



Clay Shirky

Writer, Consultant, and Teacher on New Technology and Social Media

TOPIC: Technology/Media

SUBTOPICS: The Future; Innovation; Business Strategy; Marketing and Sales; Ethics and Culture

BIG IDEA

COGNITIVE SURPLUS
CREATIVITY AND GENEROSITY
IN A CONNECTED AGE

CLAY SHIRKY

Cognitive Surplus: Creativity and Generosity in a Connected Age

In this presentation, Clay forecasts the thrilling changes we will all enjoy as new digital technology puts our untapped resources of talent and goodwill to use at last.

Since Americans were suburbanized and educated by the postwar boom, we've had a surfeit of intellect, energy, and time—what Shirky calls a "cognitive surplus." But this abundance had little impact on the

common good because television consumed the lion's share of it. Now, for the first time, people are embracing new media that allows us to pool our efforts at vanishingly low cost. The results of this aggregated effort range from mind expanding—reference tools like Wikipedia—to lifesaving—like Ushahidi.com, which has allowed Kenyans to report on acts of violence in real time.

Clay charts the vast effects that our cognitive surplus—aided by new technologies—will have on twenty-first-century society and how we can best exploit those effects. For instance, he acknowledges that new tech brings greater freedom to publish and hence lower quality on average. But it also

BIOGRAPHY

Clay is a provocative new voice on all things Internet: social networks and media, economics and culture, connected communities, and the open source movement. He divides his time between consulting, teaching, and writing on the social and economic effects of Internet technologies. His consulting practice is focused on the way network technologies provide new ways for groups to get things done, including collaboration tools, social networks, peer-to-peer sharing, collaborative filtering, and Open Source development.

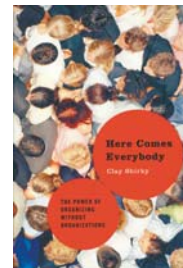
In addition to his consulting work, Clay is an adjunct professor in NYU's graduate Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP), where he teaches courses on the interrelated effects of social and technological network topology—how our networks shape culture and vice-versa. Prior to his appointment at NYU, Clay was a partner at The Accelerator Group, an investment firm focused on early-stage companies.

Formerly, he was the chief technology officer of the NYC-based Web media and design firm Site Specific, where he created the company's media tracking database and server log analysis software. Site Specific was later acquired by CKS Group, where Clay was promoted to VP Technology, Eastern Region.

Clay has written extensively about the Internet since 1996. His recent book, *Cognitive Surplus*, explores how social technologies and

allows for the sort of experimentation that produces our greatest innovations. Shirky also assesses the transformative impact of online culture, which is by definition more transparent than traditional management structures.

Here Comes Everybody



In his highly acclaimed book, *Here Comes Everybody*, Clay explores how organizations and industries are being upended by open networks, collaboration and user appropriation of content product and dissemination.

Ten years ago, the big realization was a perceptual migration from atoms to bits, from the world of the physical to the world of information. Now, another kind of digital revolution is taking hold. Networked tools are allowing groups to form and collaborate without any of the traditional friction that comes from managing the efforts of multitudes. We're witnessing the migration from an information economy based on the work of the individual mind to new forms of collective intelligence and collective effort, which represents a fundamental change in the way our society—is structured. Clay illustrates these fundamental forces at work, and how they will change the world's organizations and, ultimately, ourselves.

media are changing us, from consumers to collaborators, unleashing a torrent of creative production that will transform our world. Over the years, he has had regular columns in *Business 2.0*, *FEED*, *OpenP2P.com* and *ACM Net Worker*, and his writings have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Harvard Business Review*, *Wired*, *Release 1.0*, *Computerworld*, and *IEEE Computer*. He has been interviewed by *Slashdot*, *Red Herring*, *Media Life*, and *The Economist's Ebusiness Forum*. *Time Magazine* featured him with other futurists in a fall 2005 story entitled "What's Next."

Clay frequently speaks on emerging technologies at a variety of forums and organizations, including TED Global, PC Forum, the Internet Society, the Department of Defense, the BBC, the American Museum of the Moving Image, the Highlands Forum, the Economist Group, Storewidth, the World Technology Network, and several O'Reilly conferences on Peer-to-Peer, Open Source, and Emerging Technology. He has also presented at many company events, including Microsoft, Apple, and Deutsche Telecom.

Clay's writings are archived at www.shirky.com, and he also maintains a blog on his book at www.herecomeseverybody.org.