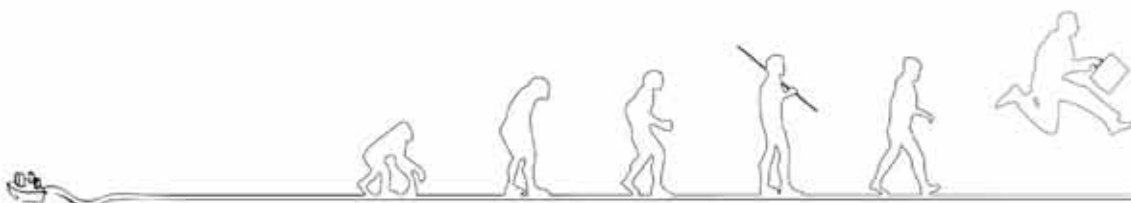


BACK TO THE FUTURE

The Hybrid Organisation: People

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INTRODUCTION

This 'thought paper' draws a parallel between young people in the 1960s and 1970s, the group that became known as the baby boomer¹ generation and young people of today, often termed Generation Y² or Digital Natives³. It examines the link between widespread cultural/social change and the growth of technology led communication media, observing how in the 1960s and 1970s the adoption of mass broadcast communication played a significant role in the cultural and social turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s, largely seen as the opposition of young people to the authority of the 'establishment,' and how currently technologies of mass personal broadcast in the 2000s may also play such a role. It suggests that just as some 40 - 50 years earlier when a 'generational' change occurred, as the 'baby boomers' adopted, developed and gradually gained influence and control over mass media, so now the 'baby-boomer' generation, which today represents the 'establishment,' is in turn about to experience generational change as 'Generation Y' gains influence and control over mass personal media. The paper questions if this will inevitably lead to a decade or so of turbulence similar to the 1960s and 1970s. We close by suggesting lessons that can be learned and initiatives taken, substantially based around the use of new media and technology, leading to a greater engagement with young people today and a smoother generational transition.

TURBULENT TIMES

Today we live in turbulent times of economic, technological and social and cultural change. They are particularly marked as, for almost 20 years, the economy has provided a relatively benign background to a period of immense technological innovation and rapid adoption. However turbulence and change is hardly a new phenomenon and history points to many such periods. Our particular interest in this paper is in the parallels between the turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s and

today and particularly their linkages through the spread and adoption of technologies of communication. Today, just as then, we are looking more generally for technologies to power the solution to many of our problems. This was framed in the 1960s by Harold Wilson and his reference to the 'white heat of this revolution'⁴ referring to technology as an economic driver and today by commentators looking to technology innovation to mitigate issues such as climate change.⁵

SOCIAL BACKGROUND - 1960s/1970s

The 1960s, often termed the 'swinging sixties' witnessed the beginning of the 'counterculture,' predominantly young people led behaviours characterised as a search for individual freedom in opposition to the social constraints of 'the establishment'. The 1960s set in train many themes and trends that would continue to develop through the 1970s and beyond, particularly those of individualism. Although youth-driven, this became a mass change that profoundly impacted all elements of society. Indeed the term counterculture gained traction not as a term coined by youth but as an expression founded in the established mass broadcast news media. The tensions developing between the youth generation, their parents, and the social structures their parents represented varied in specific detail from country to country, for these issues were not confined to the UK and US, impacting on all the developed western societies, North America, Western Europe, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. Broadly these tensions focused on sexual behaviours,

women's rights, opposition/disconnection to authority structures, and a generalised anti-materialist interpretation of culture, an interpretation that embraced hedonism and drug culture. Much of this was polarised through anti-Vietnam War protests and the growth, in the later 1960s into the 1970s, of the hippie movement, at the epicentre of which was San Francisco.

This rejection of established culture played out in the form of access to and the development of new creative forms and media genres such as psychedelic rock where 'mass circulation youth music seemed, impenetrably, exclusively coded'⁶ and was represented by artists such as Jimi Hendrix, the Doors, and Pink Floyd, those that endured into the 1970s increasingly experimenting with new technology instruments such as synthesiser and Moog, with increased electronic studio intervention. The cross over between previously disconnected media being well demonstrated by the group, Velvet Underground and the Pop Art and films of Andy Warhol. Creative expression also found play through the



ability to mass publish magazines such as Oz and books, comics and cartoons, including the work of Robert Crumb and Gilbert Shelton. This 'underground press' served as an important unifying medium for the counterculture, providing reach to achieve mass following.

The 1970s saw a continuation of many of these trends, despite the demise of hippie culture. By the mid-1970s many of the central behaviours became increasing mass adopted and main stream, for example the growth of the environmentalist movement. As the decade matured, the search for individuality took on new forms, becoming more about the self or self awareness and away from some of the more communitarian ideals of the earlier 1960s. In 1976 Tom Wolf coined the

term 'Me Decade' to describe the 1970s. The emerging concentration on self may in part have evolved from its earlier forms as a reaction towards recession, commentators having defined, up until today, the 1970s as perhaps the worst decade of most industrial countries performance since the Great Depression. The period included the oil crisis of 1973 and the more general energy crisis of 1979. By the close of the decade and substantially as a response to poor economic performance and a mass critique of the role of the state in the UK Margaret Thatcher and her Conservative Government and in the US Ronald Regan, were elected on an agenda of reducing authority power, government, the trade unions and promoting the individual and choice.

TODAY - 2000s

Today, as we experience what is now generally regarded as the most serious recession since the Great Depression, much of the story of the counterculture may appear distant and of only limited relevance. There are of course some interesting and perhaps parallel events: the Vietnam War is for most a faded memory, but we do have Afghanistan, our own developing energy crisis and, of course, climate change and more general widespread environmental concerns. The role of the state, indeed the role of authority in general is questioned, particularly by young people. There is widespread cynicism towards most institutions of authority and many young people are questioning the relevance of these structures. Much of this questioning is currently taking the form of alienation and disengagement. For instance, it will be interesting to see the share of the youth

vote at the forthcoming general election, rather than outright protest. Although this is not the case in all counties, in Greece for instance, young people have been at the heart of many of the anti-austerity plan protests. Our current recession has hit young people very badly; they are the single group most impacted through unemployment and lack of prospects. This is the immediate impact, the long-term impact as we bequeath unprecedented levels of debt and sluggish growth is far greater. It appears that the architects of the counterculture, the baby boomers, having finally got their hands on the levers of authority, have literally broken the bank. Yet the legacy is perhaps greater still. The theme of individualism that the 1960s and 1970s so developed accelerated and mutated from a more community centric individualism to a self-centric individualism, today this self orientation is stronger



than ever before. Technology has had a leading role to play, as we have moved from technologies of mass communication and mass media to technologies of the individual and self representation. Perhaps

the baby boomers, with the benefit of more social technologies can, in their final stages, avoid the need for youth to react against an establishment that many among them feel is once again failing them.

THE INDIVIDUAL AND MASS BROADCAST

The counterculture was a mass phenomenon, aided by young people having access to new mass broadcast media combined with the development and expanding reach of the existing 'establishment' broadcast media. Access to mass media opportunities, although not completely new, played a significant role in providing some form of cohesive message for young people; a powerful example of this access being Free or Pirate Radio. In the UK, Radio Luxembourg and Caroline symbolised youth interests and 'being beyond the state,' these were all youth orientated and operated outside the state licensing system, indeed were sometimes located at sea outside territorial waters. Technology empowered youth 'developments and, in particular, the miniaturisation of transmitters and the fact they can be put together by amateurs "encounters" a collective aspiration for some means of expression,⁷ giving them both a voice and reach. Interestingly, while listening to these stations was 'unauthorised,' 'established' British newspapers still published their programme schedules and in the case of Luxembourg even publishing a magazine aimed at teenage girls, Fab 208, for mass circulation, thus extending the supposedly dissenting voice. Similar access was provided by the 'Underground Press,' including titles such as International Times, Oz, Ink and Gandalf's Garden, again acting as a unifying medium and also ensuring

the provision of a direct broadcast voice for 'insiders,' while being visible and accessible to establishment media. The power to 'magnify' (scale up) this messaging came through the ability and willingness of the established mass broadcast media to report as news and comment on the underground publications and more general behaviours of the youth groups associated with the counterculture. In part this commentary was seen as the voice of the establishment or authority; its impact was to amplify and increase coherence.

"The authorities proceed to define these ways of youth as illicit, immoral, dangerous...the labels stuck and the victims converted them into badges of identity." Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties*, Bantam, 1987

There is perhaps some parallel between this period and today, when social media, blogs and 'internet noise' provide much content that is filtered, as well as nationally and internationally amplified by established mass media. Of significant difference is the relatively homogenous mass media reach of the 1960s/1970s. In the UK television broadcast was limited to just BBC1 and the commercial channel ITV (since 1955), being joined by BBC2 in 1964 (this became the first channel to broadcast commercially in colour in 1967). By 1977 there were more homes with a colour television set than a telephone⁸. Indeed at times it appeared that the average person able to do little in the face of recession and



industrial unrest turned to the amusement in the living room,⁹ the television. The relative lack of choice produced viewing figures for individual shows and content unsurpassed in later, more media crowded times. Likewise radio, although offering more choice, still provided relatively unfragmented mass audiences. National newspaper circulations were high and provided reach and influence to the UK population. While there were obvious political and other biases within all these organs of mass broadcast, they nonetheless provided reach for the young influencers of the counterculture. Indeed, the oxygen of mass media coverage played an important role in initially developing the mythology of the underground movement and then enfranchising many of their themes and ideas in the wider population, such that many of their 'values' and behaviours would find their way into broader based culture. A small-scale example of this can be seen in the Oz trials of 1971. The underground magazine Oz, under some pressure to respond to accusations of being out of touch with youth, responded by allowing school children to edit one of the editions. Already under the eye of the Obscene Publications Squad, the combination of this and some of the risqué material led to the trial of the then editors on the grounds of 'conspiracy to corrupt public morals'. The trial quickly became about freedom of speech and representation and became a major mass media event, played out in the public eye, including celebrity involvement and physical protest. The trial and the subsequent acquittal at appeal is an important incident in as much as it demonstrates the manner in which this cohort of young people learned not only to use media under their specific control to provide voice to their opinions, but how they also learned to manipulate mass media channels as amplifiers of these arguments.

It is fitting that the Oz editors would go on (following the demise of Oz in 1973) to successful careers in the representational arts and in some instances become part of the establishment mass media.

The baby boomer generation emerged from the 1960 and 1970s with an appreciation of the importance of media access and particularly the mass media unlike any previous generation. While often using technologies developed by previous generations, it was this group that first fully appreciated their real power, potential and mass authority. Many would go on to open up, participate and control mass media broadcasting in new ways. Broadcast opportunities would proliferate with new television delivery opportunities being established, such as satellite (in the UK, with Sky Broadcasting in 1989), with a rapid growth in channels. Commercially this group would innovate and drive through technology change at an unprecedented pace. By the 1990s many of the internet startups would form in the crucible of the counterculture, San Francisco, at least initially incorporating many of the value systems from earlier times. In business more generally they developed new models and transformed marketing and advertising in ways hitherto unthought of, to the point that the marketer of the 1940s or 1950s would barely recognise our consumer-focused marketing industry of today. The generation of the counterculture became not only the mass media generation, but also saw 'the break up – the slow uninterrupted dissolution – of old beliefs, assumptions and habits; the reduction of the sense of different social placings and authority' as we entered a 'self choosing'¹⁰ world and by embracing a new form of individualism drove through the broad acceptance of the new market-centric capitalist economics, probably best represented by Margaret Thatcher



in the UK. Broadcast mass media and market place capitalism has dominated the past 30 years. The children of the

counterculture have been successful on an unprecedented scale, while today the baby boomers are the new establishment.

GENERATIONAL CHALLENGE – A NEW INDIVIDUALISM?

Innovation has brought forward a very different world, where the individual and the access capability of the individual is now at the heart of our most recent developments. Today's world is both highly mobile and increasingly individual centric.

“Distances between places and people again seem to be dramatically reducing...time and space are dematerialising, as people, machines, images, information, power, money, ideas are all, we might say ‘on the move’...” John Urry, *Global Complexities*, Polity, 2003

As such, they represent the increasing mobility and complexity of modern life. This complexity is often linked to technological change and progress.

Just as so much that has influenced society over the past 50 years came from young people appropriating the ‘tools’ of the then establishment and using them in new imaginative ways to focus on a new agenda, so today we should once again look toward a new generation for the new ways of engaging and a new energy of re-invention. For there is now a generation that looks unlike any of its predecessors, ‘the people nipping at Generation X’s heels, enviably at ease with digital technologies, Generation Y have little love for hierarchy. The downturn has left many of these whippersnappers more whipped than snappy¹¹. Generation Y has ‘grown up’ surrounded by digital media, with media clustered about them, ‘with the internet and the mobile phone, messages come to people not the other way around. Individuals are connected by

their phones, but their phone is not tied to a place and its environment (such as family or office).¹² The immediate impact of this is to both increase their ‘global reach’ while localising or coalescing information and access around the individual. Significantly this group has had access to computers and the internet, mobile phones and digital video games from pre-school ages. They have been defined as having the ability to read visual images, have highly developed visual-spatial skills (indeed it has been argued that we are moving toward a right brain orientated society with an emphasis on ‘creators...and meaning makers’ and that young people represent the vanguard)¹³, to be experiential, to shift their attention from one task to another with great rapidity, be highly digitally literate (in the use of things) and be highly connected/social.¹⁴ Importantly while older groups may judge online communication against an ideal of face-to-face communication, or even more standard mass broadcast models, young people evaluate a wide range of options, including instant messaging, chat, phone, SMS and face to face according to their communication needs, their criteria including immediacy, message complexity, mobility, cost, privacy and embarrassment.¹⁵ This is a response to both the simple presence and availability of technology and to social and environmental change, in combination it represents young people using today’s tools and opportunities to connect to the world and establish and maintain their



identity, their individuality in ways alien to older groups.

This is an age and generation of connectivity. Over 70% of UK households now have internet access, 60% via broadband¹⁶, and this proportion is rising on a daily basis. Over 12% of the population access the internet when mobile¹⁷, again a trend that is rising relentlessly as smartphone sales increase. Facebook has over 66 million users¹⁸ and Twitter has seen exponential growth rates. 45% of all calls in the UK came from a mobile¹⁹ and SMS with nearly 80 billion texts²⁰ continues to expand. Two things are clear; the individual is now personally connected, more able to personally create access, to both people and things, anywhere, anytime, and spends more time actually communicating. Even more significantly Generation Y, having had this access and power to manipulate information and communication from their earliest moments, are no longer willing to enter into closed end non-engaging relationships, the old broadcast model, where things are merely presented to them. But rather, they seek to assemble things and opportunities to function in the manner most appropriate to their needs at any time.

This new connectivity has led to young people leading 'hybrid lives'²¹, combining virtual lives with physical lives in a seamless and enriching way. It has profoundly altered the nature of communication, providing broadcast opportunity for the individual, through the likes of Twitter, and proving the opportunity to create a rich fabric of communication that combines media and mode (text, video, speech, given content etc.) to build deep conversations, often unintelligible to older groups. In so doing they have exposed and changed the broadcasting models 'deep contradiction, of centralised

transmission and privatised reception'²² to emphasise the individual transmission to engage a specific individual.

Generation Y has not so far produced a mass movement in the manner of the counterculture, there doesn't seem a direct appetite or agenda to overthrow or change the establishment in any visible or mass manner. Perhaps just as worryingly it appears there is a studied disengagement or alienation towards the processes of the establishment, for many do not feel valued, able to participate in or engage as part of a process, where their input leads to feedback.²³ The youth vote element of UK General Elections has been consistently falling. It is the youth segment of the population that is currently bearing the brunt of the recession (19.1% of 16 - 24 year olds seeking work).²⁴

Just as with the generation of the counterculture, Generation Y has learned to use the innovations and tools primarily provided by previous generations, in ways unthinkable and often difficult to understand for these older groups. Yet while Generation Y appears to be ready to succeed the baby boomers, 'it's possible that after all, that the baby boomers will hang on to power'²⁵ or at least try! We have of course been here before, in the 1960s and 1970s when the establishment used its powers, to attempt to hold back the baby boomers challenge, without understanding that innovations in media and access had changed the balance of power irrevocably, they were unable to quieten the dissident voice. Today's youth voices are not engaged in a set of mass broadcast messages rather they are engaged in billions of conversations, sometimes coalescing round a theme or topic before moving on. But the parallel is still there, Generation Y understands the implications of our media and technology changes in a way that the baby boomer



generation does not. Such understanding must surely result in Generation Y replacing the baby boomers²⁶, for those that use tools most effectively tend to win out. For now as the 'baby boomers are getting old, the bills are coming in and it is the younger generations who will pay them,'²⁷ we must question if there really does need to be a re-run of the turmoil of 1960/1970s and in to the

1980s or whether there is an opportunity for the baby boomer generation to reconnect with its roots of the 1960s and enabled by our new technologies and media to re-engage with young people and in so doing achieve something the establishment of the their youth did not, to effect a smooth and enriching transition. This would surely be a fitting legacy from the baby boomer generation.

GENERATING ENGAGEMENT – ENGAGING WITH GENERATION Y

We are in the midst of a particularly disruptive time in terms of technology, societal change and economical instability. In the 1960/1970s such disruption was at least in part played out as the turbulence of generational transition - turbulence that lasted over a decade. The question now is can we navigate today's turbulence, change and renew while embracing the rise of the coming Generation Y without experiencing the widespread social disruption of the earlier period. Somehow 'roughly four generations of workers are going to have to communicate and collaborate from the Facebook generation or its successors all the way through to people who are most comfortable with telephones, voicemail and maybe a bit of email'²⁸ and, as we have seen, there are significant differences in the broad way in which these groups address the world. Generation Y, as described earlier, is a very engaged and interactive group, the way they are interacting with information, with one another and with institutions is changing rapidly²⁹. However they are substantially disengaged with

much of what today would be regarded as established authority. The question becomes how can authority, the baby boomers, engage with this group, or put another way can the baby boomer generation, while retaining the strong aspects of a mass broadcast culture, re-orientate itself to engage on a more individual level, in the process changing the nature of authority in its broadest sense, and perhaps returning to some of their own more communitarian origins from the 1060s? The challenges are significant in all fields, where we are seeing the early signs of a clash between the two generations, not just in the way we control media, but in the way we live, work and play.³⁰ The following comments represent some of the areas that may hold the key to overcoming this challenge. Most of these will involve the effective deployment of technology to facilitate change. However more significantly they will require a political will and agreement at all levels of engagement, be it at government, corporate or even individual level, to build and sustain.



ENGAGEMENT

Social media is not merely about 'crowds' or the 'wisdom of crowds'³¹ it is about individuals and identity³², yes crowds or groups coalesce but that is because they are motivated by an interest, desire or just curiosity. They do however remain individuals. The mobile device in particular has clustered round the individual, has made the individual the loci of communication. This has been accompanied by genuine multi-modal or multi-channel access (increasingly this is from the single point of the mobile device). By definition the super availability of the individual means that they are available for interruption but the old 'interruption-disruption model is dying' to be replaced by a world where 'consumers control their media content, in fact they may create it'³³. Models of mass broadcast no longer have their old traction. They need to be replaced by a more individualised message where, using information or

data of personal relevance ensures the communication is worth engaging with. To do this requires organisations of all sorts to make extensive use of information and database analysis across the whole organisation in a joined-up fashion, this hardly occurs today. Information does really need to become the prime asset of the organisation, but it needs to be mobilised and made relevant to the individual, engaging in a conversation. The group or segment should indeed be a segment, but of just one! There are of course issues of privacy and transparency arising from this, but research has already identified³⁴ that today's Generation Y person, and indeed many other sectors of the population are already more than used to the 'trade' of information, indeed the preference to exchange information for relationship or 'benefit' is very strong, it's just that too often the trade appears light on individual benefit.

ACCESS

Connectivity and access lies at the heart of community and shared endeavour. Social networks already, to some extent, open access and create sharing environments. They are of course examples of Cloud storage; information held directly on the internet is more readily available, whenever, wherever and however it is needed. It is likely that Cloud Computing will significantly expand, as part of a move to open up systems and to provide ubiquitous access. Access to all services will need to be made fully available across all media formats, often with formats working together to provide a seamless service. Past research has illustrated how Generation Y combine media formats to meet their emotional as

well as information needs³⁵. Access to and for this group highlights the changing way in which issues of digital exclusion or access, formally often seen in simplistic terms as the 'haves and have nots,' today need to continue to include these issues, but to be expanded and nuanced. When discussing exclusion among Generation Y, we also need to consider the quality of technology access (broadband speeds etc.) and issues of education and cultural capacity³⁶ combined with changing formats of engagement, such as more social or discursive approaches that will facilitate both multi-generational access and continuing break down of socio-economic divides. A re-engagement of Generation Y in the political process will



be a key element of this. Barack Obama in the 2008 presidential election tripled or quadrupled the under-30s turnout in some US states³⁷, in contrast to the UK where the youth vote has been progressively falling across both local and General Elections. Obama's success was primarily on the back of a campaign making extensive use of the internet and media, significantly this was not merely a broadcast or tell campaign rather it used the social and sharing characteristics of the medium to create an engaging, a discursive approach. Such approaches

illustrate a broader access principle that is moving from merely tell and inform to engage and discuss, at both individual and group levels.

"The only way we will rebuild the trust that has been lost is by opening up access, giving the public more, and making them feel a part of the team, a part of what we are trying to do...Unlike some, I am optimistic about this and I think technology and new media are just integral to our ability to do this."

Rishi Saha, Wired magazine, March 2010

NAVIGATION AND REPRESENTATION

Having grown up tightly coupled to much of their personal technology, ever on, ever close, there is to some extent a merging of physical presence between device and individual. This is also beginning to be recognised as navigation becomes increasingly haptic and more physically immersive. We already seen new developments in 'touch' navigation and will see more in voice control and gesture recognition. Generation Y is also significantly more visually orientated than previous generations, expressing complex information in visual as well as textural forms. This represents a challenge to older

generations, who inevitably privilege the printed word and a more linear form of accessing and ordering information. Such presentation of data will change the nature of the workplace and the skill sets required. Much of the debated-about 'fitness for purpose' of young people in the workplace and the 'private sector being left to pick up the pieces'³⁸ is probably misguided and overly simplistic. Young people do need to achieve basis standards of literacy and numeracy, but the workplace will need to react to the new inherent skills of young people both as workers and consumers.

OPENNESS

Although by no means fully open, the successes of both the Apple iPhone and Facebook illustrate the advantages of allowing open development environments, where a proliferation of functions and applications provide the user with extensive choice and the opportunity to create 'environments' that reflect their individual lifestyle and needs. This is not by any means new, indeed the much earlier growth of Microsoft Windows

charted similar territory. The now rapid proliferation of Android-enabled mobile devices likewise points the way towards open application development. From the broader perspective, ease of interconnectivity and operability empower the user and maximise their use of a device or situation. Alongside this the growth in 'unified communications,' where once separate or closed communication modes are drawn together, will be key to driving



opportunities for communication and collaboration. Again this will be facilitated by open data (see following section on transparency), in particular the ability to open up and draw down previously opaque, centralised data into more local or dynamic environments where its proximity

to the impacted users increases both its relevance and impact. Such collaboration is likely to be key to pulling the generations together, of ensuring engagement, this will require degrees of interconnectivity and openness well beyond current capabilities, but a start has been made!

SHARING AND COLLABORATION

‘Social recognition is the glue that holds community together,’³⁹ collaboration is a key element of providing this recognition. Institutions will need to establish more collaborative ways of engaging Generation Y. In education, as in all areas, kids who have grown up digital are abandoning one-way TV for the higher stimulus of interactive communication they find on the internet, sitting mutely in front of a TV set – or a teacher – doesn’t appeal.⁴⁰ The same is true in the workplace, collaboration, ‘what’s in it for me, what’s in it for you?’ becomes a central question and mutual commitment. As consumers, they want

to be treated as individuals but are also highly creative. ‘Digital creations and online creativity is about sharing. It is inherently social and creative. In many respects it is about the power of communities’⁴¹, where there is the opportunity to place co-creation of products and services at the heart of corporate strategy, and in so doing winning advocates or involvement with the brand or organisation. Making this happen will require technologies that facilitate sharing and connectivity that go well beyond our current limited endeavours, although facebook and the other social networks do point the way forward.

TRANSPARENCY

Information transparency is key to facilitating many of these developments. The belief that organisations/authority of any sort, and systems can simply be trusted to collect, hold and use personal data is both naive and damaging to any programme of involvement. The individual needs to have full access to examine any information that is held about him, to know who holds it, where it is held, how it is collected and what forms of aggregation of information take place and any further parties it is disclosed to. The individual citizen must be put back in control of their data, for in the digital worlds their ‘individuality’ is inextricably linked with all forms of data relevant to the person. As part of this

control they need the right, not only to access the data, but correct it or subject it to special protection depending on the circumstance. Many of the problems relating to data exploitation and abuse revolve around the obscurity of data to the individual, lack of transparency and the apparent ‘free market’ in the exchange of personal data. Personal information exchange is the ‘oil’ the lubricates relationships in daily life. Just as our ‘reach’ has extended in the digital world so must the use of information. However, rather than being clandestine and secretly guarded by organisations, it must become understood that personal information belongs to the individual and therefore is subject to the same set of rights.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past 60 years technological innovation and mass adoption has played a significant role in forming new social behaviours. This been actualised through two very different generations, the baby boomers and now Generation Y. What each have in common is that they represent a creative and innovative break with the past and challenge existing authority and practices.

The baby boomer generation, substantially aided and influenced by access to mass broadcast technology and media, have gone from being anti-establishment/authority youth to becoming today's establishment. Their challenge/opportunity is to engage with Generation Y – young people who, having grown up digital, are seeking a more individualistic, interactive, yet connected and social form of engagement – using personal mass broadcast/engagement.

Generation Y, currently substantially alienated and cynical toward many of the established authority structures, uses technologies in new and original ways often outside the experience or cognitive scope of existing generations.

Engaging with this group will be facilitated by new practices, based on the new technologies and media, which place the individual at the centre of engagement and augment their connected social reach, scope of communication, information access and the way in which they represent themselves and things to one another. However this will require more than technology, it will require understanding combined with emotional, political and social will. It will change the nature of education, work, life and entertainment.

Not to engage with Generation Y could lead to a decade or more of turmoil and social instability, similar in nature to that witnessed in the 1960s and 1970s.



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NOTES

Generation X (Hamblett, Deverson, 1964), those born between 1961 and 1981, is the generation immediately succeeding the baby boomers, and born before Generation Y. Generation X would be the generation more normally assumed to be 'in waiting' to take over positions of authority from the baby boomers. In terms of age demographics this is true. They receive little mention in this piece as they represent essentially a continuation of the baby boomers and while influenced by the later digital technologies are not 'born native'. As such they represent one of the generations in the 'workplace' that need to work together but are faced with same challenge as the baby boomers, how to engage with the new future as manifest by Generation Y. Indeed Generation X may in terms of authority end up as something of a 'bridesmaid,' in waiting but passed over by Generation Y!

So much of what we now take for granted has its origins in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1962 the first computer video game; 1963 saw the first geosynchronous communications satellite, in 1964 the first successful mini compute is marketed also the BASIC programming language is invented; 1965 Sony markets the first home video tape, colour TV begins transmitting in Europe; 1968 sees the first public demonstration of the computer mouse, email and hypertext; and 1969 Arpanet the forerunner of today's internet is launched. The 1970s saw the programming language C created, the first personal computers, pocket calculators and commercial sales of video games alongside the commercial availability of VCRs and microwave ovens; fibre optics begin to revolutionise communications; mobile phones were well under development and the first 1G commercial standards would shortly emerge; and in 1975 Microsoft was founded. Many of these innovations lay the foundations for today's personal communication technologies.



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