Stateless Relationships

A thesis on the effects of social networks on young professionals in the creative industries of the Occident.
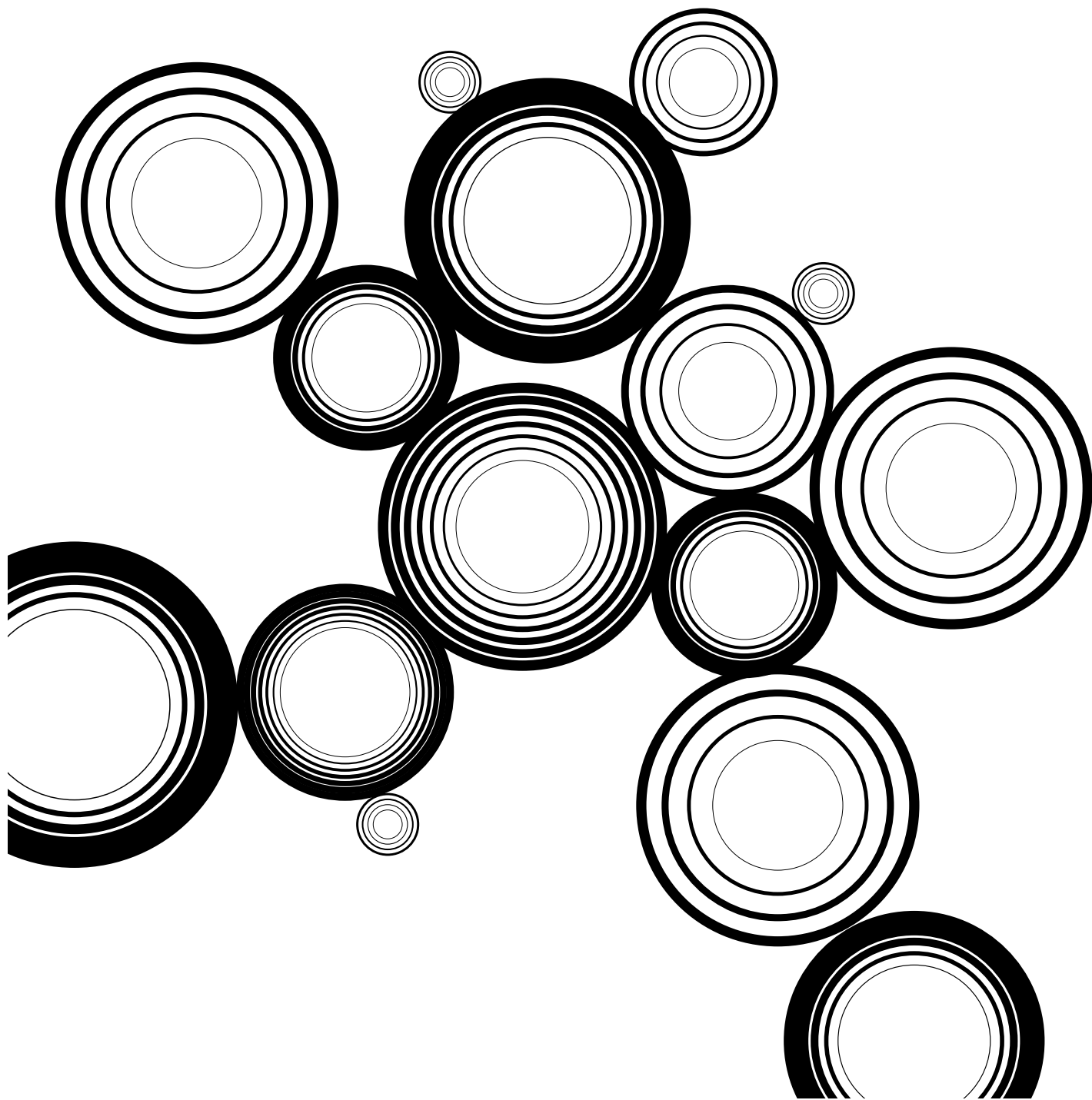
Table of Contents

How the wisdom of the crowds can be leveraged to increase knowledge
In Part 1, the author analyzes how Twitter enables *Average Joe* to strike up a conversation
with both industry and thought leaders and how barriers suddenly do not matter anymore.

How secret societies are slowly being replaced by LinkedIn
In Part 2, the author looks at how young professionals utilize LinkedIn to analyze, approach
and assist their peers in order to generate a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts
and sustain an influx of fresh minds.

Final Conclusions

Acknowledgements

Writing a thesis is much like planning a journey – you start out with a vague idea of where you want to be in the end but right now, you have no clue as to how you can get there.

'*Getting there*' did not actually take just ten weeks from start to finish, it took almost a year and a half, if you allow me the liberty of blurring the lines between passive and active research-time a little.

Human relationships have always proven to be a topic I have loved to think about, to talk about and to write about and in fact, it was as early as 2006 that I penned down the first thoughts, which would later turn into an article on *micro relationships*.

In the autumn of 2007, just after starting out in my junior year in college, I started pondering topics for my thesis, the very document you have before you.

Back then, I had a vague idea – I wanted to talk about the effects *Web 2.0* has and has had on (personal) relationships and I thought that I had chosen wisely and limited the scope of my thesis well enough.

Later on, during the spring of 2008, I had the great opportunity of interviewing a large number of speakers and attendees at both the 2008 edition of *The Next Web* and the first *Mobile Webcamp* in Belgium.

If anything, these interviews provided lots of insight but also showed me how flawed my thinking of having a clearly defined topic was.

Today, at the end of Spring of 2009, I look back on this journey with pride; I cannot say that I have overcome insurmountable hurdles during the writing of this thesis, because, if tackled correctly, any obstacle can be overcome, but I can say, true to my heart that I have learned a lot from this whole process.

Getting to where I am today has however not been a one-man process, not by far – in fact, I have actually practiced what I preach and utilized my networks skills and knowledge to improve the quality of my work and I believe that the final document has risen to a level it could not have gotten to without these people.

Foremost of all, I want to thank my mother, who has invested time, thought and money and created an environment which put me in a

position to do the things I wanted to do. Thank you, Mom.

Second, I would like to thank my teacher, Mark Meeuwenoord, for sparking ideas when I could not and for bringing reading material to my attention when I needed it.

Third, I would like to extend my gratitude towards Kevin van Beers, Vicki Busch, Michel Maas, Nathan Nelson and Leonie de Vries for taking time out of their busy schedules and investing it into proofreading and *thought proofing* my thesis during its various stages – you people rock!

Fourth, I would like to mention both Kevin Pilasky and Daninhaz Zulian for consulting with regards to the layout, color selection and visual style of this document.

Finally, I would like to offer my thanks to all those young professionals who believe in and enact the very thoughts I have written about, because there is no better proof of your teachings than seeing it being applied successfully in the real world.

To you, dear reader, I would like to extend an invitation to immerse yourself in the thoughts that follow – play with them, question them, discuss them and then, report back. Utilizing the methods I outline is not conditionally based on being a member of Generation Y (although it certainly helps) – all you need is the chutzpah to do things differently and the courage to put yourself out there.

Sincerely,   Amsterdam

Kerim Satirli   June 2009

Introduction

It is said that, to achieve financial independence and corporate success, one needs to have three qualities: a good education, a radiating smile and the ability to suck up to one's boss and hope for a few crumbs here and there.

At least those were the qualities one was required to have two decades ago, in a world without an omnipresent Internet connection and without the wisdom of crowds at one's disposal. Fast-forward to the present day; the first decade of the twenty-first century is coming to an end and social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter are continuously changing the way we communicate, work and, indeed, live.

This effect is most evident within the creative force of Generation Y, which currently, as of 2009, is defined by the median age of twenty-eight years and a spread of six years in both directions.

Young professionals within this group are identified by their high education with a larger-than-normal presence of college and university graduates and an increased social mobility when compared to their peers of the same age.

Finally, this group distinguishes itself by newfound political enthrallment, yet little to no interest in religious affiliations, and the will to excel in their specific industries.

Whereas young professionals in the past would spend their workday in an uninspiring cubicle, surrounded by less-than-motivational posters and dull co-workers, the same social group, these days, spends at least twenty five percent of their work day online, socializing with not only, co-workers, but also their former and future boss, their romantic partner(s) and myriad of other individuals, who are, often times, only known by their online handle.[1] What would seem like a waste of financial resources at first is actually a new way of generating (financial) value. Every minute spent on social networks is, in essence, time spent on building and expanding a personal brand, arguably one of the most precious commodities in our current economy.

---

[1] (Unnamed BBC Editor, 2007)

The importance of personal brands has increased in recent years as our societies succumb more and more to the power of Capitalism. Everything starts to become a service or product. Not unlike products in a grocery store, personal brands need to be grown, maintained and advertised, as only products with a high demand tend to survive in the long run.

However, not only are young professionals spending an increasing amount of time on building their own brand, they are, in fact, also increasing their knowledge, thereby increasing their personal value and thus, becoming more valuable to the companies they work for. A *personal brand*, or its spiritual predecessor, the reputation is, however not all one needs to succeed; a strong backing in the form of a diverse network is just as essential.

This was something that groups of educated people realized as early as two thousand five hundred years ago and it still is something that people, these days know very well.

In the past, these networks were given names such as *Freemasons*, *Skulls and Bones* and *Mysteries*. These days, powerful networks are named after their respective functions: Twitter and LinkedIn.

In this thesis I am going to look at how these two social networks are altering the way young professionals in the West are leveraging new tools in order to stay ahead of the crowd on a professional level and continuously increase their personal (brand) value.

In order to achieve this, I have selected these networks based on a number of reasons, and I believe that it is important to outline my intrinsic motivation before we continue on.

By my nature, as a human being, I am interested in expanding my knowledge wherever and whenever possible. I mostly achieve this by connecting with interesting people, both offline and online. While LinkedIn and Twitter are, by far, not the only tools available on the Internet that would allow such connections to be made, they are the networks that hold the most personal significance to me. Both sites have generated a relative high return on investment for me, both on a professional and personal level.

The final reason for selecting these networks is their high importance and rising popularity within the established social group that acts as the basis for this thesis.

I myself am a part of this very social group and I believe that being in the midst of it all enables me to give both an overview and insight that someone on the outside could not.

The more you use the Internet,
the more social you are offline.

The Internet adds,
rather than subtracts, sociability.

Manuel Castells

Steven Johnson **emergence**

The TIPPING POINT — MALCOLM GLADWELL ABACUS

THE WISDOM JAMES ANCHOR BOOKS
OF CROWDS SUROWIECKI

SIX DEGREES DUNCAN J. WATTS NORTON

WEINBERGER SMALL PIECES LOOSELY JOINED PERSEUS PUBLISHING

LINKED Albert-László Barabási PLUME

NEXUS Small Worlds and the Groundbreaking Theory of Networks Mark Buchanan NORTON

THE LONG TAIL CHRIS ANDERSON rh BUSINESS BOOKS

HAI KLER The Wealth of Networks

How the wisdom of the crowds can be leveraged to increase knowledge

1.1 – Power Struggles

As products of the Western World, many of us were raised by a number of Educational systems that instilled one simple, yet very concise message into us: knowledge equals power. Regardless of the national backing behind the Educational system, this pseudo-adage was and, in fact, still *is* present in the societies of the Occident.

And yet, one has to wonder: if knowledge equals power, what does wisdom equal? Wisdom, in this example, is defined as the amount of knowledge needed to live the good life; time spans filled with both intellectually and ethically correct decisions.

As long as we can accept that knowledge, indeed, equals power, then wisdom must equal sheer might, for the simple reason that our (Western) society is hastily replacing the hundred fifty-year-old phrase of '*survival of the fittest*' and replacing it with one of '*survival of the best-informed*'.

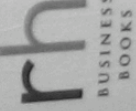The wars that break the news are still the ones that feature guns and bombs. Yet the wars that happen right on our doorstep - in our stock exchanges and research facilities, these are wars of knowledge, of insight and of profound wisdom.

Edward Bulwer-Lytton concluded in 1839 that "*The pen is mightier than the sword*" and even though the true origins of this adage might not be known, Bulwer-Lytton certainly struck the right cord:

> True, This! —
>
> Beneath the rule of men entirely great,
> The pen is mightier than the sword. Behold
> The arch-enchanters wand! — itself a nothing! —
> But taking sorcery from the master-hand
> To paralyse the Cæsars, and to strike
> The loud earth breathless! — Take away the sword —
> States can be saved without it!

And it is indeed so: the pen, in its most metaphorical form, is countless times mightier than any sword, for it is the pen that signed the purchase order for the sword in the first place.

1.2 – World Changing

During the last fifty years, the way students are taught new information has fundamentally changed. Whereas in the Fifties, students were instructed to memorize lots of important facts and tidbits about the world they live in, these days, the focus is not so much on knowing everything from the top of your head, but rather knowing *how* to retrieve said information.

In fact, this kind of evolution makes a lot of sense when we take the concept of *Homo Universalis* as a comparative example.

During the Renaissance Age, men like Leonardo Da Vinci and Isaac Newton were, like most of their peers within the scientific community, considered *'Men of the World'*, due to their broad knowledge across an expansive battery of subjects - literal know-it-alls in the most positive sense of the word.

Today, in our time and age, knowing only a fraction of the amount of knowledge these *Renaissance Men* had entitles one to wear the same title, for the reason that knowing everything is literally impossible – our world is too vast for that.

This is why, these days, we learn *where* to find information as opposed to what the information really is.

This change in learning should not, however, be viewed as a negative thing. The way young professionals currently memorize information is much more transient, but at the same time, more hyperlinked, not unlike the Internet that sparked this revolution in the first place.

A society's level of sophistication is measured, mostly, by the amount of achievements the populace is able to generate within a certain timeframe.

There is no doubt that the *Generations X*, *Y* and *Z* are not lagging behind in any sector, when compared to *Generation Jones* or its predecessors.

1.3 – Herd Intelligence

In 2004, New York Times best-selling author James Surowiecki wrote a book called *The Wisdom of Crowds*, in which he explains how a group of people can become what he refers to as a '*wise crowd*'.

A wise crowd, at the bottom of its existence, requires a large amount of different opinions. This ensures that there is ample diversity in the knowledge, with some vectors overlapping each other and yet others being interpreted by members of the group with their personal experiences in mind.

To form crowd intelligence, a group also requires a certain amount of independence, in that people's opinions should be uninfluenced by those that surround them. This, in essence, comes down to the ability to make a decision on your own, as opposed to following the mainstream.

Wisdom, in its general form, is a superset of high specialization – meaning that a person can specialize in one field of study, but not all of them. To combat knowledge black holes, the community has to be able to both draw from and depend on its members. This supports the earlier statement that a wise crowd requires diversity.

Finally, a gathering can become intelligent if those involved can figure out a way to harness the skills that are present within the community, and by figuring out a way to make decisions that appeal to the majority of the voters.

All these traits combined however, are not, by definition, a recipe for success. Nonetheless, it has been shown that in critical cases such as the SARS outbreak in 2003 and the H1N1 outbreak in 2009, crowd intelligence has been instrumental to gathering and analyzing information as well as collaborating effectively, on a global scale, towards a possible cure.[2]

Wikipedia and sister-site *Wikinews* are other well-known examples of this; both sites, at times, are host to a number of patrons who edit information in real-time. This means that edits are made as they occur and it is ensured that information is available as soon as possible to the whole audience.

---

[2] (Surowiecki, 2004, pp. 160)

1.4 – Hyper Connectedness

In a talk Surowiecki gave at the O'Reilly Emerging Technology Conference in the spring of 2005, an attempt was made to answer the question if an individual could be *too* connected. Although there is no definite answer to this question, it is generally advised to have a large and diverse network that boasts a high amount of qualified members.

Twitter, amongst other tools, is one site that allows such a network to be formed rather easily.

The service's ease-of-use lies within the fact that any one message, a so-called *tweet*, cannot be longer than one hundred forty characters. This limit includes meta-information such as recipient, location or possible topic-denomination. Due to the succinct nature of this form of communication, power-users of the tool have learned to express their thoughts in a very concise manner and still manage to get their point across.

This also hallmarks the evolution of information production and distribution we are witnessing as a society. Information is not static anymore, meaning that it cannot be changed easily.

In fact, it never has been, but has often been considered as being so, incorrectly, for many decades, even centuries.

But information is not only '*not static*' anymore; it is also not, by definition, as inherently extensive as it was before. Whereas in the past, one would have offered or found big chunks of data, these days, the same type of information comes packaged in small, bite-sized piece. The downside of this evolution is, of course, that big amounts of (meta) information get lost along the way and to-the-point information turns into hard-to-distinguish data-bins without much context.

This lack of obvious context is most pervasive on the Internet, because unlike books, additional information can be found everywhere and authors often do not take the time to present an extensive '*suggested reading*' list anymore.

However, this ease-of-publishing also adds to the diversity of information that is present on the World Wide Web, next to putting us in a position where we can update whole knowledge bases with the blink of an eye, or, more precisely, at the click of a button, as soon as new information surfaces.

1.5 – Bird Watching

Now that a framework has been established, it is time to move to the main topic of this chapter and examine how Twitter, a micro-blogging tool and social network, can be utilized to spark conversations with the so-called industry top dogs.

Twitter, by definition, is a prime example for the application of social knowledge across a variety of scenarios. The tool has been instrumental in raising political awareness, ensuring that laws are followed and also helping at least one person to get out of jail.

On April 10, 2008 an American graduate student, together with his translator, was arrested for being in the vicinity an anti-government protest in Mahalla, Egypt. While being transported to the police station, the student updated his Twitter stream with one word: 'Arrested'.

What followed was a frenzy of international collaboration, wherein a large group of people utilized their network and displayed a significant amount of independence and different opinions as well as a large amount of legal and cultural wisdom that helped free the student within twenty-four hours.

On the other side, the translator did not have access to the same resources and as such, was forced to spend three months in prison while allegedly questionable interrogation techniques were being used on him to confess to a fabricated truth.[3]

This, naturally, is not the modus operandi of how Twitter works most of the time, but it does point out the possibilities the service has and the opportunities that are *there for the taking*.

These possibilities are so vast that many companies across the West are realizing the incredible shot they have in areas of customer loyalty expansion, damage control and even sales generation.[4]

---

[3] (Carr, 2009)
[4] (Unnamed Direct2Dell Editor, 2009)

Social networking tools often give
the impression of having a 'relationship',
without providing the substance of one.

There is something critically important
to incarnate, *'face to face'* relating.

Online communication is really,
very low bandwidth.

Rich Tatum

1.6 – Interpersonal Relationships

Twitter's utility lies within the premise that it facilitates the creation of relationships on a nuclear level, whereas our society, in general, only allows for the creation of relationships in its smallest form to take place on a micro level.[5]

The fundamental difference between these two qualifiers is that a nuclear relationship is even more transient than a micro relationship, thereby making it the fire-and-forget type our society has become so fond of in the past decades, mainly due to changes in the types of communication we employ.

But a change in communication is not the only contributing factor - in fact, to paraphrase Dutch sociologist Jan van Dijk, the network society is in essence complementing and replacing face-to-face communication by gradually moving everything to a digital plane.

Even though one might not want to take part in any such exchange, the truth, according to Manuel Castells is that, even if *you* refrain from taking part in a 'Network Society', it will always take part in your life.

This is very important when we take into account that Twitter enables conversations to take place on a global level, thereby turning your local chit-chat into a bit of news that can be read, if you so please, by anyone, around the world, in myriad of different settings.[6]

---

[5] (Satirli, 2006)

[6] (van Dijk, 2005) and (Castells, 2004)

1.7 – Ballroom Chatter

To make the effect of Twitter more understandable, it helps to think of the service as a social gathering that imperfectly describes how our society, in general, is built up.

Twitter is inhabited by, amongst others, politicians, students, surgeons, lawyers, marketeers, customer service representatives, a one-hundred-four-year-old woman and even a cat. Ever since Twitter went *mainstream,* which, according to the Wall Street Journal *happened in October 2008,* this demographic only has expanded in size due to the increased media attention the service has received since then.[7]

In fact, the increase in media attention has been so big that, during the month of May, the Dutch newspaper nrc.next, aimed primarily at young professionals, did not have a single issue without a reference to the service.

However, one has to consider the set-up of the audience and take into account that there is still a lavish *digital divide* to consider, even when we only include individuals from the Occident in the make up of the target audience.

For arguments sake, let's put the group (e.g.: the Twitter users) into a virtual room of unlimited size, with a stage and working microphone in the middle of it. The audience, in example: all users of the service are able to 'hear' what the person behind the microphone has to say, but they are free *not* to listen.

The end of the Twentieth Century and the beginning of the Twenty-First Century were very much about being in the spotlight and getting one's *Fifteen Minutes of Fame.* Twitter, in essence, is a way to get one's, what Andy Warhol dubbed *Fifteen Seconds of Fame*, with an option of getting said spotlight effect repeatedly, thereby being able to amass, if done correctly, a lot more than fifteen actual minutes.

In terms of the creative industry, Twitter is the habitat of most of the usual suspects that can be seen at conferences and Barcamps. However, while it might be difficult for the low-level conference attendee to strike up a face-to-face conversation during an actual conference, Twitter has a much lower barrier of entry.

---

[7] (Vascellaro, 2008)

In talks with professional Twitterazi, it has become evident that this low barrier of entry is what makes the *top dogs* more receptive for a chat with an unknown.

Whereas during a traditional conference, any one conversation could result in the top dog being tied down for too long, Twitter allows its users to selectively listen to what they want, giving one the ability to drown out actual background noise, something that proves to be very difficult at actual conferences, and focus on the conversation at hand.

Although communication within Twitter gets more personal when one mutually follows others, such a situation also creates figurative background noise and might therefore result in the drowning out of the information signal that is pertinent to the case at hand.

1.8 - One hundred forty-character wisdom

Twitter, like any assembly, has the ability to provide support to those that are present however, unlike normal gatherings, Twitter's audience is spread out across the globe and thereby forms a perfect basis for the first element that is required to form a *wise crowd*. As outlined earlier, Twitter is in essence, one big *Starbucks*, with lots of patrons present at any one time, all of them having, in the best case, nothing in common with each other, other than the fact that each and every voice represents a different opinion. Of course, as is the case in any (social) group, there will be a certain overlap of skills and knowledge. This can be primarily utilized to verify information from the members whose knowledge overlaps and secondly, this can be applied to filter information from *Internet trolls*, people who thrive on being disruptive in a negative way. Twitter's main side effect, the incredibly easy creation of both micro- and nuclear relationships actually forms the basis for the second element, which pertains to the creation of crowd intelligence.

Based on the results of a number of case studies, it can be evidenced that Twitter-followers do not necessarily translate into real-life contacts that are close to a user. In fact, many Twitter power-users have so many followers that it would be technically impossible for them to know everybody on a personal level in the offline world.

Using this conclusion as a departure point, we can thus deduce that contacts on Twitter are so impermanent that a high level of independence is available to any one participant throughout the whole experience.

Not unlike the first element, diversified opinion, the third ingredient, an attribute of (high) specialization, was highly present in the audience that used Twitter until the service became known to the 'mainstream' due to promotion by American celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey, Ashton Kutcher and Britney Spears.[8]

---

[8] (Siegler, 2009)

In this post-Oprah period, Twitter still harbors a great number of knowledgeable individuals that are more than happy to lend their hand, in the form of expertise, to perfect strangers in return for 'street cred', meaning that any help rendered ought to be considered a display of their expertise in a given field.[9]

Finally, the fourth element, decision-making, can be found in large quantity in the Twitter ecosystem.

Human beings are prone to *social decision-making*, meaning that most decisions are made based on input from people close to the decision maker. However, input from experts and specialists is oftentimes equally as – if not more - important to the overall process and in cases where expert opinions are called upon, social vicinity is left out of the equation altogether.

The Twitter ecosystem does have a high level of extensibility and ever since a public API was released, new applications have shown up on a daily basis, with a fair amount of those applications, such as *PollDaddy* and *twtpoll* serving the process of *social decision-making.*

---

[9] see 'street cred' in the Glossary and Definitions section

1.9 - Remarks

We live in an age that is filled with information nodes.

The generation of information is present in any part of the World, but the West, like no other part of the World, excels at creating unfathomable amounts of data.

Western societies believe that knowledge equals power and have accepted the switch to a world where information has a higher political value than sheer force.

The way our students are being educated has changed not only on a superficial level, but also on the basis that access to the Internet seems to become so important that many students would flunk out of college if disconnected from their primary information sources for long periods.

Real libraries, with printed books, are being replaced by free, but at times, unverified information sources such as Wikipedia and Twitter. This is a result of the services starting to play an increasingly important role, not so much on a technical level, but on a social one. As people discover and accept that information presented in printed media is not always correct and at the same time get more and more accurate information from online sources, a shift in trust can be witnessed.

The fact is that Twitter's social implications reach so far that official institutions, emergency services and politicians around the world depend on it to stay connected with the populace in a real-time manner that, additionally, also links up with their (current) technical capabilities. The service also plays an important role in the ad-hoc forming of wise crowds. This can mainly be attributed to the demographics of the service, but does, in part, also stem from the technical markup of a tweet.

This social markup, however, also means that many users will create more nuclear relationships, which may have no quantifiable business value and as such, only add to the online social diversity of a person.

In conclusion, it is safe to say that the information generated by Twitter is a lot more fluid than the information that is being generated by scientific societies around the world. It is through this transience of information that Twitter is able to generate not only information, but also actual knowledge, though no wisdom in the purest form of the word.

Through the influx of new members, the site will be able to sustain such generation in the long run, up until our societies reach a point where another evolution in communication takes place.

How Secret Societies are slowly being replaced by LinkedIn

2.1 – A Shroud Of Secrecy

Since the dawn of time, societies of the world have had a knack for reserving secret, beneficial knowledge for select initiates in order to leverage real-world power, whether they were so-called witches, alchemists, or magicians, or later in history, Freemasons and members of other secret societies.

To this very day, the United States of America are believed to be the host country *with the most Secret Societies*; which in itself is no small feat. Even though many people know about the Societies, a shroud of riddles surrounds the actual, inner-workings of the organizations themselves and most, if not all, investigations are shut down before they produce tangible results.

These Societies ensure that their members are treated to 'the better life', by a system that is akin to the 'paying it forward' ideology that has found many supporters in the first decade of this century. This ideological concept refers to a state whereas the acting party of a good deed does not ask the good to be returned to them personally, but rather expects the recipient to repay the acting party by doing something good for others. In Secret Societies, new members benefit from that which has been built by those that have joined before them and, in turn, these new members will, too, contribute a considerable amount of assets to the *cause* that needs to be fueled like any engine. Because that is simply how these incubators work.

Joining a secret society, on the other hand, is not something that can be done on a whim. Having someone in your family as part of such a network certainly helps, but it is no golden ticket to being accepted. One, supposedly, has to pass rigorous inspection and complete a number of initiation rites if we are to believe what the 2002 book *Secrets of the Tomb* depicted.

By definition, there are always more people interested in joining a secret cause than there is space available and as such, the mist of secrecy and intrigue is kept intact for decades, sometimes even centuries on end.

Up until now, this shroud was the borderline between opportunities that are handed to you and opportunities you had to work for. But this is slowly changing, in part due to the business social network called LinkedIn.

LinkedIn, although initially considered a niche site by many early users, has had growth rates in excess of two hundred fifty percent for the past three years, translating into some forty million users as of Spring 2009.

At its core, the site provides users with the ability to connect to other members, based on a number of different vectors, such as professional, educational or personal affiliations.
However, a connection can also be established by simply entering a user's email address.

2.2 – (Not) The Answer to Life, the Universe and Everything

With a user base that spans more than one hundred and fifty industries, an age range that includes anybody from young adults to the not-so recently retired and prominent users that read like an edition of *Forbes Magazine*, LinkedIn, too, has what it takes to help in social decision-making and crowd intelligence. LinkedIn's business development team realized this early on, and in January 2007 rolled out a feature named *Answers* that enables a user to pose a question to their network.

Unlike Twitter's collective intelligence, LinkedIn's question and answer service only displays a question to the first, second and third degree of one's network and not all registered users, therewith ensuring that the quality of answers would be proportional to the quality of the network a person has generated. Questions can be posted free of charge and can be targeted towards a certain audience by tagging them with one or more categories that pertain to the topic.

In a survey the author held on both LinkedIn and Twitter on the effects of "Web 2.0 technology on one's personal life", it became evident that, while LinkedIn provided fewer overall answers, the quality of the answers was a lot higher. These answers also contained more extensive backup for arguments that were made and references to other site members that would know more about the topics.[10]

It is certainly worth noting that the overall reach of the question on LinkedIn was a *mere* four million users, as opposed to, potentially, all unique visitors of Twitter. When compared to similar situations twenty years ago however, where people without any affiliation to public opinion researchers would conduct this kind, four million is a much bigger survey audience than one could hope for.

Besides the higher quality of answers, LinkedIn's Answer section also helps one to expand their network with new connections, thereby ensuring that any user's access to crowd intelligence grows even more.

A statistical analyst for LinkedIn mentioned during the 2007 edition of *The Next Web* conference that for every ten answers a question receives, the poster (of the original question) would be able to expand his network by one new connection.

---

[10] (Satirli, 2007) and (Satirli, 2008)

Participation in the Answers community can earn a user 'points', which, although without any monetary value, do signify proficiency and expertise in a given category, therefore increasing said person's professional value.

LinkedIn members who grasp the concept of Answers actively participate in the community and provide in-depth, free-of-charge solutions, often as many as hundred times per week.

In conclusion, given the size of the audience, the lack of *ranks* and the diversity in specialties, any question posed is a question posed to a potentially wise crowd.

The final component that would form a semantically correct wise crowd, however, is missing on LinkedIn, due to the fact that the best and most appropriate solution to question is decided by one single person, as opposed to it being selected by a community.

Nonetheless, research conducted by a number of authors and social media analysts during the course of 2008 has proven that there is a very high demand for the kind of interaction that *LinkedIn Answers* provides and user demographics have shown that Answers is of special interest to members of Generation Y.[11]

---

[11] (Li and Bernoff, 2008, pp. 23)

2.3 – Will Work From Home

Along with Answers, LinkedIn also offers a number of tools that enable a person to research and analyze a company, connect with employees and possibly find a new job.

Generation Y members who also fall in the creative industry group are inclined to work as freelancers, on location or, if the clichés hold true, from home. Being represented on LinkedIn opens up a whole new market to them.

Contrary to traditional freelancing websites such as *Elance* and *Guru.com*, LinkedIn's freelancers often times come bearing arguments in the form of recommendations and references as well as a connection degree that displays how active and 'linked in' a person is.

In personal interviews the author held with high tech companies and web start-ups in Amsterdam, it became evident that this statistical data is the primary factor when hiring new employees.

2.4 – Churning Masses

As mentioned before, LinkedIn has seen a steady rise in growth rate of about two hundred fifty percent each year for the past three years. As such, a certain influx of fresh knowledge can basically be guaranteed, if we take into consideration the kind of users that have joined the site's user base in the past.

For young professionals in the creative industry, LinkedIn, if used correctly, can be seen as an incredible asset enabling any one user to reach out and touch someone with their knowledge, skills and network.

Gone are the days when graduates had to apply for jobs in a traditional way with many large corporations in the hopes of getting a shot at a job that would sustain them for at least a year, before *they find something that suits their, supposedly, unique skill set better*.[12]

These days, the trust network one builds on LinkedIn appears to be equally if not more important than the offline recommendations one can amass by performing well on a job.

This is in stark contrast with the past, where attaining a position of power within a company was time intensive and generally followed the *KILL principle*, meaning that the process, as a whole, was '*long and laborious*'. An employee had to follow a pre-determined path of pleasing department heads and outperforming his peers, continually reaching and exceeding targets. At the same time, any performance would have to be made in a way that did not make one's manager look bad in front of his superiors.

These days, LinkedIn's tools for searching out potential employees allow the searcher to limit searches to people with a certain number of recommendations, thereby underscoring the trust companies place in this kind of data. LinkedIn, like any other social network site places the role of quality monitor directly in the hands of other users, thereby forming a *High-Trust Society*. There is no built-in (artificial) intelligence that prevents a user from claiming a walk in outer space or the discovery of a new, much longed-for cure. Nothing except for the user's network, who supposedly knows the user and is familiar with his or her successes.

---

[12] (Hira, 2008)

This barrier against fabricated truth, however, is all that is needed to keep the network truthful throughout the board.

In fact, from surveys held by the author with LinkedIn users during the 2008 and 2009 edition of *The Next Web* conference, it became evident that there is indeed a social quality assurance and control present.

Even though none of the professionals that were questioned had experienced this kind of situation in their network, it was unanimously agreed that any such situation would be dealt with by advising the offender to the invalidity of the claims that were made. Further questioning also revealed that, depending on the outrageousness of the claim, more severe actions such as a formal review request would be made, if needed.

This self-cleaning system that is in effect on LinkedIn not only ensures a high quality across the board, it also sets the network apart from the previously mentioned micro-blogging service, Twitter.

Due to the constant stream of new messages, information posted on Twitter has a very low half-life – messages *might* get reposted, but even then, a tweet's lifespan will only be extended for so long; notwithstanding the fact that there are technical ways to access old tweets, both via internal and external search engines.

With LinkedIn, knowledge shared with others in the Answers section is considered a valuable commodity and as such is stored for posterity and, by default, linked to one's professional profile, accessible to anyone searching for it.

By commoditizing this knowledge, the network adds value to one's profile, which, in turn, increases a member's personal (brand) value.

Without the human community,
one single human *cannot* survive.

Dalai Lama

2.5 – Offline Value

In the spring of 2007, Fox Interactive Media, the owner of MySpace.com published a report that came to an interesting conclusion:

> Contrary to popular wisdom, social networking sites are not all about initiating casual relationships with strangers.
>
> While that might make good copy, the reality is that most social networking users rely on the medium to deepen their existing relationships, whether with their favorite bands, brands, or people.[13]

Even though the report was based on MySpace and did not take into account any other networks, the result holds true when applied to the demographics of LinkedIn, where some seventy five percent of connections are made between people who know each other in real life.

The offline value of connections becomes even more evident when 'adding a relationship' ultimately translates into adding a job position to one's resume. And while this does not sound *that*

common to Europeans, young professionals from North America are increasingly flocking to LinkedIn's facilities in order to find their next gig.

While it can be considered 'cool' to boast about one's achievements no matter how small in the real world, showing off on LinkedIn can be even more rewarding, due to the fact that the audience one can reach is a lot bigger.[14]

This is due to the fact that establishing a connection with someone else online can be a lot easier than creating an offline connection. The process, as a whole, can be expedited if both parties are so inclined and, in its fastest form, only requires three mouse-clicks. While this might be seen as an advantage for those trying to build a big network in a short period, it does however, inch very close to the borderline between a powerful network and a watered-down collection of random, online personas.

---

[13] (Drath et al., 2007)

---

[14] Please note that the author is not advocating the so-called padding of your profile on LinkedIn. Keep your resume "real" and do not water down the information your network has access to by putting half-truths on there.

However, there are two sides to the story: showing off also means that more information can be found during searches, thereby potentially putting the name of a hiring manager within someone's reach and at the same time providing applicants with ample background information on a number of 'attack vectors' which are, in essence, different ways to approach the 'person in charge'. With the right query, it is possible to analyze which companies in one's vicinity are hiring for the skill set a user is able to provide. What is even more important, by interpreting the data, it can become evident which personal profiles are favored over others. With a global recession in full effect, finding the right job quickly is not only important, but for some *paramount,* especially as we head into a world where the average college graduate accrues a debt of upwards of fifty thousand US Dollars.[15] Thanks to the details that one can source from his or her professional network, staying ahead of the crowd becomes a tad more manageable.

The previous paragraphs in fact serve as examples of what '*survival of the best-informed*' means, because they outline how an informed individual is much more likely to find a job than a person with a skill set that perfectly matches the job requirements.

---

[15] (Marr Cronin and Horton, 2009)

2.6 - Remarks

Nepotism has long been one of the cornerstones of the business world, both ancient and modern, and it is safe to say that this will not change in the near future. In fact, with networks such as LinkedIn on a breathtaking rise, a new form of favoritism will emerge and manifest itself in the business world.

This new type could very well turn out to be *'Second Degree Nepotism'*, whereas jobs are not only handed out to relatives, but also to First and Second degree members of one's professional network.

Such a change would ensure that jobs are not only given to those that have powerful family, but also, preferably, to those that have a powerful network.

In turn, this will promote the building of networks and encourage more (young) professionals to attend conferences, Barcamps and other professional-social gatherings. Generally, this will also trigger the social group to share much more of their knowledge with peers, knowing that any such exchange will be rewarded with increased influence and, in certain cases, opportunities with certain rewards attached to them.

Because the LinkedIn network is still so new, relative to more traditional frameworks such as Freemasonry, the impetus to provide assistance to others within the service comes in part from a shared sense of discovery.

The motivation of finding a new system provides that tacit agreement among its adherents.

PART 3

Final Conclusions

3 – Tying A Tie

Financial independence and corporate success have long been the most important ingredients for the rating of a person's lifetime achievements. All it took to *"get there and live the good life"* was a college degree, a good dentist and knowing how and when to flatter your boss and keep doing so on a regular basis.
Fast-forward to the present day, Generation Y is coming of age and the young professionals of the West are slowly but surely realizing that there are other ways to excel in one's professional field, namely by utilizing the wisdom of crowds and harnessing the power of social networks.
In its most basic form, this change can be seen as a departure from an ideology whereby achieving success and reaching the top was *long and laborious*, to an ideology wherein a traditional command hierarchy is replaced by simplicity and stupidity, thereby resulting in increased accessibility on a number of levels and a lack of bureaucracy.

Both Twitter and LinkedIn are prime examples when outlining this kind of change, as neither network features a strict hierarchy or any deep going form of bureaucracy. At the same time, the networks promote openness and accessibility amongst its participants, thereby ensuring that there is a steady influx of new members, with new opinions and fresh skills that can be harnessed by others.

Although Generation Y is not the first social group to display both an increased interest *as well as* dependence on social networks and crowd-powered wisdom, it is certainly the first generation of people where these features are displayed in such an overt manner, across this vast a social group at the same time.

Even though both LinkedIn and Twitter have proven themselves to be valuable tools for young professionals in the areas of knowledge generation and network building, the sites are far from the only sources available to young professionals as of right now.
That being said, one has to take into account the reach both of these networks are able to not only provide in the short term but also sustain over a longer period of many years, thereby manifesting themselves into the social space they encompass.

When applied correctly, the sites can be utilized to multiply one's personal brand value by establishing a position of influence within a specific social group and surround oneself with a mix of people who are able to supplement and complement the areas of expertise where one might be lacking.

In the near future, this change will become even more tangible as the first digital natives, members of Generation Z, graduate from colleges and universities across the West and join the working force of our societies, all the while adapting and transforming the ways of Generation Y to fit their specific time and needs.

defined state will crystallize itself with more new types of non-romantic relationships being developed and applied whenever necessary.

Even though this kind of change will bear an increase in fire-and-forget type relationships, it will also herald a rising interest in knowledge sharing and transnational collaboration.

This kind of cooperation will not take political or religious affiliations, sex or skin color into account, thereby promoting equality amongst its participants. In turn, this will enable the resulting product to be much larger than the sum of its parts.

In conclusion, this evolution towards relationships without a clearly

Bibliography

Literature

Alba, J (2009). *I'm On Linkedin - Now What???*. Cupertino, CA, USA: Happy About.

Castells, M (2004). *The Rise of the Network Society*. Hoboken, NJ, USA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Castells, M (2006). *Mobile Communication and Society*. Cambridge, MA, USA: MIT Press.

van Dijk, J (2005). *The Network Society*. Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: Sage Publications.

Li, C, & Bernoff, J (2008). *Groundswell*. Boston, MA, USA: Harvard Business Press.

Manovich, L (2008). Software Takes Command. La Jolla, CA, USA: UCSD Publishing.

Papacharissi, Z (2009). The virtual geographies of social networks. *New Media & Society*. *11*, 199-220.

Surowiecki, J (2004). *The Wisdom of Crowds*. London, London, United Kingdom: Little, Brown.

Internet

Carr, S (2008, July, 11). April 6 detainee
      recounts alleged prison torture .
      Retrieved June 17, 2009,
      from Daily News Egypt Web site:
      http://statelessrelationships.com/go/egypt/

Drath, Dan (2007, April 24). Never Ending
      Friending. 1,
      Retrieved June 17, 2009,
      from MySpace Web site:
      http://statelessrelationships.com/go/fox/

Hira, N (2008, May 30). Job-hopping Gen Yers
      aren't disloyal. They're smart.
      Retrieved June 17, 2009,
      from Fortune Web site:
      http://statelessrelationships.com/go/fortune/

Ito, M, et al, (2008). Living and Learning
      with New Media. *Digital Youth Project, 1*,
      Retrieved June 17, 2009,
      from Digital Youth Research Web site:
      http://statelessrelationships.com/go/digiyouth/.

Johnson, S (2009, June, 05). How Twitter Will
      Change the Way We Live.
      Retrieved June 17, 2009,
      from TIME Web site:
      http://statelessrelationships.com/go/time/

Marr Cronin, J & Horten, H. E. (2009, May 22). Will Higher
      Education Be the Next Bubble to Burst?.
      Retrieved June 17, 2009,
      from Chronicle.com Web site:
      http://statelessrelationships.com/go/chronicle/

Satirli, K (2006, December, 14). Micro Relationships.
      Retrieved June 17, 2009,
      from kerimsatirli.com Web site:
      http://statelessrelationships.com/go/micro/

Satirli, K (2007, October 2). How did Web 2.0
      affect the way we go about interpersonal
      relationships?.
      Retrieved June 17, 2009,
      from LinkedIn Web site:
      http://statelessrelationships.com/go/li-answers-1/

Satirli, K (2008, October 2). How did the social
web influence your kinship relationships?.
Retrieved June 17, 2009,
from LinkedIn Web site:
http://statelessrelationships.com/go/li-answers-2/

Siegler, M. G. (2009, April 16). Oprah's First
Tweet Will Be Tomorrow On Her Show.
Soccer Moms To Take Over The Service?.
Retrieved June 17, 2009,
from TechCrunch Web site:
http://statelessrelationships.com/go/oprah/

Vascellaro, J (2008, October, 27). Twitter
Goes Mainstream.
Retrieved June 17, 2009,
from WSJ.com Web site:
http://statelessrelationships.com/go/wsj/

Vos, H, & van Geel, A (2009). The Next Web 2009.
Ruigrok|Netpanel, 1,
Retrieved June 17, 2009,
from Ruigrok|Netpanel Web site:
http://statelessrelationships.com/go/ruigrok/.

Unnamed BBC Editor, (2007, September, 11).
Facebook 'costs businesses dear'.
Retrieved June 17, 2009,
from BBC News Web site:
http://statelessrelationships.com/go/bbc/

Unnamed Direct2Dell Editor, (2009, June 11).
@DellOutlet Surpasses $2 Million on Twitter.
Retrieved June 17, 2009,
from Direct2Dell Web site:
http://statelessrelationships.com/go/dell/

Quotes and Citations

Edward Bulwer-Lytton (March 7, 1839).
  Richelieu; Or the Conspiracy.
  used in part 1.1

Manuel Castells (May 21, 2008).
  *Internet and Society: What Academic
  Research actually knows about it.*
  used in the Introduction

Dalai Lama (date unknown).
  source of quote unknown
  used in part 2.5

Richard Tatum (October 3, 2007).
  *How did Web 2.0 affect the way we go
  about interpersonal relationships?.*
  used in part 1.5

Talks and Presentations

Kaye, D (2005, March 16). [Podcast]
  Independent Individuals and Wise Crowds.
  IT Conversations. Retrieved June 17,
  2009, from
  http://statelessrelationships.com/go/itconvos/

Unnamed Yahoo! Editor, (2008, May 21).
  [Vodcast] Big Thinker Manuel Castells
  Discusses Internet and Society. Yahoo!
  Research Distinguished Speaker Series.
  Retrieved June 17, 2009, from
  http://statelessrelationships.com/go/yahoo/.

Interviews

The interviews referenced within this document were recorded and / or held during the following conferences:

PICNIC '07 in September 2007
The Next Web 2008 in April 2008
Mobile Webcamp Hasselt in April 2008
Internet Week New York, June 2008
PICNIC '08 in September 2008
Barcamp Liverpool in December 2008
The Next Web 2009 in April 2009

Recordings can be made available on request.

Imagery

The images used within this document are used under permission and licensed accordingly.

"Books" by adactio on Flickr:
http://statelessrelationships.com/go/adactio/

"Boardroom" by track5 on iStockPhoto:
http://statelessrelationships.com/go/track5/

Glossary and Definitions

API
An *API*, short for application programming interface, is a set of routines, data structures, classes and protocols that are provided in order to support the building of an application.

Barcamp
A Barcamp is a user-generated conference, held in an open and participatory way that mostly resembles workshop sessions of the last century. Content for sessions is provided by participants and admission is usually free of charge.

Digital Divide
Digital Divide is a term used to describe the gap between people with effective access to digital and information technology and those with very limited or no access at all.

Elance
Elance is a freelance marketplace, allowing companies to find freelance labor for commissioned work.

Facebook
Facebook is a social networking site founded in February 2004, mainly used for personal networking. As of May 2009, it had more than 200 million registered users.

Generation Jones
Generation Jones is a term used to describe the demographic group of people born between 1954 and 1965.

Generation X
Generation X, commonly abbreviated to *Gen X*, is a term used to describe the demographic group of people born after the baby boom ended and prior to the 1980s.

Generation Y
Generation Y, commonly abbreviated to *Gen Y*, is a term used to describe the demographic group of people born between the 1980s and the early 1990s.

Guru
Guru.com is a freelance marketplace, allowing companies to find freelance labor for commissioned work.

Homo Universalis
Homo Universalis refers to a person whose knowledge is not restricted to one subject area. Most ancient scientists, such as Leonardo Da Vinci and Isaan Newton are considered *Homo Universalis* by today's standards.

KILL principle
KILL stands for 'keep it long, laborious' and refers to the way most companies handled advancement on the job in the past. This principle can be applied to a great number of things.

KISS principle
KISS stands for 'keep it simple, stupid' and refers to an ideology that ensures that something is both simple and easily understood. This principle can be applied to a great number of things.

LinkedIn
LinkedIn is a social networking site founded in December 2002, mainly used for professional networking. As of May 2009, it had more than 40 million registered users.

linked in
linked in is an officially accepted term, denoting the status of being connected on LinkedIn.

MySpace
MySpace is a social networking site founded in August 2003, mainly used for professional networking. As of May 2009, it had more than 140 million registered users.

PICNIC
PICNIC is the name of an annual conference, held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The conference primarily caters to innovators and entrepreneurs in the new media scene.

Renaissance Man
see Homo Universalis

retweet
retweeting is an officially accepted term, denoting the reposting of a message on Twitter, either by using the 'RT:' prefix or the 'via' suffix, thereby giving attribution to the original poster(s).

Skulls and Bones society
'Skulls and Bones' is one of the secret societies of Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. The societies alumni include prominent figures such as George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry.

social decision-making
Social decision-making refers to a concept whereas one's (trusted) community is involved in the making of a decision; this is comparable to group voting.

Starbucks
Starbucks is an international coffeehouse chain based in Seattle, Washington, USA and is the largest coffeehouse company in the world.

street cred
refers to the concept of credibility in an urban setting. In this example, street cred refers to the amount of credibility any given user has on the service.

The Next Web
The Next Web is the name of an annual conference, held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The conference primarily caters to innovators and entrepreneurs in the web scene.

top dog
Top dog is a term used to describe the leader of a group. This may refer to a thought leader, an industry leader

Tweep
Tweep, Twitterazi and Twitterer are all officially accepted terms for a person who uses Twitter. Differences are purely based on personal preference.

Twitter
Twitter is a social networking site and micro-blogging service, founded in March 2006, mainly used for sharing personal messages. As of May 2009, it had more than 1 million registered users.

Twitterazi
see *Tweep*

Twitterer
see *Tweep*

United Grand Lodge of England, The
The United Grand Lodge of England is the governing body of Freemasonry in England, Wales and the Channel Islands

Wikinews
Wikinews is a citizen journalism powered news site built on the technology that powers the popular Wikipedia platform.

Wikipedia
Wikipedia is the name of a free, multi-lingual and user-editable online encyclopedia. It is often considered on par with the much older and better-known Encyclopædia Britannica.

This document was written in Microsoft Office for Mac 2008 and typeset in Adobe InDesign CS4.

The DVD case was designed in Adobe InDesign CS4 and Adobe CS4 and utilizes a packaging design from Coudal&Partners Jewelboxing.

The fonts that were used originate from the Myriad Pro and Helvetica Neue families of typefaces.

Project management was done using Subversion, Sofa's Versions and Atlassian's JIRA.

Part of the glossary and definitions section was written by reusing content posted on Encyclopædia Britannica and Wikipedia websites.

The most up-to-date version of the document can always be found on the official companion website at:
http://statelessrelationships.com