

Neighbourhood Networks



by Terry Daley,
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Residential Services Revamped

The integration of IT into virtually all aspects of the economy and society in turn will lead to future business opportunities not yet imagined by today's businesses and consumers. New digitally-enabled business/social networks will be responsible for generating the lion's share of our economic growth and prosperity in the not too distant future. Consider the technological changes that have happened in recent years.

Some interesting points from a Sony executive presentation posted recently on YouTube:

- The first text message sent was in 1992. Today, the number of text messages

sent/received each day exceeds the total population of the planet.

- It took the internet 4 years to reach a market audience of 50 million. Facebook took 2 years.
- There's over 200 million users on MySpace (if it were a country it would be 5th largest)
- One out of 8 couples married in the USA last year met online

The number of internet devices in 2008 was 1,000,000,000. The cost of an eee Network PC in Australia is down to \$375. Every school child should have one – but be quick we're running out of IP addresses.

There are 31 billion searches on Google

every month (To whom were these questions addressed B.G. (Before Google)?

In a recent book titled "Cyburbia" author James Harkin notes that the original idea of peer to peer communication was to bypass controls on what we should watch, read or listen to and put us back into direct communication with a community of our equals. He also points out that problems can arise when people with apparent similar interests can discover one another so rapidly. For instance where people only encounter those that share their own opinions or interests, rather than anyone who might challenge them, this can result in people living in 'walled gardens' with



people had them. Now we all use email attachments, direct to the desk-top rather than the fax machine.

Where any network grows, the connectivity between the nodes explodes to criss-cross each other with an exponential number of possible connections, increasing the potential "value" of the network. When hypertext was invented, this gave us a whole new method of browsing through information on the internet to find matching connections.

World-wide Waste Network Groups

The waste industry in Australia is a bit of a microcosm, even more so in New Zealand. Most members of the community at different levels know many of their peers and mix at industry events and trade shows. Some travel overseas to review international trade shows, but few would be members of or monitor waste issues and trends globally unless you're a presenter at these events. Yet there are electronic waste networks out there.

One of the business networks I belong to is "LinkedIn.com" where I've recently noticed there are several interesting discussion forums for waste. Under Groups, there's a "Waste Management and Recycling Professionals" group that has a wide field of "discussions" that range from people looking for advice on disposal problems to discussions on the impact of new legislation. While this seems to be predominantly US centric, I have been surprised when standing up in the glass house to make a comment, that there's been rapid response from other Australian states and British /Irish members. You can set notification levels not to be annoying.

Waste Industry Information Repositories

Another industry "portal" we review is www.environmental-expert.com that has a large range of industry articles and papers and has been collating connections for over 10 years. Though this site looks American, it's actually grown out of Spain to have global presence.

Social Networks (of Consumers)

In a free white paper on enabling the social company, Steve Outing notes the following:

*The world has changed;
Consumers have changed;
Most companies have not.*

dangerous, blinkered viewpoints. (eg: several teenage disturbed individuals, bound by a shared fascination with school shootings).

The Network Effect

More and more these days it's not what you do but who you know! The concept of six degrees of separation was based on a study by Harvard social psychologist Stanley Milgram whose experiment in getting letters hand passed from one side of the USA to the other addressed to someone they didn't know, resulted in an average of six connections (the small world experiment). Yet in technology, one fax machine was of no use until many

Consumers have been empowered by the Internet. Unless your business is headquartered in a cave where Internet access is unavailable, you've heard the buzz about "social networking." Social networking is a trend that you need to understand, so you can apply it at your organisation. AND this may represent a promising new line of business for you.

Social networking, as defined for the online world, is about forming communities of shared interest, and giving people in those communities, tools to come together, communicate with each other, and produce meaningful content that is important to them.

Electronic Neighbourhood Watch

In the UK, an interesting social pressure group uses www.FixMyStreet.com as a community site where residents can list illegal dumping, rubbish spills and a range



of other waste related problem points on the map. This in turn is a very public profile against which the local council waste services need to respond or be shown to be unresponsive. This site alone gets almost a 1,000 problems a week logged.

In the UK, there's a predominant council culture of applying fines to the waste collector if they can't respond fast enough to clean up a waste problem or keep streets up to a level of cleanliness in high traffic tourist areas. Council inspectors have mobile devices that can log problems on-line with pictures and GPS time date

stamps to initiate problem logging. Flowing on from this, the residential contractors are having to equip their field staff supervisors and mobile clean-up teams with rapid response communication devices.

So far in Australia, we've seen some demand for litter bin vandalism/damage inspection via hand-held systems, and electronic bin deployment tracking but we're only now seeing emerging interest in letting residents log their own service requests (e.g. for kerbside cleanups or bin repairs) and complaints over the web.

When carbon credits counting pushes through to encourage monitoring of residents to see who's putting out recycling and who's not, we might expect more illegal dumping.

Tracking Who's Putting Out (or Who's NOT!)

With GPS tracking devices getting smaller it's now possible to monitor put-out rates by grabbing a signal for each lift arm movement. Even if measured manually, this



is usually something contractors have kept to themselves for years, not wanting to pass such data on to the next contractor.

Just knowing where the trucks or sweepers are and where they've been is useful information. Each contractor seems to charge councils for re-establishing maps

of run areas and collection densities at the cost of the public purse. Even in a recession this is one pocket of the industry that still pays rates.

You can find Terry Daley, waste, on LinkedIn.com

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