

HERE COMES EVERYBODY

By CLAY SHIRKY

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Reviewed by Chris Hermenitt

Social networking has unleashed a power that is changing the world. Words like the “Arab Spring” and pictures of cellphones documenting crowds fighting dictators and their armies have entered our collective memory. In *Here Comes Everybody*, Clay Shirky makes the persuasive case for the significant social and business revolution that has been set into motion by the growth of new social networking tools. Groups and individuals are now empowered in ways unthinkable even ten years ago. In example after example, he convinces the reader that the power of social networking now gives everybody unprecedented opportunities to influence people and organizations. He also demonstrates that this new world has its own rules, potential and dangers. So how are we to manage this new freedom and what will be the implications for our organizations and their leaders?

Managers know that managing the activities of a group is costly and accelerates dramatically as a group grows larger. This creates a dilemma few businesses know how to deal with. To keep this cost of activities manageable, organizations tend to limit input from group members. In the process, many voices needed for continuous improvement and innovation go unheard. Shirky argues that the new social networking tools have created new possibilities to overcome the limitations of traditional organizations. They increase input and cooperation while reducing the cost of managing activities, and of failure, to almost zero. This has given rise to new forms of organization and products, such as

the open source software movement. To make this model work, Shirky says, you need promise, tool, and bargain: a promise of the value of the activity that attracts participants, a technology tool that allows a group to share information and coordinate the activities of its members, and a bargain that specifies the way the group works together and manages its activities.

Shirky's proposal is no longer utopian. Given the new social networking tools, the possibilities are almost limitless. This book may be a wake-up call for those who are still wondering if the Facebook revolution will go away or if it is here to stay. If you are in that category, Shirky's book will greatly help you face the many new expectations created by the proliferation of social networking tools and understand their potential for your own organization.