



Grown Up Digital

How the Net Generation Is Changing Your World

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Chances are you know a someone between the ages of 11 and 30. You've seen them doing five things at once: texting friends, downloading music, uploading videos, watching a movie on a two-inch screen and doing who knows what on Facebook or MySpace. They're the first generation to have literally grown up digital — and they're part of a global cultural phenomenon that's here to stay.

The bottom line is this: If you understand the Net Generation, you will understand the future.

If you're a baby boomer or Gen Xer: This is your field guide.

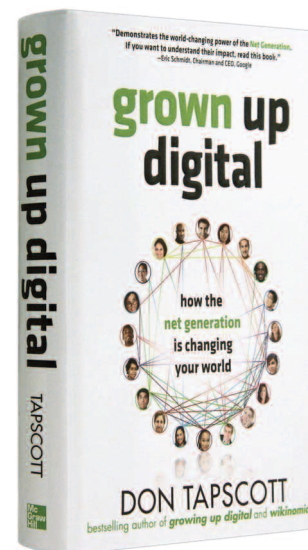
A fascinating inside look at the Net Generation, *Grown Up Digital* is the product of a \$4 million private research study. Author Don Tapscott has surveyed more than 11,000 young people. Instead of a bunch of spoiled "screenagers" with short attention spans and zero social skills, he discovered a remarkably bright community that has developed revolutionary new ways of thinking, interacting, working and socializing.

The Net Generation is changing every aspect of our society — from the workplace to the marketplace, from the classroom to the living room, from the voting booth to the Oval Office.

The Digital Age is here. The Net Generation has arrived. Meet the future.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How the brain of the Net Generation processes information.
- Seven ways to rethink your marketing plan.
- Eight distinctive attitudinal and behavioral characteristics that differentiate the Net Generation from previous generations.
- How young people and the Internet are transforming democracy.



by Don Tapscott

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: GROWN UP DIGITAL

by Don Tapscott

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Part One: Meet the Net Gen

Introduction

The Net Generation *has* arrived.

As the first global generation ever, Net Geners are smarter, quicker and more tolerant of diversity than their predecessors. They care strongly about justice and the problems faced by their society, and are typically engaged in some kind of civic activity at school, at work or in their communities. This generation is engaging politically and sees democracy and government as key tools for improving the world.

With their reflexes tuned to speed and freedom, these empowered young people are beginning to transform every institution of modern life. From the workplace to the marketplace, from politics to education to the basic unit of any society, the family, they are replacing a culture of control with a culture of enablement.

Eight characteristics, or norms, describe the typical Net Gener and differentiate this generation from their baby-boomer parents. They prize freedom and freedom of choice. They want to customize things, make them their own. They're natural collaborators who enjoy a conversation, not a lecture. They'll scrutinize you and your organization. They insist on integrity. They want to have fun, even at work and at school. Speed is normal. Innovation is part of life.

Learn From Them and Act

For the first time, the next generation coming of age can teach us how to ready our world for the future. The digital tools of their childhood and youth are more powerful than what exists in much of corporate America. If we listen to them and engage them,

their culture of interaction, collaboration and enablement will drive economic and social development and prepare this shrinking planet for a more secure, fair and prosperous future.

Learn from them and you will see the new culture of high-performance work, the 21st-century school and college, the innovative corporation, a more open family, a democracy where citizens are engaged, and perhaps even the new, networked society. ●

The Net Generation Comes of Age

The Net Generation is a distinct generation. It is made up of the children of the post-World War II generation, called the baby boomers in the United States. The baby-boom "echo" generation, is the biggest generation in the United States. Around the world there has been an even greater demographic explosion, with 81 million members.

Technology Is Like the Air

While Net Gen children assimilated technology because they grew up with it, adults have had to accommodate it — a different and much more difficult type of learning process. With assimilation, kids came to view technology as just another part of their environment, and they soaked it up along with everything else. For many kids, using the new technology is as natural as breathing. As Andy Putschoegl is quoted as saying, "I was born using an Apple computer."

This generation is different from its parents in eight ways. These differentiating characteristics are referred to here as the Net Generation Norms. Each norm is a cluster of attitudes and behaviors that define the generation. These norms are central to understanding how this generation is changing work, markets, learning, the family and society.



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- They want *freedom* in everything they do, from freedom of choice to freedom of expression.
- They love to *customize* and *personalize*.
- They are the new *scrutinizers*.
- They look for *corporate integrity* and *openness* when deciding what to buy and where to work.
- The Net Gen wants *entertainment* and *play* in their work, education and social life.
- They are the *collaboration* and *relationship* generation.
- The Net Gen has a need for *speed* — and not just in video games.
- They are the *innovators*.

Creating the Future

As talent, the Net Generation is already transforming the workforce. The biggest generation ever is flooding into a talent vortex being created by the expansion of the global economy, the mobility of labor, and the fastest and biggest generational retirement ever. They are bringing new approaches to collaboration, knowledge sharing and innovation in business and governments around the world. There is strong evidence that the organizations that embrace these new ways of working experience better performance, growth and success. ●

A Generation Bathed in Bits

The Net Generation is driving the democratization of content creation as young people generate online photos, music and copy, from movie reviews to commentaries on everything from products to politicians. This is leading to a power shift from authorities to ordinary individuals. People can participate in the economy in ways that were previously unthinkable — creating television news clips that rival those seen on TV currently, writing an encyclopedia like Wikipedia or selling goods in e-markets like Craigslist. As knowledge expands, power is becoming more widely distributed as well.

The Net Generation treats technology differently than their parents do. While TV was the signature medium of the boomer generation, the Net Generation doesn't just watch TV; they listen to it while they're chatting with friends and navigating the Web.

Communication, Collaboration and Creation

They're transforming the Internet into a place where people can communicate, collaborate and create together, and soon you will be able to access it all from the palm

Three Guidelines for a Sharper Mind

Here are three ways to sharpen your brain:

1. Work on your wiring. Play a new instrument, learn a second language or pick up a taxi route.
2. Work on your wiring the Net Gen way. Get fluent with the technology by immersing yourself. Try speed text messaging on your mobile phone (not while driving, of course), using Instant Messaging and MySpace at the same time, or playing action video games.
3. Multitask wisely. Don't answer every e-mail instantly; check it in chunks, ideally a few hours apart.

of your hand. The social networking sites could be the new grid for the Internet. It could have a significant impact on everything the Net Generation touches, from games to music to global civic action. The Net Geners are just starting to use the tremendous power of this digital tool, and they have the power to realize the dream that many boomers had: to give power to the people. ●

The Eight Net Gen Norms

These kids are very different than their baby-boomer parents. These differences can be referred to as “norms” — distinctive attitudinal and behavioral characteristics that differentiate this generation from their baby-boomer parents and other generations. These norms were tested in an nGenera survey of 6,000 Net Geners around the world. The list stood up pretty well.

The eight norms are rooted in the different experience of today's youth — especially with regard to their media diet. They have grown up being the actors, initiators, creators, players and collaborators. It has made them who they are — young people who are different in many ways than their parents and grandparents were at their ages. The Internet has been good for this generation. And these *Grown Up Digital* kids will be good for us.

Characteristics of a Generation

The eight norms are:

1. **Freedom.** Research suggests that Net Geners expect to choose where and when they work; they use technology to escape traditional office space and hours; and they integrate their home and social lives with work life. More than half of the Net Geners surveyed online

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in North America say that they want to be able to work in places other than an office. This is particularly true of white- and some gray-collar workers.

2. Customization. Net Geners get something and customize it to make it theirs. This is the generation that has grown up with personalized mobile phones, TiVo, Slingbox and podcasts. They've grown up getting what they want, when they want it and where, and they make it fit their personal needs and desires.

3. Scrutiny. Given the large number of information sources on the Web — not to mention unreliable information — today's youth have the ability to distinguish between fact and fiction.

4. Integrity. The stereotype that this generation doesn't give a damn is not supported by the facts. Net Geners care about integrity — being honest, considerate, transparent and abiding by their commitments. This is also a generation with profound tolerance.

5. Collaboration. Net Geners collaborate online in chat groups, play multiuser video games, and use e-mail and share files for school, work or just for fun. They bring a culture of collaboration with them to work and the marketplace and are comfortable using new online tools to communicate.

6. Entertainment. Net Geners believe in enjoying what they do for a living. They expect their work to be intrinsically satisfying. Net Geners become bored easily, so playing with their tech devices keeps them interested.

7. Speed. They're used to instant responses, 24/7. Video games give them instant feedback; Google answers their inquiries within nanoseconds. So they assume that everyone else in their world will respond quickly too.

8. Innovation. The Net Geners live to stay current, whether it's with their cell phones, iPods or game consoles. The latest product makes their friends envious and contributes to their social status and positive self-images. ●

The Net Generation Brain

Many of the Net Geners are using technology to become smarter than their parents ever could be. Growing up digital has equipped these Net Geners with the mental skills, such as scanning and quick mental switching, that they'll need to deal with today's overflow of information. They know when they have to focus, just as the most intelligent members of earlier generations did. They may think and process information in a different way than most boomers do, but that doesn't stop them from coming up with brilliant insights or new

models of doing business and winning an election.

Yet the picture is a lot more complex. The evidence suggests that the top students are reading more and performing spectacularly well in school. The bottom ones are failing and falling behind — for reasons that have little to do with the Internet and more to do with a failing education system, and problems with the family, poverty and other social causes.

They would be doing better if the education system changed to embrace the way they learn, think and process information.

If Net Geners are given the tools to handle the overflow of information available today on the Internet — as some Net Geners already are — they have the potential to be the smartest generation ever. Some are already entering adulthood with the intellectual skills to handle the demands of and opportunities provided by the Internet. ●

Part Two: Transforming Institutions

Nearly nine in 10 school districts that had ubiquitous computing environments reported a positive impact on academics.

One of the most dramatic changes occurred in Cowansville, a small city in the Eastern Townships, Quebec, a few miles north of the Vermont-Canada border. After the school board gave laptops to each kid from grade 3 to grade 6, the percentage of students reading or writing at a competent level for their age went up 12 percent! Absenteeism went down 26 percent and behavioral incidents dropped 34 percent.

The 2.0 School

Judging from the studies, computers can't live up to their potential as an educational tool if they are deployed in the old-fashioned education system that relied on teachers to deliver content.

Some 2.0 schools — the kinds of schools that have embraced the eight Net Gen norms — have emerged as startups, like Greenwood College School in Toronto. It began in 2002 with a big donation from Richard Wernham, a successful lawyer who had just cashed out on a profitable mutual-fund business.

From the outset, Greenwood was a 2.0 school in every sense. Students with a wide variety of learning skills are carefully evaluated before school begins, so each child gets an education that suits his or her learning style and interests. For example, students are given tests based on their learning style, so some get conventional tests or oral ones, while others are assigned artistic projects. Every

student has a laptop, and in class the teachers work with smart boards — big screens that function like interactive Web sites. The teachers can send whatever they put up on the smart board to the students' laptops so they won't miss anything. ●

The Net Generation in the Workforce

In the United States alone, there will be a shortfall of 10 million workers by the year 2010. In the next 10 years, the demand for more than 30 million U.S. college-educated workers will greatly exceed the 23 million new college graduates that are expected. A labor crunch at senior levels is imminent. America's 500 biggest companies will see half of their senior managers retire in the next few years, which leaves a lot of companies scrambling to figure out how they can accelerate the growth of Net Geners who have just entered the professional world. Ronald Logue, chief executive officer of State Street Corp., put it this way: "A central issue for our success is how fast can we get these digitalized kids into management."

New Models of High-Performance Work

Business, in other words, needs the Net Generation — in more ways than one. The Net Generation "is the foundation for the next three decades of employment and leadership," according to Randall Hansen, founder of Quintessential Careers, one of the oldest and most comprehensive career development sites on the Web. Yes, they are "the most pampered and indulged generation," he notes. But "this generation is also the most tech-savvy and wired (or perhaps wirelessly connected) cohort. Their views of life and work are different from any others' — and if employers want to recruit and retain these people, strategies and policies and procedures will have to change."

In the war for talent, employers are going to have to understand the key Net Gen norms if they want to hire them, and keep them.

- **Freedom.** Net Geners want the freedom to work when and where they want, the freedom to enjoy work and family life, and the freedom to try new jobs.
- **Customization.** Net Geners have grown up customizing everything — from their iPods to their ring tones — and as they start working they want employers to manage them as individuals, not as a big group.
- **Scrutiny.** Sixty percent of Net Geners check out a company before accepting a job offer.

- **Integrity.** When scrutiny increases, corporate integrity is essential.

- **Collaboration.** Collaboration is how Net Geners get things done.

- **Entertainment.** Two out of three Net Geners feel that "working and having fun can and should be the same thing."

- **Speed.** Net Geners become frustrated quickly if they have to wait for managers or deal with a mountain of red tape. They want to move up quickly too.

- **Innovation.** Three out of four Net Geners would like to find new ways of accomplishing their jobs.

Manifesto for Change

The Net Generation's eight norms provide a manifesto for change that will revolutionize the workplace of tomorrow. These norms will also provide competitive advantage to companies that embrace these norms today. Managing talent today is about creating new opportunities, enhancing competitiveness, reducing costs and increasing profits and success. The sheer numbers of the Net Generation, both from North America and nations with rising economies, offer an unprecedented bounty of talent. This wave of young workers will not only work for tomorrow's global corporations, but will increasingly shape and direct the most successful corporations, wherever their nominal headquarters might be. ●

The Net Generation as Consumers

Today, social networks, driven largely by youth, are the key arena where young people talk to each other, meet new friends and keep up with acquaintances. These social networks are not just networks like Facebook or MySpace, but also include the myriad places on the Web where people can meet and share information. They constantly swap views on movies, music, clothes and dozens of other topics in these networks. When they think about what to buy, Net Geners go to online social networks to see what their friends are buying — 32 percent of teens say they "buy things my friends have." When they lack experience with a problem, 29 percent ask their friends for advice.

Kids are influencing their friends as never before. These communication networks and the relationships they foster can be referred to as "N-Fluence networks." For the Net Generation, this is where influence really lies, in these networks of friends and acquaintances.

The Net Geners use communications networks that are orders of magnitude larger, far more complex and

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much more efficient than those that were possible when their parents were young.

Types of N-Fluence Networks

Just as not all N-Fluencers have equal value, not all networks are equally valuable either. There are three different categories of N-Fluence networks. Each one functions differently, although there's plenty of overlap. A message between best friends or acquaintances can go viral quickly and spread over the world.

- **Best Friends.** Best friends are the small group of people the user knows well (on MySpace this would include your "Top 8," for instance). Despite a preference for face-to-face contact, new channels, such as cell phones, instant messaging and text messaging, provide more consistent access to peers and introduce stronger interpersonal dynamics into these relationships.

- **My Social Network.** A social network could be a group of 100 or so traditional acquaintances plus the much larger technology-enabled extended social network that may include hundreds or even thousands of "friends."

- **The World.** The "world" is the larger collective of people who the user does not know personally but with whom he or she is in contact through the network. When today's youth broadcast their opinions to friends and family on public blogs, or on sites such as Amazon, eBay, Epinions, MySpace or YouTube, they also influence the world around them.

Seven Guidelines for Marketing Professionals

Here are seven rules to guide your marketing plan:

1. **Don't focus on your customers — engage them.** Turn them into "prosumers" — consumers who become producers of your goods and services.

2. **Don't create products and services — create consumer experiences.** Add value to your offerings to make them richer experiences and use the Web to help deliver your new values.

3. **Radically reduce advertising in broadcast media.** Shift your marketing communications spending to digital media.

4. **Develop a strategy to plug into N-Fluence networks.** "Word of mouth" is the key.

5. **Rethink your brand.** The brand is no longer just a promise, image or badge — for many companies it should become a relationship.

6. **Bake integrity into your corporate DNA and marketing campaigns.** Honesty, consideration, accountability and transparency are the foundation of trust for this generation.

7. **Move the Net Generation into the center of your marketing campaigns.** The Four Ps — product, place, price and promotion — are an inadequate framework to deal with the consumer of the future. Replace them with the ABCDE of marketing: anyplace, brand, communication, discovery and experience. ●

The Net Generation and the Family

The Net Generation has challenged the old family setup — with father as CEO and mother as chief operating officer — on many fronts. The old hierarchy has given way to a new kind of family democracy, in which Net Geners have a voice in family affairs.

The family dinner is making a comeback now that Net Geners are becoming parents. This may be the manifestation of the open family in action. This is where they'll talk about what their children find on the Internet. They'll discuss it openly rather than installing blocking devices that they — as Net Geners — know are bogus and easy to avoid. They won't try to spy on their kids; they value freedom too highly. So instead, they'll collaborate over dinner, and the father (or mother) will not necessarily be at the head of the table. The family dinner will be the signature of the Net Generation.

The Open Family

Net Gen parents will collaborate with their children in creating an interactive, open family that lives according to a different model of authority — one that disregards conventional family hierarchies and roles and is topical, situational and fluid. Net Geners are quick to recognize that the best way to achieve power and control is *through* people, not *over* people.

Here are four parenting guidelines from the kids who have grown up digital:

1. **Have a family vision.** Create an open family based on multidirectional communication, mutual trust and respect for a fluid notion of authority.

2. **Interact.** Get involved beyond the daily lives of your family; prioritize spending quality time with one another.

3. **Customize your parenting.** Differentiate the environment and the opportunities available to address individual children's needs.

4. **Consciously design your family to balance work and personal lives.** Recognize the trade-offs you are willing to make and attack them one by one. ●

Part Three: Transforming Society

The Net Generation and Democracy

Net Geners care about their communities. They are volunteering in record numbers to tackle some of the world's most difficult problems, such as poverty and global warming. Their civic engagement shot up after the horrific attack on the World Trade Center in 2001, and it has stayed up in the years afterward, unlike that of other age groups. Yet, while they volunteered in huge numbers after 9/11, they have steered clear of formal politics. Fewer than half of 18- to 24-year-olds voted in the 2004 presidential election — a figure far below the 64 percent of voting-age citizens who went to the polls.

They don't support the libertarian view that governments should just get out of the way and let markets rule. Nearly two-thirds of youth ages 15 to 25 believe strongly that government should do more to solve problems, according to a 2006 Civic and Political Health of the Nation survey conducted by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE).

Power to Change the Country

Several polls show that a huge majority of Net Geners feel that they have the power to change their country. Eighty-four percent of 18- to 26-year-olds said that it seemed that the gap between rich and poor had grown in the past 20 years, and a remarkable 94 percent thought this growing gap was a bad thing. These figures are higher than those for older generations. In a Magid Associates 2006 survey for the New Politics Institute, young adults were more likely than any other age group to favor governmental action to reduce economic differences among Americans.

The Net Gen norms have enormous implications for government leaders. Youth want governments that are customizable, fast and innovative. They want choice and the opportunity to collaborate. They will scrutinize candidates and elected officials like never before. Above all, to win their trust, politicians must behave with integrity.

Building Trust With a New Generation

To win the trust of Net Geners, governments have to be transparent. At a minimum, policymakers should publicize their overall goals and objectives and, for specific issues and decisions, the documents they relied on, the names of the participants in the decision-making process and their underlying rationales and criteria, and

they should provide reasons why alternative policy options have not been pursued. True transparency must make the processes, underlying assumptions and political presuppositions (including supporting research) of policy explicit and subject to criticism.

Adopting transparency as a core value and actively encouraging and fostering its application by making information readily available will be critical in establishing trusting, long-term relationships with the generation that will dominate politics in the 21st century. ●

Making the World a Better Place

Activists are tapping into the same characteristics that describe the Net Generation, especially the following:

- **Freedom.** The Internet obviously opens up a world of possibilities both for young activists looking for a bigger audience and for young people considering which cause or causes to back. On TakingItGlobal, for example, activists can choose from 75 causes or issues being discussed and more than 10,000 nonprofit organizations. They can think about attending any one of the 10,000 events worldwide or read one of more than 250,000 blog posts.

- **Customization.** Maybe they want to be digital activists, helping out by hunting for information or spreading the word through social networks. Or maybe they want to give something up — like plastic bags. Or maybe they want to organize something or volunteer in a part of the offline world that they care deeply about. Today's top activists give Net Gen volunteers a choice.

- **Scrutiny.** Young people are watching companies' behavior. More than half of young people say they rewarded or punished companies based on their perceived social performance, according to a 2002 survey by the World Bank Institute of more than 2,000 people whose ages ranged from 15 to 30.

- **Integrity.** Honesty, transparency and authenticity are crucial if you want to get through to Net Geners.

- **Collaboration.** MTV's campaign for Darfur wouldn't have happened without the help of college students. The spark came from a senior at Georgetown with a modest proposal to give up a luxury for a day and give the money to an organization working in Darfur. The fire spread when digital activists targeted the companies that are alleged to be indirectly financing the massacre. And it turned into wildfire when an innovative Californian activist created an addictive game that made regular kids walk in the shoes of a Darfur teenager.

- **Entertainment.** You've got to be fun to engage kids these days.
- **Speed.** Activists are operating at speeds we've never seen before. They can reach millions of people in minutes.
- **Innovation.** Instead of knocking on doors to ask people to sign a petition, activists reach millions of people online in an instant.

The instant access to global information has made kids not only more knowledgeable about the big issues, but more sophisticated in their attack. They know they have this power, and they're using it. ●

In Defense of the Future

We need to remember that in this world, there appears to be more good than bad.

As we enter the new age, the future won't just happen. It will be created — and primarily by Net Geners. Whether they become entrepreneurs, raise money for mental health research, change their communities, organize youth around the world, build networks to stop global warming, fight genocide in Darfur or join political campaigns like millions of American Net Geners did in 2008, they are becoming an unprecedented force for change.

Through their massive demographic muscle and unconstrained minds, they are creating a new world. Unlike the tepid, sterilized, one-way conduit of the mass media, the place they are constructing gives any idea, no matter how threatening to the contemporary order, a voice. They are using the Web and their social networks to discover and collaborate. For better or for worse, the biggest generation in American history is beginning to use its media to discover, debate and take action.

Shattering the Old Ways

The second half of the 20th century was dominated by a generation — the baby boomers. During that period, strong models of mass media, the enterprise, work, commerce, family, play and social life were established. The new Web and the new generation are beginning to shatter these old ways — and our evidence points to a better world if we permit them to succeed. This massive wave of youth has rights, growing aspirations, truly awesome capabilities and nascent demands that are far-reaching.

This generation will change the world. They are already bringing and implementing radical views regarding the way business should be conducted and

Three Tips for Managers

As the Net Generation comes into the workforce, they are changing the way we think about talent and work. Here are three tips for managers:

1. Design work systems according to the eight norms. Look to the Net Generation culture and behavior as the new culture of work and the new enterprise.
2. Rethink authority. Be a good leader, but understand that in some areas you will be the student and the Net Gen employee will be the teacher.
3. Rethink recruiting; initiate relationships. Use social networks based on trust to influence young people about your company.

about the process of democratic governance. They are a generation that can learn together, as a unified generation, unlike any other. They are seeking to protect the planet and they find racism, sexism and other vile remnants of bygone days to be both weird and unacceptable. They will seek to share in the wealth they create. They will want power in every domain of economic and political life.

The big remaining question for older generations is whether that power will be shared with gratitude — or whether we will stall until a new generation grabs it from us. Will we have the wisdom and courage to accept them, their culture and their media? Will we be effective in offering our experience to help them manage the dark side? Will we grant them the opportunities to fulfill their destinies? This will be a better world if we do. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Grown Up Digital*, you'll also like:

1. ***Personality Not Included* by Rohit Bhargava.** In this era of social media, Bhargava details the theory of personality and explains how to put it into action effectively.
2. ***Citizen Marketers* by Ben McConnell and Jackie Huba.** This book documents the phenomenon of enthusiasts and evangelists as marketers.
3. ***Mass Affluence* by Paul Nunes and Brian Johnson.** The authors explain how to capitalize on the returning movement of mass marketing.