



Information and Value

Access to information was the first gift of the Internet. And the struggle between information creators and information users on value and compensation began. Content control will determine the existence or extinction of business models in the future. Professionals will be the most affected.

Trends

The impact of technology on information access continues. Every new device, program, or application shifts the value and thus the reward to info-creators from info-users. We already see the destructive nature of now free information on the once powerful industries of publishing, journalism, travel, movies, and music. (Note the extension of digital information to sounds and images.)

You have heard the cliché, “Information seeks to be free.” That is only part of the original quote that actually defined a dual nature by Stewart Brand at the first Hackers' Conference in 1984.

"Information wants to be free. Information also wants to be expensive. Information wants to be free because it has become so cheap to distribute, copy and recombine - too cheap to meter. It wants to be expensive because it can be immeasurably valuable to the recipient. That tension will not go away. It leads to endless, wrenching debate about price, copyright, intellectual property, the moral rightness of casual distribution, because each round of new devices makes the tension worse, not better."

Future Impact:

Professionals have historically used information control as business leverage. Customers will assume control empowered by the most advanced technology tools for information access, distribution and manipulation in history. The view of any category of information by the consumer as a commodity (“cheap”) or value (“expensive”) will determine the survival of a profession or business. Professionals that flourish will transform information control to knowledge experience. Then clients become partners in the pursuit of solutions, not customers seeking information.

[Note: Personal Power is one of 10 areas with greatest future impact that I track in the “Way of Tomorrow” series.]

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