide in 1996 and discovered, counter intuitively, that he is best taken not in small doses but in large doses. If all you heard of him were the odd belch, you'd be forgiven for dismissing him. But Stern is greater than the sum of his farts. Listen for a few days and you will hear the rare man—rare especially on broadcast—who is not afraid to say what he thinks and what we think on broadcast—who is not afraid to say what he thinks and what we think but don't dare say. In the plasticized, packaged world of roreporters on TV and shtickmeisters on radio, it's a relief to hear somebody who's candid, honest, and blunt. He is open and transparent about his life. He is unafraid to ask the tough question; I only wish that the PR-laden morning shows were as direct as Stern or as skeptical as Stewart.

New Imperatives

- We heard a few cute ideas and then, thank goodness, a scientist in the room put a stop to it. This, he said, is not how innovation is made. Scientists start with a problem and then try to find a solution. I'll show in a later chapter on the Google.org foundation.
- Day went on to report on the solutions platform InnoCentive, where scores of companies post problems with offers of rewards for solutions from independent inventors, scientists, and tinkerers, whom InnoCentive calls "solvers." The problems range from the profound (a \$1 million reward to find "a biomarker for measuring disease progression in Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis [ALS or Lou Gehrig's Disease] to the scientifically geeky ("near complete conversion of phenol compounds into non-volatile or insoluble products in an aqueous solution") to the prosaic (a large company wanted "bakeable cheese technology" for snack products; another offered \$5,000 for "novel approaches to gently and effectively clean a baby;" and the Rockefeller Foundation offered \$20,000 for the design of solar-powered internet routers).

If Google Ruled the World

- Which I think is why spas are so big now." That may be why Google's offices feature pods where employees can shut off the world and easy chairs where they can just stare at an aquarium.

Media

- Roussel was following a key rule in this book: Decide what business you're in.
- **I return to** Howard Stern, who is not only the self-crowned king of all media but who was, I argue, Googley before there was a Google. He saw a radio industry built around the local broadcast tower and broke its rules, starting in 1986, when he built a syndicate of stations that made him famous (and infamous) across the country. He didn't rely on an existing network. He built his own network. Then he used radio as a platform to create a presence on TV. He used radio to become a best-selling author, and he turned his book into a hit movie. He later became huge on the internet, and put satellite radio in orbit.
- Stern's relationship with his audience is what set him apart. He created a collaborative product—not just because he took phone calls from listeners but because those listeners made their own entertainment, which they generously gave to the show: phony phone calls, brilliant song parodies, theme songs for hapless producer Gary “Baba Booley” Dell'Abate, games, even movies. They gave him their creativity and loyalty. He gave them airtime and attention. This was their mutual gift economy.
- Stern decided long ago that he would not push a self-serving charity as rival Don Imus had or sell tacky schwag like the Rush Limbaugh Excellence in Broadcasting mouse pad. I wouldn't mind buying a Stern hat or jacket—I'd wear my taste proudly—but Stern won't sell them to me. He refuses to cash in on our relationship. He knows that his value rests with his fans. Stern took a gamble on that relationship in 2006 when he moved from broadcast—chased off by the Federal Communications Commission's harassment—to Sirius Satellite Radio. He received a reported \$500 million for the move—motive enough, of course—but there was no way to be sure that the millions of fans needed to make him worth his price would follow. They did. At Sirius, Stern has handed over control to his audience; when they told him to change programming on his two 24-hour satellite channels, he obeyed.
- **I use Stern** as a case study in Googlethink to demonstrate that you don't need to be Google—or be on the internet or rely on technology or even be inspired by Google—to think in these new and open ways. Stern broke the control system and rules that the entertainment business holds dear and built his empire on his relationships. It's still about relationships.

Advertising

- But mass marketing will no longer be the most efficient means of spreading a message. Competitors who learn to target customers—by relevance, not by content or demographics—will increase effectiveness and efficiency and lower their cost. Who has the leading relevance engine? It's not mass-market TV (with its skippable ads). It's not one-size-fits-all, shrinking newspapers. It's not billboards on the road or on web sites. It's Google.
- In his 2001 book, *Gonzo-Marketing*, Christopher Locke—another coauthor of *Cluetrain*—argued that “the fundamental message of marketing must change from ‘we want your money’ to ‘we share your interests.’ In this respect, corporate underwriting is a way—perhaps the only viable way at present—for companies to put their own money where their mouth is.” He urged companies to buy ads on relevant blogs—not as a way to distribute messages in banners, but as a way to underwrite blogs, as they would a PBS show. Sponsors say by their support that they share the interests and affections of the blog's readers. Does that co-opt the blogger?

- Media buying, under Locke’s theory, now becomes more important than messaging. When your customer is your ad, media doesn’t mean content, it means people. Networks of people will become a force in advertising. Already, media companies, including Forbes and Reuters, are running blog ad networks for marketers. A group of fans on Facebook discussing a product is worth a thousand ads.

Manufacturing

- “Threadbanger”
- One should find opportunities to make more targeted products and to partner with customers to design, support, and sell products. Google and the internet change everything, even factories.

Service

- **Sellers and buyers** still need services. Perhaps the next-generation agent should offer them a la carte. First, sellers want buyers to find their homes. That’s marketing. Agent’s say that’s what they offer now, but they don’t much. As I said earlier, when agents put an ad in the paper it’s to market themselves as much as the home. I’d start a company that does nothing but help market homes in the open internet, creating listings on craigslist, taking pictures and making videos, making web pages for the homes. Making sure those pages show up in searches, even buying ads on Google. Thanks to Google, you can do this on your own with links to as many photos as you want (free on Google Picasa); video tours (free on YouTube and easily shot with a \$100 Flip Video camera); maps to area attractions (free with Google Maps); an aerial view (thanks to Google Earth); lists and reviews of local restaurants (thanks to Yelp, also on Google Maps). Home sellers can add links to their own favorite hangouts and best grocery stores and add tips about where the kids can play. You can sell not just the property but the experience, the lifestyle, the community. It won’t be long before you can introduce buyers to our neighbors, linking to their blog or facebook page themselves, so there’s a business opportunity to help. I’d sell these services and options for flat fees, not a percentage of the sale price.
- The other problem with selling a house is hassling with tours. I’d start a company that offers concierge services to schedule and escort would-be buyers. The concierge doesn’t have to sell the house (as a buyer, I don’t need anyone to open closets and point out how allegedly large they are. Thank you very much). Buyers could pay the concierge to chauffeur them from home to home. Sellers could pay the concierge to hold open-houses (and make coffee and cookies)—and I think that if buyers knew they wouldn’t be trailed by sellers’ agents, they might be more likely to visit a home. I would not be surprised to see local home-tour bloggers emerge, taking tours, taking pictures, and treating new homes on the market as news. I’d read it and buy ads there.
- Buyers can use the tools of the web and mobile technology to research a prospective neighborhood. New services such as EveryBlock.com list all kinds of data around addresses—crimes, building permits, even graffiti cleanings. Outside in organizes local blog posts around locations so you can read what your neighbors are talking about. With smart searches, can read what your neighbors are talking about. With smart searches. Home buyers can get school data and local news archives. They can look up and contact Facebook users who live in the area. A neat new service called CleverCommute provides a real picture of traffic headaches. All this open data beats the agent telling you that every neighborhood is wonderful and every house has potential.

- Agent 2.0 will have her own rich web site showing the towns she covers and the homes she has helped to sell, , with links to lots of information about the area. She'll want Google-juice. When I come looking for a home, I may search for someone to help me. That could be a remade agent, it could be a disruptive newcomer, or I could do it on my own. I'll be looking for the best service and the best deal in an open and competitive market—without anyone paying 6 percent.

Money

- He said “web site” practically with disdain, as one would say “disco.” He inspired one student, who wanted to start an online magazine for teen girls, to shift from the web to Facebook. She had to think differently.
- Entrepreneurship is spreading among youth. There's a blog for young capitalists called College-Startup.com
- **To make** a similar impact in the United States, a bit at a time, see DonorsChoose.org, where you can contribute to teachers' needs. See also Facebook's Causes application, where members start, join, support, and donate to causes.

Public Welfare

- Imagine how valuable it could be for us patients to go to a site to record our conditions and activities right before the onset of afib (the familiar name for the condition). In some people, too much food, wine, stress, or activity can trigger an attack; in others, these have no effect. Doctors have some of this data already, but only from limited samples. If millions of patients around the world shared their experiences, would we discover new triggers, new correlations, new causes, even new treatments? Don't know. But we can't know until we try, until we open up and provide the means to gather the information and analyze it.
- In 2008, Google started a health service online (at google.com/health) where users can enter their conditions and the drugs they take as well as results of tests, such as cholesterol screening, which they may download from a limited number of health companies that have signed up so far.

Public Institutions

- The internet also makes it easy to connect teachers with students—see TeachStreet.com, which in only two cities has 55,000 teachers, trainers, tutors, coaches, and classes, according to Springwise. I wouldn't go there to learn surgery, but I might to get help with my stale German.
- Jonathan Rosenberg, senior VP of product management, blogged that the company is looking for “non-routine problem-solving skills.” His example: The routine way to solve the problem of checking spelling would be use a dictionary. The non-routine way is to watch all the corrections people make as they refine their queries and use that to suggest new spellings for words that aren't in any dictionary. Rosenberg said Google looks for people with five skills: analytical reasoning (“we start with data; that means we can talk about what we know, instead of what we think we know”); communication skills; willingness to experiment; playing in a team; passion and leadership. “In the real world,” he said, “the tests are all open book, and your success is inexorably determined by the lessons you glean from the free market.” Rosenberg's best advice for students and universities: “It's easy to educate for the routine, and hard to educate for the

novel.” Google sprung y from seeing the novel. Is our educational system preparing students to work for or create Googles? I wonder.

Exceptions

- Waste disposal? Atoms again, but I’ll bet that we, the customers will start using online soapboxes to gang up on manufacturers and force them to reduce their obscene packaging. Furniture? There’s a blog called Ikea-hacker that enables fans to share ideas for modifying the slavishly Standardized Swedish products.