

GROWN UP DIGITAL – HOW THE NET GENERATION IS CHANGING YOUR WORLD

Don Tapscott

Reviewed by Ken A. Baker

Grown up Digital (Tapscott, 2009) describes the net generation from three points of view; who they are, what they are doing to the institutions of society, and society itself. This book came about out of Don Tapscott's \$4 million research project funded by large companies.

Who are the net generation? They are those born from January 1977 to December 1997. They are the "kids" who are digitally savvy and utilize different devices to assist in their communication with the world. They utilize technology in a different way than any generation before them, and the result is that it is changing the way society interacts with these individuals.

A good example of the net generations perspective is the way they utilize TV. For Baby Boomers (1946-1964) the TV was the main method of mass communication. It was a major entertainment medium as well. The Net Generation utilizes TV as muzak, or background noise. A good example of this is when my stepson would come over to the house. We would have the TV on so all of us could watch a show. He would hook up the computer, fire it up, and be playing a multi-player game, and be texting his friends, all the while watching the show. This kind of digital connectivity allows personal contact and impersonal contact on a scale that the baby boomers never were exposed to.

This has implications for several of society's main institutions; education, work, consumers, and family. The net generation utilizes and interacts with each of these differently than the previous generations before them.

In 2007 a video was uploaded to You Tube called "a Vision of Students Today". It panned a typical undergraduate classroom and they hold up placards with statements on them. They go like this:

My class size is 115.

Eighteen percent of my teachers know my name.

I complete 49 percent of the readings assigned to me.

I buy \$100 textbooks I never open.

I will read eight books this year, 2,300 web pages, and 1,281 Facebook profiles.

I will write 42 pages for class this semester and over 500 pages of emails.

When I graduate, I probably will have a job that doesn't exist today.

An eye-opening indictment of what the net generation thinks about the institution of education. This generation doesn't want information for information's sake. They want what can be useful to them. Thus a teacher must make the material relevant, and engaging. Plus the teacher needs to utilize the world they perceive, meaning the net, in how they deliver the educational material.

The last part of the book has to do with how the net generation is reacting in the political arena, and the environmental arena. It was obvious that the net generation had a significant impact to the Obama campaign, and how they reacted to the campaign tuning into their way of thinking and interacting. His web site, tweets and the like connected with this generation much more than the McCain camp did. The net generation cares about the environment and work on both a personal and societal level to achieve an environmentally friendly environment.

Don closes the book with a chapter on the future and answers some of the positive and negative questions brought about in the preface of the book.

A fascinating read for anyone wanting to know more about this generation of society and how they are changing the world.

Tapscott, D. (2009). *Grown up digital : how the net generation is changing your world*. New York: McGraw-Hill.