

trends 2008

The Creative Group Internet Trend Forecast

What online trends are shaping the creative profession? To get a snapshot of the shifts taking place and how those in the creative profession can best prepare for them, we tapped the expertise of our friends at The Webby Awards. The information in this report is compiled by David-Michel Davies, executive director of The Webbys and the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences, a 550-member organization dedicated to creative, technical and professional progress of the Internet and evolving forms of interactive media.

Davies interviewed the industry's elite to get their perspectives on how the Internet is evolving, and we're pleased to share this information with you. We hope you find it helpful and invite you to contact The Creative Group at creativegroup.com or **1.888.846.1668** for help with any of your staffing or employment needs.



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An interview with **Nicolas Roope**,
Creative Partner, Poke London

pokelondon.com

The release of the iPhone in 2007 marked the first rumblings of a tectonic shift in mobile technology. Suddenly, the cell phone claimed great swaths of territory that was formerly dominated by computers – e-mail, the Web, music. The tremors will continue with the release of Google’s long-awaited Android, the first open source mobile operating system, which will spur the evolution of ordinary handholds into even smarter devices.

Q: What new capabilities do you see mobile devices having? In essence, as devices get smarter, what will they be able to do for us?

They’ll become a remote control for your life.

Q: How can companies prepare for more people accessing information using mobile technology?

First of all, companies should conceptually grasp the opportunities for their business, specifically. Too many companies buy into applications that have no relevance to them or their customers. If there’s a link in the chain where mobile can play a really useful role, then great; if not, don’t bother. Only then should the technology, platform and partner questions be asked.

Q: What are the opportunities you see for creative professionals to capitalize on this trend?

Creative people can bring new ideas to the table. The big problem with mobile, as I see it, is that most of the killer applications haven’t been born yet. Creative people will not only provide new compelling content but also new reasons to interact. When businesses grasp this properly and understand how to weave creativity into their research and development process, good “idea” people will be very much in demand.

Q: How do you think Android will change the mobile phone industry?

Android may finally provide the developer and idea communities with a set of standards that will allow for much deeper and more rapid innovation that will, in turn, whip the market into a frenzy. It will rewrite the operator's rules for application support and platform openness, and finally force them out of their very conservative tendencies.

Site to check out for more information:

moconews.net



An interview with **Beth Porter**,
Author, *The Net Effect*

portermedia.co.uk/portermedia

The Internet flourished thanks to open standards, and now companies like Google and Verizon are embracing this model in everything from social networks to cell phones. Watch for new web applications that allow users of different social networks to easily move photos, music and videos from one to the other. In the wireless world, Verizon and others promise to open their networks to all devices and applications by the end of 2008.

Q: Can people expect major change in the coming year because of open sourcing, or do you think it will happen gradually?

I believe open sourcing has been slowly but steadily gaining corporate approval as the Internet matures. This is primarily because companies have seen that transparency doesn't equate either with theft of intellectual property or loss of profits. It also is partly due to the almost genetic understanding of technological possibilities and workarounds by a generation eager to push boundaries and make their mark. Of course, it's always possible that we may see one giant breakthrough this year, but I'd be looking to the next five years to see some real shape-shifting throughout the industry.

Q: Will other companies follow the lead of Google and Verizon?

That's pretty well inevitable.

Q: What are some "lessons learned" from the past year that marketers should keep in mind when navigating the current business environment?

According to analysts, it came as a big surprise when texting was taken up so obsessively by kids. The pre-market hardly saw past its use as yet another business tool. This echoed the "Great Surprise" back in the days of the first video recorders – advertisers were amazed to discover the public was fast-forwarding through the ads on commercial TV.

I'm not saying there's no room for more short-term marketing, but if it isn't properly backed by a longer-term view then both marketers and the public will always be playing catch-up.

I believe there's still a philosophical divide between the people who want to push sales of hardware and those who make their living honing their creative vision, whether they're novelists, poets, dancers, fashion designers, comedians, whatever – and divides diminish respect.

The other big factor missing from most marketing is a real dialogue with end-users. There's not enough recognition that a growing number of age groups already have an expectation of interactivity. I see wisps of evidence to the contrary in some of the more creative corporate presences online. But companies simply have to get more creative in the ways they present themselves to their target markets – and by more creative, I mean more creatively interactive. Stimulate people's genuine contributions and give them instant feedback (and this does not mean putting a "poll" on the screen).

Q: Are there any activities you envision social networks being used for in the future that they aren't used for now?

I'd like to see the encouragement of all kinds of communities facilitated by technology, whether they're focused on the arts, online learning, sports, politics, disability or genealogy. I'd like to see a completely different delivery of a chat forum – much more dynamic, more graphic and, of course, far more speech-oriented.

I also hope social networks are used to facilitate dialogue on every continent, asking people what they want from the technology. Only open sourcing can assure a truly innovative, elegantly designed and intuitively easy-to-use mechanism for discussing complex issues that affect us all.

Q: Do you think social networking will eventually catch on with people of all demographics?

Of course, especially as globalization prevails economically. The fastest-growing age group who access the Internet is those over 80. Down the scale, you've got a generation who practically emerged from the womb with an Internet connection. Technophobes are fast disappearing as a marketable factor, while our genetic imperative to communicate rages on.

Q: What does this mean for marketers?

Good marketers know that if the corporate sector truly wants to capture people's attention for longer than the next new headline, they have to learn to swim in a far more sophisticated pool of ideas and aspirations. This can be very scary because people are unpredictable and traditional marketing has too long relied on aspects of control.

Q: What are the savviest marketers doing right now to capitalize on social networking?

They're learning the new rules by being active participants and *listening* to what people want instead of trying to *tell* them what they want. They're realizing that to deliver to their companies they need to be far cannier than trying to adapt traditional techniques from the world of print and television, and other passive media experiences.

Q: What are the most common mistakes marketers make in terms of social networking?

Trying to muscle into a genuine network of commonality with crass techniques or diverting an ideas factory into a platform for your own agenda. And, most of all, assuming you can control people and that you know better than they do.

Social networks used properly are all about sharing common interests, forging friendships based on passions and beliefs. They are not about being the bully in the playground. You'll be found out quickly and expelled from school. A slight rethink of your strategy will pay BIG dividends down the line.

Site to check out for more information:

w3.org



An interview with [Lee LeFever](#),
Principal, Common Craft
[commoncraft.com](#)

Cell phones that record video are nothing new, but sites like [Qik](#) allow users to stream live video straight from their phones to the Web, putting a powerful new tool in the hands of ordinary people. Now anyone can broadcast breaking news from anywhere in the world – and everyone is potentially in the public eye.

Q: How do you see streaming video from a mobile device directly to the Web changing the news media?

Real-time streaming has its place in the news, but I don't think it's the live streaming that's the big deal. What will change news and media is having 20 different people who have captured an event from 20 different angles – and how the media manages relationships with these people. Maybe they were streaming it at the time, but it's the use/reuse of the footage that I think will have a greater impact.

Q: Aside from broadcasting news as it happens, how do you envision people using this technology?

I've gotten calls from friends at concerts who have held their phone into the air so I could hear a little live music. It sounded terrible, but I loved the gesture. I think streaming mobile video will be a great way for us to feel even more connected to people that matter. Imagine being able to watch your niece's dance recital, as it happens, 3,000 miles away. What's great about it on a consumer level is that it's so lightweight. It doesn't require editing, it doesn't require uploading – it just happens.

Q: How will companies be able to capitalize on this technology? What are some of the risks involved?

I think we're going to see a lot more companies that enable "normal" people to control, organize and share access to their streams. Not everyone will want to stream directly to the public Web. I'd love to see an emphasis on using streaming technology to solve problems. Consider rural healthcare emergencies that need a specialist's opinion – live streaming could be used to quickly address issues that require visual interpretation.

Q: How long do you think it will be before the majority of people easily send video to one another via their phones?

Three to five years for my mom to get it.

Q: In your opinion, which marketers are using video such as YouTube effectively and why?

The obvious example is "Will It Blend?" by Blendtec, which is a wonderful example of entertaining content that sells products. Another is Google, which has devoted a lot of resources to introducing new products and services with short entertaining videos. I think we'll see more brands turn to their communities of users to create raw and authentic advertising that people actually want to watch. That's the key – marketing that people want to watch.

Q: Do you think this will be used as another form of Twitter, where people can actually watch what others are doing versus reading updates around the clock?

The problem of always-on streaming is that, for most people, daily life is 98 percent boring and 2 percent interesting to the audience. That's not a good trade-off. Twitter and micro-blogging enable us to distill hours into one short observation. I can consume the updates of hundreds of people in short text form, but streaming video would take all day to consume. Sure, I may follow streaming video for some individuals on special occasions (Ze Frank goes to Disney World!), but I don't think "Twitter for video" is something the average person will devote time to following on a regular basis.

Q: Do you envision new privacy rules/legislation transpiring if this becomes a bigger trend?

More than rules, I think we need more education and awareness. We're talking about individuals having the power of the media – a big responsibility. The media has very strict rules about intellectual property and privacy – they have lawyers, CEOs. At the same time, consumers don't usually know the rules – why privacy matters, what intellectual property is, how to protect and share it, etc. They don't have a lawyer telling them about future risks. Even if the rules change, the bigger issue is awareness of how to use these devices responsibly.

Site to check out for more information:

silverlight.net



An interview with [Graham Hill](#),
Founder, TreeHugger

[treehugger.com](#)

From its inception, the Internet has promised to empower individuals over monolithic organizations, but not until recently was this potential more fully realized. From sites like [Kiva](#), which allows anyone to become a micro-lender, to [ModestNeeds](#), which enables users to help others with their bills, to [Etsy](#), a thriving global marketplace for handmade items, online globalization has finally translated into “people power.”

Q: What additional types of online services do you envision that will increase “people power” in the next few years?

My guess is that we’ll see even more customization, personalization and on-demand services – especially for media – as well as more bartering and product service systems like [Netflix](#) and [Zipcar](#), which dematerialize ownership. That is, you own rights to a service instead of the goods themselves. For most goods, we care more about the service or entertainment value that it gives us over the physical item itself, and the Internet has the availability to deliver goods in a dematerialized way. Also, websites like [Freecycle](#), [GoLoco](#), [craigslist](#) and [eBay](#) will help people connect on a local level via the Web to trade, share, give and buy.

Q: How can organizations build credibility so that people know they are supporting a worthwhile cause versus an Internet scam?

Credibility is partly about being transparent and honest and good, but it’s also about building a reputation among users. The Web is a viral marketplace, so if a site is trying to scam its visitors, it’ll usually get found out pretty fast. Good testimonials, press and logos from trusted organizations all help.

A big part of developing trust among users comes through how a corporation deals with problems. If they accept their role in the mishap, apologize, tell people what they are going to do to fix it and then take action quickly; a bad situation could almost help in developing trust.

People like real people – those who are direct and honest, and have faults that they don’t try and hide. I think people also like corporations that are real, direct, honest and take responsibility for their actions.

Q: It appears that consumers have grown more socially conscious over the years. What role do you think the Internet has played in this?

As people have learned how to use the Internet to dig deeper into all sorts of topics, they've learned to vet their own decisions when it comes to everything from medical choices to the safety of the cleaning products they use to the working conditions under which their favorite T-shirts were made. The Internet has played a significant role in allowing people to gain access to tons of information that helps them make buying decisions, and that's allowed them to be more particular, educated and aware of their decisions when it comes to social consciousness.

Q: What can marketers do to appeal to a more socially conscious public?

They can be transparent and upfront. They also can find new ways of doing things according to the triple bottom line – that is, thinking about people, the planet and monetary profit, in everything they do. A few socially conscious marketing decisions don't make a business truly green or socially conscious; that's something that has to come from deep within the company – it has to be authentically built into their DNA, so to speak. Do the right thing. Be cool. Be human.

Site to check out for more information:

olpc.org



An interview with **Pim Betist**,
Founder, SellaBand

sellaband.com

The music distribution options created by the Web continue to bring joy to everyone except the major record labels. Radiohead made waves not only by dropping its label and self-distributing its new CD online, but also by allowing fans to pay whatever they liked. Even Madonna abandoned the major-label model, since easier distribution meant her concert promoter could do the job. Look for both experiments to spark similar innovations in the future, benefiting artists and music-lovers alike.

Q: What do you think was the ultimate take-away from the Radiohead experiment, and is there anything businesses can learn from it?

Above all, the experiment has shown how strong and important the relationship between artists and their fan base is. We must keep in mind, however, that this model only works for artists who have already reached super-stardom. I do think the Radiohead experiment proved once again that there is plenty of room for innovation in the music industry. Also for emerging artists!

Q: Has the Internet made it easier for talent to be discovered?

Yes and no. The Internet is a beautiful and highly effective medium for artists to meet their market. No doubt about it. But I've lost count of the number of bands on MySpace and GarageBand these days. They're adding friends like there is no tomorrow, changing the connotation of the word "friend" on the Web. The challenge now for artists is to be discovered by their potential fans. One way of making yourself visible is through the long-tail functionalities on Last.fm and Pandora. And of course there is SellaBand, where fans rack up \$50,000 for you to record an album. Anything can work, but the key challenge is to be noticed by potential fans.

Q: What opportunities and risks are there for companies/marketers based on this trend?

Discovering artists creates positive energy among consumers. The main drivers fueling this emotion are the creative urges each consumer undeniably possesses. We're all artists, but until now we had neither the guts nor the means to go all out. Instead of asking consumers to watch, listen, play and passively consume, brands can now get them to create, produce and participate. The risk in utilizing this output is that your well-guarded brand is associated with inferior forms of art. However, if you take the punt, you can reap the rewards.

Q: How has iTunes affected the music industry and how people choose to purchase music?

iTunes has changed the purchasing behavior of consumers from an album level to a track level. It also broadened our musical horizons as there is no stock limitation like we used to have in the bricks-and-mortar stores. iTunes has, therefore, along with online stores like [Amazon](#), [eMusic](#), [Amie Street](#) and the like, had a major impact on the long-tail development.

Sites to check out for more information:

[hypem.com](#)
[radiohead.com](#)

About The Creative Group



The Creative Group specializes in placing highly skilled creative, advertising, marketing and web professionals with a variety of firms. We represent Flash and InDesign experts, brand managers, multimedia strategists, communications specialists and more. Firms that work with us know they will be matched with professionals who have been evaluated using TalentMatch™, our proprietary evaluation process that includes a personal interview and skills testing. Businesses also appreciate that our staffing team members typically have marketing and creative backgrounds. In fact, many of our account managers have won design competitions and marketing awards. For more information or help addressing your staffing needs, please call **1.888.846.1668** for the office nearest you or visit us at creativegroup.com.

About The Webby Awards



Hailed as the “Internet’s highest honor” by *The New York Times*, The Webby Awards is the leading international award honoring excellence on the Internet, including web sites, interactive advertising, online film and video, and mobile web sites. Established in 1996, the 12th Annual Webby Awards received a record 9,500 entries from all 50 states and over 60 countries worldwide. The Webby Awards is presented by The International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences. Sponsors and partners of The Webby Awards include: Adobe; The Creative Group; .ORG; The Barbarian Group; Level3; *Adweek*; *FORTUNE*; *Variety*; *Wired*; IDG; Brightcove; PricewaterhouseCoopers; 2advanced.Net; KobeMail and The Museum of the Moving Image.