

TOP TEN CONCERNS > BOARD POLITICS > INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

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Five things Don Tapscott has learned about collaboration

Jarina D'Auria

Wikinomics author and consultant Don Tapscott believes that transparency is power and that the benefits of collaboration outweigh its drawbacks, Jarina D'Auria shares his learnings.

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1. Business is under the microscope today. With limitless information available and accessible on web, companies tend to be scrutinised like never before. In a world of instant communications, whistle-blowers, inquisitive media and Googling, citizens and communities are able to routinely put firms under the microscope. With this technology, customers can evaluate the worth of products and services at levels never explored before. In a way, companies have become bare for all to see. To collaborate effectively, companies and business partners have to share intimate knowledge with one another. Corporations are becoming naked. And if you're going to be naked, you'd better be buff!

2. Transparency is a new form of power. Rather than representing something to be feared, as was the case in the past, transparency is becoming central to business success. Corporations that reveal more about their business and policies win the customer and boast better performance. For this reason smart firms are choosing to be open. You could say they 'undress for success'.

3. The benefits of mass collaboration are boundless. It's hard to think of a service or product that couldn't benefit from collaboration. Yet the music industry continues to oppose collaborative efforts. And while it has been clear for years now that this is the right way to go, C-level executives remain adamant- despite evidence to the contrary- that the drawback's of collaboration's outweigh the benefits.

4. Practice what you preach. Tappscott tries to get as much firsthand knowledge before sitting down to write, and so when writing Wikinomics for example, he used online discussion forums to brainstorm ideas and seek suggestions. The book's subtitle How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything was derived from soliciting suggestions from the public. And to write the sequel to his 1998 book, Growing Up Digital called Grown Grown Up Digital Tappscott once again makes use of online discussion groups such as Facebook and other networks to brainstorm ideas. The company is run by wiki and the occurrence of an actual management meeting in the past months is non-existent.

5. Thinking forward pays off. Tappscott first began to think seriously of networking and the profound impact it would have on society, when carrying out his work on the Office of the future at Bell Northern Research in the 1970s. While his research started within the confines of the corporate context, it didn't take long for him to see that networking would extend beyond corporate boundaries. It was then that he realised that some form of "information superhighway" would precipitate major changes. At the time however, the belief that professionals and managers would never learn to use a keyboard, was widely popular.