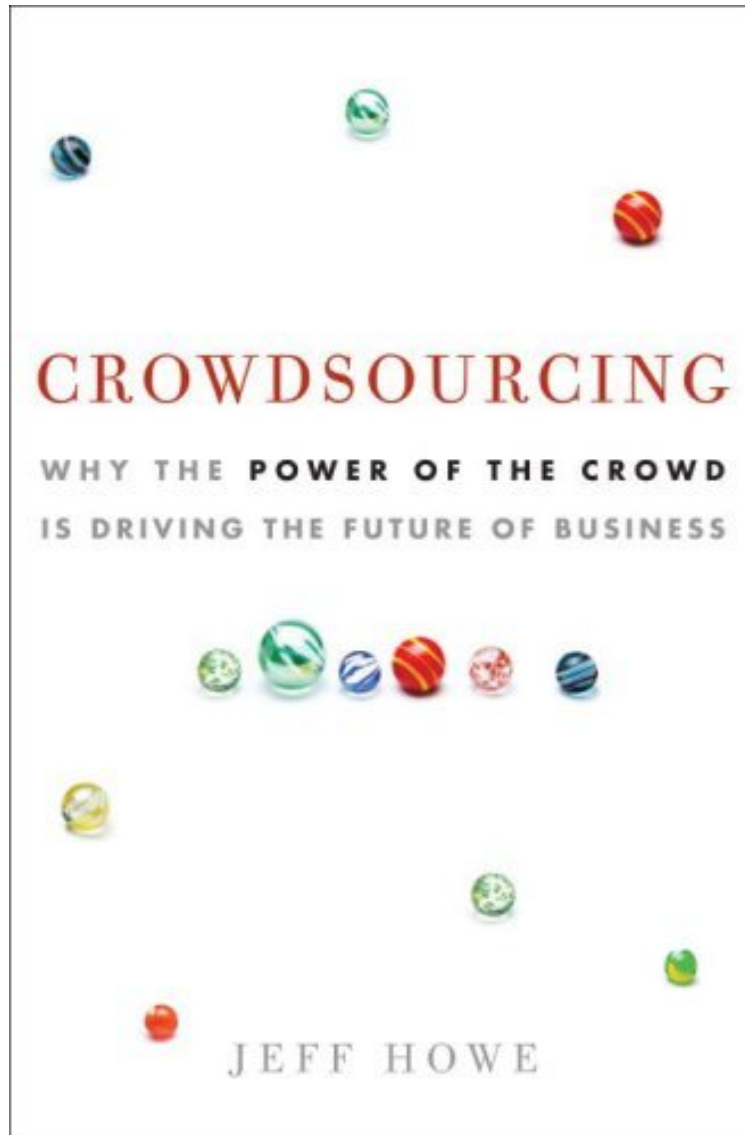


(Free read ebook) Crowdsourcing: Why the Power of the Crowd Is Driving the Future of Business

# Crowdsourcing: Why the Power of the Crowd Is Driving the Future of Business

*Jeff Howe*

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**Jeff Howe : Crowdsourcing: Why the Power of the Crowd Is Driving the Future of Business** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Crowdsourcing: Why the Power of the Crowd Is Driving the Future of Business:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Overall Treatise on the Influence and Power of Crowdsourcing By John Possumato From the positives of crowdsourcing and in its influence on business (the creation of Google with citation information being a key example) to its "dark side" of mob rule and mass mediocrity (the

creation of Google can be used as the same key example), Howe very effectively explores by analysis and representation the phenomena of crowdsourcing as its "hyper fueled" by the World Wide Web. Howe effectively outlines the transformation that crowdsourcing on the Web has created, from business and the means of production, to information distribution, to finance, what factors caused this transformation and where this may lead in the future. Finally, Howe projects the future, when the "digital natives" (those children now coming of age in the Internet era), supplant the "digital immigrants" (the rest of us), and, reminds us of the Pew Internet American Life Project study that determined that, as of 2007, 93% of all American 12 to 17 year olds are regular Internet users, and, of those, 64% are creating content among themselves on the Web, and finally, the majority of those content creators are creating content in crowdsourcing, social network type environments. All and all, this is one of the most worthwhile books on the every expanding, and talked about, topic, and is a "must read" for anyone interested in the emerging crowdsourcing evolution.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Howe's exuberance has some merit but is ultimately a little misguided.

By Jay P "No matter who you are, most of the smartest people work for someone else," quips Bill Joy, a Sun Microsystems co-founder. This declaration was articulated as a paean to the wisdom of crowds, the subject of Jeff Howe's 2008 book, *Crowdsourcing: Why the Power of the Crowd is Driving the Future of Business*. Why limit yourself to a small, expensive subset of the available talent, the argument goes, when a global network of freelancers will gladly do the job better for little or free?

Howe's enthusiasm is very nearly unequivocal. He predicts that today's tech-savvy youth will "help accelerate the obsolescence of such standard corporate fixtures as the management hierarchy and nine-to-five workday," concepts he deems to be "artifacts of an earlier age when information was scarce and all decisions...trickled down from on high." And Howe's praise of the community as exemplified in crowdsourcing is so complete that it borders on subservience: "Yes, communities need a decider," he concedes in his concluding chapter, but while "...you can try to guide the community...ultimately you'll wind up following them." The author's unabashedly optimistic chronicle of the ascendancy of crowdsourcing (a label he created) brings to mind a phrase once made famous by former Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan: "irrational exuberance." Jeff Howe's full-fledged advocacy for the crowd's potential is equally as overreaching as Jaron Lanier's dire warnings on the same topic. In *You Are Not a Gadget*, Lanier writes ominously, "We [have]...entered a persistent somnolence, and I have come to believe that we will only escape it when we kill the hive." Both authors fail to account for some basic rules of human nature. Lanier laments that "when [digital developers] design an internet service that is edited by a vast anonymous crowd, they are suggesting that a random crowd of humans is an organism with a legitimate point of view." To which Howe would undoubtedly respond, Damn right. In fact, he explicitly states that "a central principle animating crowdsourcing is that the groups contain more knowledge than individuals." Howe and Lanier are each right in their own ways. Crowdsourcing does indeed represent an entirely new model of work, one that transcends business and could upend a sizable chunk of existing corporate practices. Many of Lanier's fears, while understandable, are not feasible now or in virtually any other conceivable time horizon. And yet he is right that crowdsourcing will never replace the value of specialization. While Howe correctly lauds the democratization of decision-making -- for example, aspiring filmmakers are no longer beholden to studio executives' every whim -- his populist celebration of online egalitarianism is not bounded by realistically described limitations. "The crowd possesses a wide array of talents," Howe writes, "and some have the kind of scientific talent and expertise that used to exist only in rarefied academic environments." The key word here is "some." Howe notes Sturgeon's Law ("90 percent of everything is crap") and briefly admits that this may present an inaccurate portrayal of reality: "a number of the people I talked to for this book thought that was a lowball estimate." Even for the ten or fewer percent that actually do provide reasonably intelligent contributions to the marketplace of ideas, much will be repetitive or non-cumulative. A thousand people with a hobbyist's interest in chemistry may all eagerly contribute to a forum on noble gases, but it hardly follows that they will achieve any real breakthrough that eludes far more studied experts in the field. Ultimately, it is not so much the anecdotes that undercut Howe's thesis, nor is it his own repetition (which, in one particularly egregious case, consisted of several sentences copied wholesale from an earlier section of the book). Instead, it is his idealism that brings to mind countless earlier predictions of technology's ability to transform human nature, prophecies that have more often than not been proved demonstrably untrue. It remains to be seen what will become of crowdsourcing; will it go the way of the flying cars that American prognosticators naively envisioned over half a century ago? This seems unlikely, and yet so does the author's vision of a crowdsourcing revolution in business. The truth will likely lie somewhere in the middle, lodged comfortably between Jeff Howe's crowd-fueled utopia and Jaron Lanier's "hive mind" hell.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great book, although slightly outdated.

By My wife won't let me pick a name. This book, authored by the man who coined the term "crowdsourcing," was written at a time when online crowdsourcing was still in its infancy. Due to that, he tends to rely heavily on a few stories to make his points. However, despite that, the book is a fascinating read that will contribute enormously to my thesis studies on how businesses should utilize crowdsourcing.

“The amount of knowledge and talent dispersed among the human race has always outstripped our capacity to harness it. Crowdsourcing corrects that—but in doing so, it also unleashes the forces of creative

destruction. From Crowdsourcing First identified by journalist Jeff Howe in a June 2006 Wired article, "crowdsourcing" describes the process by which the power of the many can be leveraged to accomplish feats that were once the province of the specialized few. Howe reveals that the crowd is more than wise; it's talented, creative, and stunningly productive. Crowdsourcing activates the transformative power of today's technology, liberating the latent potential within us all. It's a perfect meritocracy, where age, gender, race, education, and job history no longer matter; the quality of work is all that counts; and every field is open to people of every imaginable background. If you can perform the service, design the product, or solve the problem, you've got the job. But crowdsourcing has also triggered a dramatic shift in the way work is organized, talent is employed, research is conducted, and products are made and marketed. As the crowd comes to supplant traditional forms of labor, pain and disruption are inevitable. Jeff Howe delves into both the positive and negative consequences of this intriguing phenomenon. Through extensive reporting from the front lines of this revolution, he employs a brilliant array of stories to look at the economic, cultural, business, and political implications of crowdsourcing. How were a bunch of part-time dabblers in finance able to help an investment company consistently beat the market? Why does Procter Gamble repeatedly call on enthusiastic amateurs to solve scientific and technical challenges? How can companies as diverse as iStockphoto and Threadless employ just a handful of people, yet generate millions of dollars in revenue every year? The answers lie within these pages. The blueprint for crowdsourcing originated from a handful of computer programmers who showed that a community of like-minded peers could create better products than a corporate behemoth like Microsoft. Jeff Howe tracks the amazing migration of this new model of production, showing the potential of the Internet to create human networks that can divvy up and make quick work of otherwise overwhelming tasks. One of the most intriguing ideas of Crowdsourcing is that the knowledge to solve intractable problems—a cure for cancer, for instance—may already exist within the warp and weave of this infinite and, as yet, largely untapped resource. But first, Howe proposes, we need to banish preconceived notions of how such problems are solved. The very concept of crowdsourcing stands at odds with centuries of practice. Yet, for the digital natives soon to enter the workforce, the technologies and principles behind crowdsourcing are perfectly intuitive. This generation collaborates, shares, remixes, and creates with a fluency and ease the rest of us can hardly understand. Crowdsourcing, just now starting to emerge, will in a short time simply be the way things are done. From the Hardcover edition.

"An informed and enthusiastic guide to the new collaborative creativity."—Times (London)  
"A welcome and well-written corporate playbook for confusing times."—BusinessWeek  
"An engaging mix of business, sociology, organizational theory, and technology writing and fits the mold of Malcolm Gladwell's perennial bestseller, The Tipping Point."—Newsweek  
"While small groups have often been the foundation of great performance—think SWAT teams and Skunk Works—Jeff Howe has made the compelling case for the power of far larger communities of interest. He shows in Crowdsourcing—with rich illustrations from Google and InnoCentive to Threadless and Wikipedi—that the right community with the right incentives can often invent, write, and run research and business initiatives more effectively and less expensively than traditional enterprise."—Michael Useem, professor of management and director of the Leadership Center at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, and author of The Go Point: When It's Time to Decide and The Leadership Moment  
"Beyond the wisdom of crowds is the work of crowds, a powerful and transformative source of creativity and an economic engine that defies traditional rules. Jeff Howe's guide to crowdsourcing—to use his perfect coinage—is insightful, fun, and indispensable to those who want to understand, or participate in, this amazing phenomenon."—Steven Levy, author of Hackers and The Perfect Thing  
"Jeff Howe has captured a complex and vital change in the business landscape: in the next few years, your customers could become your collaborators, or your competitors. His ability to weave story and strategy together makes Crowdsourcing a readable and indispensable guide to this new world...."  
About the Author  
JEFF HOWE is a contributing editor at Wired magazine, where he covers the entertainment industry among other subjects. Before coming to Wired he was a senior editor at Inside.com and a writer at the Village Voice. In his fifteen years as a journalist, he has traveled around the world working on stories ranging from the impending water crisis in Central Asia to the implications of gene patenting. He has also written for U.S. News World Report, Time magazine, the Washington Post, Mother Jones, and numerous other publications. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife and children.  
From AudioFile  
The challenge with an audiobook based on a newly coined word is that after about five hours the reader gets the point—and there's still another five hours to go. In this case, WIRED reporter Jeff Howe has coined the term "crowdsourcing"—when a company takes a task previously done by employees and outsources it in the form of an open call to a large, undefined group of people. (Think Wikipedia and iStockphoto.) Explaining the concept works fine in print as the reader can skip about, and it works even better in Howe's crowdsourcing blog, but it doesn't seem to gel in audio. Considering that Howe speaks publicly—frequently and quite convincingly—on the subject, the audiobook might have been better served by his narration rather than Kirby Heyborne's meticulous and careful delivery. R.W.S. copy; AudioFile 2009,

Portland, Maine