



# Crowdsourcing: Why the Power of the Crowd Is Driving the Future of Business

By Jeff Howe

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## Crowdsourcing: Why the Power of the Crowd Is Driving the Future of Business By Jeff Howe

Why does Procter & Gamble repeatedly call on enthusiastic amateurs to solve scientific and technical challenges? How can companies as diverse as iStockphoto and Threadless employ just a handful of people, yet generate millions of dollars in revenue every year?

"Crowdsourcing" is how the power of the many can be leveraged to accomplish feats that were once the responsibility of a specialized few. Jeff Howe reveals that the crowd is more than wise—it's talented, creative, and stunningly productive. It's also a perfect meritocracy, where age, gender, race, education, and job history no longer matter; the quality of the work is all that counts. If you can perform the service, design the product, or solve the problem, you've got the job.

But crowdsourcing has also triggered a dramatic shift in the way work is organized, talent is employed, research is conducted, and products are made and marketed. As the crowd comes to supplant traditional forms of labor, pain and disruption are inevitable, and Howe delves into both the positive and negative consequences of this intriguing phenomenon. Through extensive reporting from the front lines of this workplace revolution, he employs a brilliant array of stories to look at the economic, cultural, business, and political implications of crowdsourcing.

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*By Jeff Howe*

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## **Crowdsourcing: Why the Power of the Crowd Is Driving the Future of Business** By Jeff Howe **Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"An informed and enthusiastic guide to the new collaborative creativity."

—*Times* (London)

"A welcome and well-written corporate playbook for confusing times."

—*BusinessWeek*

"An engaging mix of business, sociology, organizational theory, and technology writing and fits the mold of Malcolm Gladwell's perennial bestseller, *The Tipping Point*."

—*Newsweek*

"While small groups have often been the foundation of great performance—think SWAT teams and Skunk Works—Jeff Howe has made the compelling case for the power of far larger communities of interest. He shows in *Crowdsourcing*—with rich illustrations from Google and InnoCentive to Threadless and Wikipedia—that the right community with the right incentives can often invent, write, and run research and business initiatives more effectively and less expensively than traditional enterprise."

—Michael Useem, professor of management and director of the Leadership Center at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, and author of *The Go Point: When It's Time to Decide* and *The Leadership Moment*

"Beyond the wisdom of crowds is the work of crowds, a powerful and transformative source of creativity and an economic engine that defies traditional rules. Jeff Howe's guide to crowdsourcing—to use his perfect coinage—is insightful, fun, and indispensable to those who want to understand, or participate in, this amazing phenomenon."

—Steven Levy, author of *Hackers* and *The Perfect Thing*

"Jeff Howe has captured a complex and vital change in the business landscape: in the next few years, your customers could become your collaborators, or your competitors. His ability to weave story and strategy together makes *Crowdsourcing* a readable and indispensable guide to this new world."

—Clay Shirky, author of *Here Comes Everybody*

*From the Hardcover edition.*

#### About the Author

JEFF HOWE is a contributing editor at *Wired* magazine, where he covers the entertainment industry among other subjects. Before coming to *Wired* he was a senior editor at *Inside.com* and a writer at the *Village Voice*. In his fifteen years as a journalist, he has traveled around the world working on stories ranging from the impending water crisis in Central Asia to the implications of gene patenting. He has also written for *U.S. News & World Report*, *Time* magazine, the *Washington Post*, *Mother Jones*, and numerous other publications. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife and children.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

From [AudioFile](#)

The challenge with an audiobook based on a newly coined word is that after about five hours the reader gets the point--and there's still another five hours to go. In this case, WIRED reporter Jeff Howe has coined the term "crowdsourcing"--when a company takes a task previously done by employees and outsources it in the form of an open call to a large, undefined group of people. (Think Wikipedia and iStockphoto.) Explaining the concept works fine in print as the reader can skip about, and it works even better in Howe's crowdsourcing blog, but it doesn't seem to gel in audio. Considering that Howe speaks publicly--frequently and quite convincingly--on the subject, the audiobook might have been better served by his narration rather than Kirby Heyborne's meticulous and careful delivery. R.W.S. © AudioFile 2009, Portland, Maine

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