

## Wikinomics

By Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams  
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Wikinomics epitomizes Shakespeare's words "oh brave new world."<sup>1</sup> The book is designed to introduce the reader to the quickly developing and changing environment of the internet and to demonstrate how it is impacting our current and future economy. Consumers are more active than ever, globalization is making the world a smaller place, and the sharing of ideas across disciplines and cultures is creating a wealth of information the likes of which have never before been seen.

Assuming nothing, the authors introduce and explain the new technologies that they believe are driving the changes in our economy. Although the explanations are not incredibly thorough, they are accessible to the average reader because they are not bogged down by technical language. The authors provide examples that allow the reader to understand the point without having to reference other materials. For instance, the authors take the time to go into the history of Linux because it is essential to the birth of wiki and understanding the authors' ideas on collaboration. The authors acknowledge that the basics of Linux "although well known in the technology community...are not known

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<sup>1</sup> WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, THE TEMPEST, *available at* <http://www.william-shakespeare.info/script-text-the-tempest.htm>

by all.”<sup>2</sup> Although the explanations cause the book to be rather lengthy, it stops the text from existing in a vacuum and helps the reader gain a deeper economic perspective.

The focus of *Wikinomics* is primarily on wiki and how its interactive character is changing global culture, which is in turn changing the economy. Wiki is a software that allows readers to edit the web pages they view.<sup>3</sup> The concept encourages sharing and mass participation, and allows for huge projects—such as the well known wikipedia—to result from massive collaboration that would not otherwise be possible. It is within this context of openness and collaboration that the world of wikinomics is formed.

Wikinomics is a great source to spark new ways of thinking. The book forces the reader to think about current culture, how it has changed over the past decade, and how it is likely to further develop. For example, the media industry has been changed by websites like Digg where people upload news stories and readers vote on what stories they enjoy and find informative.<sup>4</sup> Modern news consumers can choose what time of day to obtain the news and can even add their own stories. Furthermore, today the masses can choose the most newsworthy articles online, while traditionally print and television corporate giants decided the newsworthiness of a piece and whether it would be served for public consumption.

However, the book’s downfall is its lack of self-criticism. The tone of the writing is excited and optimistic about its predictions of the future of the economy and the business model. On the other hand, the reader must be reminded that these concepts remain mostly projections and no change can be entirely positive. The authors provide

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<sup>2</sup> DON TAPSCOTT & ANTHONY D. WILLIAMS, *WIKINOMICS* 23 (Penguin Group 2006)

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 13

<sup>4</sup> DON TAPSCOTT & ANTHONY D. WILLIAMS, *WIKINOMICS* at 144; Digg.com, <http://www.dig.com> (last visited Nov. 26, 2007)

little, if any, of the negative aspects of the changes they predict. A presentation of some of the contrary arguments, even if coupled with an argument against them, would enhance the reader's understanding of the subject.

Because the book is mostly focused on economics, the optimal audiences are the business managers or aspiring business leaders of today. The book provides detailed examples to show how consumers are changing and why long held business models will have to be altered if a company is to compete. Although the book mentions legal issues of copyright and patent law in passing rather than providing a detailed legal analysis, a legal reader can gain a great deal from the book's economic perspective. If the changes predicted by the authors as the Armageddon of current business models prove true, the impact on Intellectual property and Corporate law will be enormous. Any attorney or legal scholar could gain new ideas and a deeper understanding of the future of these legal areas with this light read as background knowledge.