

**Date:** May 1, 2008

**Title:** How Digital Technologies are Changing Business

**Assignment:** Blog Posting for part of our reading for last week of class

**Format:** WordPress blog

Hello All,

We have been charged with reading a couple things this week that as far as I am concerned should not be considered "work". [Free! Why \\$ 0.00 is the Future of Business](#), is such a compelling article that I really didn't mind it. I've actually been trying to get my friend's dad, an MBA and MA in Taxation Law graduate to read it for over month now to hear his thoughts on it. I just sent another text message out, so I may be in luck.

Things like this make me excited; not just because they're interesting, but because they let me think that I wasn't born too late, and that I will still find a way to make a fortune off of the Internet. The other reason things like this excite me is because they reinforce my feelings that many old schoolers don't get the Internet and the Web, and don't fully appreciate how it can be harnessed to make a living. I have realized that I will never be happy working for in a traditional job, no matter how lucrative it may be. If I can jump aboard this "media train" then perhaps I can find my own niche.

Essentially, Chris Anderson, the Editor in Chief of [Wired](#), argues in this article that the prices of goods and services related to the web are quickly approaching free. He then explains the complex, inter-related forces that are at work that are making this happen. [Google](#) is a good example. Google can afford to give us a top-notch search engine for free because it can sell millions of adds to probably millions of sites for relatively cheap, and still make a ton of money in the process. Anderson argues that a free lunch is possible, as long as someone picks up the tab. This is brilliant.

However, there is a dirty side to all of this that I think Anderson just glazed over.

Anderson says, "Then came the next wave: paid inclusion in search results, paid listing in information services, and lead generation, where a third party pays for the names of people interested in a certain subject. Now companies are trying everything from product placement (PayPerPost) to pay-per-connection on social networks like Facebook. All of these approaches are based on the principle that *free offerings build audiences with distinct interests and expressed needs that advertisers will pay to reach.*" (emphasis added by me.)

Whoa there. So, what we have is a group of people that all have a certain interest. Let's say it's politics. They frequent certain websites, and use Google. Google who provides a discount for anyone who signs up for their intra-web store. You give them the typical information that websites use to profile people. And your credit card information. Lets say 200 people frequent 3 of the same websites. Let's say they all subscribe to *The Economist*. They are all lawyers. That detailed demographic information is extremely valuable--and dangerous. These lists have been bought for years by magazine companies. I, for example have thought about subscribing to that magazine for years. Then, a month ago, I received a letter from them asking me to subscribe at a discounted rate. Hmm... How was I profiled as a likely

subscriber to *The Economist*? I did graduate recently with a degree in History. I am now enrolled in an MA program. Perhaps my information was bought, and along with others like me.

It's easy to talk about all of these abstract issues of morality and ethics that are brought up with the Information Age until you are personally involved. Then, it gets pretty uncomfortable.

I will wrap this up by saying, as exciting as the prospect of free applications that make my educational and leisure time on the internet better, I can't help but think that this is costing us somewhere--our privacy. Is it worth it?

**Comments:** This post showed what I hope is a wiser version of myself when confronted with new information. I looked at this article with great curiosity and was excited about the recent developments regarding e-commerce that it detailed. I also wondered at whether this convenience was worth the lack of privacy that this sort of business engenders. I never lost my sense of skepticism, I was just more careful with how I presented it at the end of the semester compared to the start.