

**Amplifying Businesses and Communities for Resilience
Presentation Summary and Strategic Actions**

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Amplification through participatory digital media

Participatory digital media and Web 2.0 tools and applications are shaping our individual and collective capacities to think, understand, collaborate, and create.

Specifically, these media help to extend our capacity to

- *sense the world* around us by gathering, tracking, and filtering information about our broader environment using tools such as camera phones and mobile sensors, news aggregators, micro blogging like Twitter, social bookmarking and collaborative filtering.
- *cooperate and create shared resources* using weblogs and wikis, visual mapping tools like Google Maps, and even collaborative gaming.
- *act collectively and form new kinds of groups* like smart mobs, swarms, and MeetUps creating new kinds of flexible, ad hoc social structures and ways for us to self-organize without top down mandates or complex rules.

For small business, amplification means expanding the human resource capacity, strategic position in the market, and the capacity to innovate. For communities amplification provides new options for re-organizing and adapting to changes in a very uncertain and volatile world.

Moving strategy beyond best practice to generating novel solutions

Systemic disruptions such as climate change, energy insecurity and peak oil; and pandemics challenge business as usual and the assumptions of business strategy based on best practice. Strategic thinking needs to move beyond the notion of best practice to a capacity for developing novel solutions in conditions of extreme uncertainty.

What's needed is a capacity to create new patterns and new agency at the local level. A key component for developing community resilience – the ability to recover from crisis – is to become amplified. Amplified communities use participatory digital media to expand and extend their capacities to sense, learn, collaborate, and generate new ideas and solutions. They do this by developing service platforms that are more flexible and capable of reorganizing during crisis.

Three Resilience Service Platforms

Regenerative Commerce: integrates transaction networks with social networks to create alternate forms of wealth generation.

The *Interra Community Change program* creates a social network of local (and regional) merchants, producers and consumers who deepen the networks of trust and cooperation to increase financial flows within the local community and supports sustainable business practices.

User-Centered Governance: combines user centered-design thinking plus new forms of civic interaction using participatory digital media like cell phones, Twitter, weblogs, wikis, even google maps and data mashups. Civic processes and decision-making (like elections, developing municipal legislation, or city strategic plans and priorities) are co-created and co-managed by self-organizing groups and government officials.

FutureMelbourne uses a public wiki along with public in person convenings to implement an open, co-created city strategic plan.

Community-based maker economies: is a combination of a growing “do-it-yourself” culture with small-scale fabrication and production. Two trends are driving the possibility for maker economies: (1) community access to fabrication technologies (e.g. computer controlled laser cutters, welding tools, electronics design tools, and 3D printers -desktop printers that print objects) and (2) know how networks (collaborative practical knowledge sharing networks).

TechShop is membership-based workshop located in Silicon Valley that enables members of the community to become small-scale fabricators. Anyone can become a member of *TechShop* and learn to use the equipment to make whatever they need from jewelry to computer parts to furniture. *Instructables*, a website that allows people to share how-to information of all kinds – from designs and instructions for making a solar panel or hacking your computer or cell phone to how to re-use recycled materials or restore old furniture.

Imagine a network of community fabrication centers where local residents can share their problems and solutions and have access to the equipment to produce the solution. The potential is for a network of ad hoc micro factories that are tuned into local social and economic dynamics, and can leverage the practical know-how of communities across the globe.

The Challenge

Developing community resilience is not a technology strategy. It is about re-examining your identity, values, and practices as contributors to a resilient community. Clay Shirky wrote that “revolution doesn’t happen when society adopts new technologies—it happens when society adopts new behaviors.” Your challenge, and opportunity, is to creatively figure out

how you can use social media to develop the practices to infuse greater resilience into your businesses and your community.

Strategic Actions for Developing Resilience

What can small business developers, owners and managers do to bring about more resilience in organizations and communities? How can participatory, digital media help?

1. **Become more transliterate.** Amplified communities will be able to read, write, create, and interact in multiple forms of media – digital, print, face-to-face, oral. As small business professionals you'll need to become more sophisticated in engaging with your market, your employees, partners, suppliers in multiple media formats. This is what Future Melbourne did, they learned how to use the collective, open and transparent attributes of the wiki format to support their planning process. You have some of the best experts at the IOCT to help you develop this capacity!

2. **Recognize that people are critical infrastructure** for innovation, flexibility, and local wealth creation. We always say that a company's most valuable asset walks out the door at the end of the day. Today, we have to expand that to include customers, suppliers, partners, members of your local community and anyone who might interact with your business as critical assets. These are potential resources that can be activated for insight into new product or service offerings, for trust during difficult decisions, and for loyalty in the face of competitive pressures. Again, Future Melbourne believed that every Melbourne resident was a potential contributor to its planning process and provided a way for each person to participate.

3. **Use participatory, digital media to grow resources**, not horde them. Collaborative social media like weblogs, wikis, social bookmarking, and photo sharing are able to collect lots of small resources that by themselves don't mean much but when aggregated they add up to something big and valuable. This is how Wikipedia works, and Amazon's referral system and eBay's power seller rating system work. The Interra community change card does this by adding up a tiny percent of each transaction between participating merchants and shoppers to create a big sum of money that goes back into the community. Look for ways to use collaborative social media to design interactions and invite participation to create abundant resources – market information, community information, assessments or referrals that might be valuable. These are services that could add value to your customers and distinguish you from other players.

4. **Practice ecological thinking** and think about your business, your community, in a broader global ecology. How can you provide solutions to multiple problems that will ripple through the local or regional system? Interra is a good example here. By supporting local merchants who support local growers that engage in sustainable farming practices, Interra not only creates financial incentives for consumers and merchants to participate, but they increase demand for producers who have less impact on the community's ecology. These deep linkages have multiple positive impacts.

5. **Develop a Beta Culture** that supports improvisation, experimentation, rapid prototyping, feedback and iteration. These are core elements of design thinking that help reframe problems and reveal novel solutions. Melbourne and Puget Sound are experimenting with new forms of civic activity and service platforms. What these communities are learning from their experiences with FutureMelbourne and Interra will prove invaluable as they design solutions and strategies in the future. TechShop and Instructables enable individuals and communities to prototype, revise, and innovate.

6. **Create a business environment for contextual leadership.** This means building a collaborative environment that can tap into internal and external stakeholders for vision and mobilizing resources around emergent insights and opportunities. FutureMelbourne is really an environment for local expertise and leadership at any level in the city to emerge and become visible. Interra is an open system, allowing any kind of merchants, suppliers, or consumer to participate and innovate off of the basic program. Both Future Melbourne and Interra are generative platforms – they support new twists and unexpected uses of the platform by individuals with vision. How can you leverage openness and transparency to enable leadership and vision to emerge from your business or your community?

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