

ROGER FIDLER

MEDIAMORPHOSIS: UNDERSTANDING NEW MEDIA*

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Lufthansa AG is also rigorously making the information triple jump – with emphasis on information transfer: The specific information is obtained via an interactive NewsFlash offer, evaluated within databases, and executed as a virtual information service (customer specific travel offerings). The compressed information is given effectively back to the customer through the help of the push technology “NewsFlash.”

THE WAY TO SUCCESSFUL ELECTRONIC COMMERCE

Competitive advantage in the markets of the future is shifting from product edges alone to informational advantages. Management of and for information is at the center of the consideration of future entrepreneurial engagement in the virtual data world of the Internet, where it must be added that market development and the pressure of competition will obviate the question of WHETHER OR NOT and force rather the question of HOW. The information triple jump, i.e. gaining, processing, and transferring information, will assume strategic significance for management. Existing processes in the business should be analyzed with an eye to the application of information technologies (IT), whereby knowledge and ability are no longer alone at the top; desire as well assumes a leading role. The practical examples illustrate quite clearly that the use of information and communication systems will be just as natural as the use of traditional business structures. There is still opportunity waiting for the entrepreneur willing to make the first move!

“Mediamorphosis” by Roger Fidler is a breath-taking, sweeping overview of communications technologies and their impact on the media through the millenia and in the years to come.

Ten chapters cover a wide range of issues including media evolution and convergence, media traits, digital technologies, Internet publishing, socio-political forces of control, new media experiments, virtual reality, user interactivity, and future trends. A list of acronyms and abbreviations is also included.

Roger Fidler is a well-known electronic publishing visionary and practitioner. He has worked in the newspaper business for more than 34 years. He was the director of the Knight-Ridder Information Design Laboratory, founder of the PressLink online service for newspapers, and a key member of the Knight-Ridder Viewtron videotex service. Roger is currently a professional in residence at Kent State University.

Fidler identifies six principles of mediamorphosis – coexistence and coevolution of media forms, gradual metamorphosis of new media forms from old ones, propagation of dominant traits in media forms, survival of media forms and enterprises in a changing environment, merits and needs for adopting new media, and delays from proof of concept to widespread adoption of new media.

According to Fidler, there are three great mediamorphoses in human communication: spoken language, written language, and the digital language. Spoken language led to social group formation, complex problem solving skills, and the development of “broadcast” forms like storytell-

ing and ritual performance. Written language ushered in the development of portable documents, mechanical printing, and mass media.

Digital language – unlike spoken and written – enables communication between machines, and mediated communication between humans. In digital language human distinctions between text, images and sounds are irrelevant. We are in the earliest stages of such transformations, says Fidler – but we can already see “how computer networks using digital language are greatly extending human interactions throughout the world.”

Fidlers book covers the technological and cultural contexts of the third mediamorphosis, as well as case studies of successes and failures of new media technologies like online services. The third mediamorphosis was marked by the invention of electricity, the convergence of telegraphy and photography, electro-mechanical and electronic technologies, computers, and networks.

Three chapters sketch out projected scenarios of mediamorphosis in the interpersonal, broadcast, and document domains in the year 2010. Fiddler also addresses some of the promises and challenges posed to media, audiences, educators and governments by technologies like the Internet.

In sum, “Mediamorphosis” is a valuable, insightful piece of work for media analysts and practitioners. A list of online resources and discussion lists would have rounded off the material perfectly. There is also little treatment of issues outside the U.S. and Europe, or about the opportunities for alternative, non-mainstream news media. Still, Fidler has done a great job of putting together one of the first, comprehensive frameworks for charting the evolution and interaction between media forms in the cyberspace age.

* Mediamorphosis: Understanding New Media, Fidler Roger, California 1997, Pine Forge Press, 302 pages, ISBN: 0803990863.

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The winter edition will be dedicated to a selection of the best papers presented at the 1998 Association for Information Systems (AIS) Americas Conference Mini-Track on Electronic Commerce. The conference was held in Baltimore, Maryland, August 14-16, 1998.

Guest Editors for this issue are Troy J. Strader, Iowa State University, and Kent A. Walstrom, University of Arkansas. The best papers presented in the mini-track on electronic commerce present an interdisciplinary perspective on electronic market research. Our goal is that the papers accepted for publication in this special issue of Electronic Markets will provide a wide range of perspectives on the impact of electronic markets on consumers, businesses, transaction intermediaries, and government. These perspectives include, but are not limited to, economics, marketing, strategic management, psychology, sociology, public policy, and technical disciplines such as computer science and telecommunications.

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The spring edition will focus on Electronic Commerce in the Americas. We intend to continue our series commenced with Electronic Commerce in Asia (97/1) and Europe (98/1).

We look for articles dealing with the current status of related projects, visions and policies on Electronic Commerce, key players and their strategies to employ EC efficiently, leading and pursuing regions, range of planned investments and time schedules for implementation, regional aspects and governmental policies to promote the diffusion of EC, technologies used and the question of open versus closed platforms, the strategy for the future, etc.

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In the summer issue we will focus on the field of logistics and transportation, changes brought about by the development of Electronic Commerce are bringing new developments, including innovative co-ordination mechanisms. Innovative concepts concerning organisations and technologies like "Virtual Organisations" and "Electronic Markets" are gaining importance within an industry context that demands increased flexibility and substantial efficiency gains.

We are currently searching for articles dealing with the current status of projects, visions and policies related to Electronic Commerce within the area of logistics.

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