

"Google is not just a company, it is an entirely new way of thinking. Jarvis has done something really important: extend that approach to business and culture, revealing just how revolutionary it is."

—CHRIS ANDERSON, author of *The Long Tail*

What Would Google Do?

Jeff Jarvis

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What Would Google Do? Jeff Jarvis

“Eye-opening, thought-provoking, and enlightening.”

—*USA Today*

“An indispensable guide to the business logic of the networked era.”

—Clay Shirky, author of *Here Comes Everybody*

“A stimulating exercise in thinking really, really big.”

—*San Jose Mercury News*

What Would Google Do? is an indispensable manual for survival and success in today’s internet-driven marketplace. By “reverse engineering the fastest growing company in the history of the world,” author Jeff Jarvis, proprietor of Buzzmachine.com, one of the Web’s most widely respected media blogs, offers indispensable strategies for solving the toughest new problems facing businesses today. With a new afterword from the author, *What Would Google Do?* is the business book that every leader or potential leader in every industry must read.

What Would Google Do? Details

Date : Published January 27th 2009 by HarperBusiness (first published 2009)

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Author : Jeff Jarvis

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Carrie says

I will use this book in my future entrepreneurial journalism course, and possibly social media as well - which is saying a lot, because I rarely add new required texts.

If you read Jarvis' blog/follow him on Twitter etc. and are generally well-read when it comes to digital disruption, there isn't much new here - but it's still an excellent, clear summary of the way not just Google but social media and the web more generally are changing many industries, including journalism, media, and education. I think it will be particularly useful for introducing students to these concepts, much like Clay Shirky's "Here Comes Everybody."

Some of his critics say Jarvis pushes his argument too far, is too wholeheartedly a Google fanboy - but to that I say...yeah, but so what? I think we need some of that in a world in which far too many people are exactly the opposite - STILL unwilling to see the change smacking them in the face. You don't have to agree with every word to believe that books like these and Shirky's serve a very useful purpose. We need our evangelists for the new age.

The one part I struggle with is with the Googlification of education. I am all for disruption in education in principle, and I wholeheartedly agree that even if I wasn't, tough luck - it's coming. But my experience as an educator who works with a lot of non-elite, first generation college students is such that we have a long way to go to marshal the forces of the web and disruption to provide greater access to high quality education to all. Why? Because we can Googlify education and learning more easily that we can Googlify motivation and grit, and at the end of the day, no learning goes on without those two things. Maybe motivation and grit will flower in an era of greater abundance, but I worry.

I like his point that most of our education system is still too highly focused on conformity and memorization; and that maybe that push for sameness that saturates the entire system is what turns kids off to learning - by the time I get them in college, maybe it is all but too late. I love this quote:

"There is an abundance of talent and a limitless will to create, but they have been tamped down by an educational system that rewarded only a few against, and discouraged by a critical system that anointed a closed creative class."

Yes. But. I teach classes in which there are never quizzes or tests (no memorization - who needs it in a Google age?) and creativity and innovation are encouraged, even demanded - we build things and make stuff. We play with new social media tools, make cool multimedia projects on topics entirely of their choice, and/or we build media startups. And I have some success with that - but frankly it is a relatively small handful of students who actively participate, even do the required work. You can bring them to the Googley classroom but you can't make all of them drink.

Riku Sayuj says

How would Google run the world? How would everything look if every industry, every social activity was

"googley"?

Everything would be more open, collaborative and fun, that is how. The book might be masked as an exploration of a successful way of doing things, but in reality it a call for the open-source "gift" economy in which everyone participates to create great value. It makes sense too, for much of it.

Apple posed some problems for the author though. Apparently non-open-source can also work spectacularly.

In any case, let us try out this world. It seems like a a good place to take risks.

Chris Cahill says

Never before have I wanted to burn a book once I finished it.

I bought this at a charity shop to see what an outsider's perspective from 2011 matched with my insider's perspective in 2015. Unfortunately, Jarvis' canonization of the all holy "link" and constant chset-pumping of his own resume make me want to save anyone else from wasting their time with this trash. The only friend I would give this book to would be someone I know to be a true masochist.

Ryan Holiday says

There's this example What Would Google Do? where Jarvis talks about how newspapers could respond to Huffington Post setting up a new blogging venture in Chicago. He basically says that they should become their new best friend - forget that they are competition and think long term. They'd get more out of magnanimity than being territorial.

But, he concludes, it doesn't matter because "news organizations don't yet think that way." The thing is, no one does. People, like Marcus Aurelius said, are "meddling, ungrateful, arrogant, dishonest, jealous and surly." We shouldn't be surprised when they act that way.

The benefits of being open minded, collaborative, honest, and helpful are not new. We've been extolling those virtues since Aesop. Or on Google's business end, being scalable, keeping overhead low, treating your customers like partners, pocketing less value than you create. Those are the basic, bedrock fundamentals of business.

My point is that we already know all that stuff is good. Awareness isn't the problem. Children know that you shouldn't be evil. We don't need to praise it anymore. What we should be discussing is how to practice it.

The book itself falls into the gap between knowing and doing. Jeff misses a very teachable lesson at the juncture where he is mature enough to admit that it's sort of contradictory to take the most old school way of publishing his idea - advance from a major publishing house, syndicate part of the book in a magazine right at the release date, etc. His words: Sorry. Dogs got to eat.

Right. Welcome to reality. Where we all live. Where some entertainment companies would probably do innovative things but are tied to crazy artists. Or, companies controlled by petty bosses or signed leases or

long term contracts or institutional inertia. The problem isn't that they haven't asked the right rhetorical question. If doing what Google does was easy, they'd have already done it. Since it's hard, they haven't.

This book and books like it lack concreteness. What would Google do is a great question. It's a wonderful title for a book. But it's not well served by 250 pages of proof that it's the right one to ask. We know this. Our collective wisdom knows this.

So what specifically makes Google able to ignore the barriers that trip other people up? How do they keep the instinct to be surly, meddling, dishonest and jealous from taking over? How can people put the brakes on a direction they know is conflict with their long term goals? In other words, we're trying to solve organizational problem with psychological treatments and it's never going to work. WWGD? has all sort of great examples of good - as in not evil - decisions that Google and other companies have made. What is doesn't have is much introspection as to how they fought the resistance towards making it.

I'd really like to read a book that doesn't think the solution lies in more talking. If you were to suggest one of the ideas in the book where you work nobody would tell you it was stupid - they'd just say "it's not realistic." THAT is where we need pages. Not to say Jeff's book isn't good (it is), it's just not what it could be. It's lame to treat all this as some revelation because it's not. It should be a starting off point.

Jon says

This might be my favorite read so far of 2009 (although I thoroughly enjoyed Outliers and Here Comes Everybody as well). I love discussing creative disruption and this book is full of that. While some of the best ideas aren't Jeff's (Umair Haque and Fred Wilson are heavy influences and mentioned repeatedly in the book) for me it didn't much matter because of the importance and timeliness of the subject matter. If you're entrepreneur you have to read this book.

Dianne says

"Google is an avalanche and it has only just begun to tumble down the mountain."

The world wide web is an amazing phenomena in the way that religion is a phenomena. You may love it, you may hate it or you may be somewhere inbetween. Regardless where you are in that spectrum it is here and like religion it is powerful so we might as well try to learn about it. At first I thought this book was going to be about as exciting as the manual that used to come in the box with a new computer but it's way more interesting than a manual or a reference book. It explains how Google became so powerful then gives you the basic steps for using Google or some of the other Platforms to improve your business, (if you have or want to have a business). The key is the distribution that you can achieve through the platform Google. Platform and Distribution are the two key words in the book. I think it was because I had read the book The Facebook Effect that I found this book useful. Seeing how Facebook evolved helped me to follow the ideas presented in What Would Google Do? And believe me there are a gazillion ideas in this book. Because its copyright date is 2009, some of the predictions made are now old hat. Like being able to put more time on your parking meter by using your telephone. Makes we wonder if parking meters and one day even coins will be extinct. Jeff Jarvis has written a guide book to the internet that I found intriguing. What has Google Done? It has brought simplicity, openness, a respect for the small and it brought us the G Generation. From my experience as a teacher and a grandmother I see that it has literally brought a world of knowledge to our livingrooms. I

wish that my father had been alive to use Google. He used to spend his spare time researching at the local library using tiny roles of microfiche.

Antonia Munteanu says

I think it is a good start to better understand how Google works. It is not a black hole where all our information goes, behind it were people that made the decisions on how to simulate artificial intelligence. My granny was using Google and was always seeing it like a wise friend. This book give her an understanding on what it is behind the click, each commercial that you get depending on gender and so on.

I did not read any similar books so this makes it hard to rate it by comparison. Hope this helps.

Ahmad says

It should be 3.5 stars out of 5 (or somewhere between 3-4 stars).

In this book, author Jeff Harvis of BuzzMachine.com, discusses the concept of "Googlethink". He takes Google and studies what made today's huge company, an enormously successful organization and how that success can be transferred to other industries.

The book is divided into 2 parts. The first of which is the answer to "What/Why?" as in "What/Why is Google successful?". Jeff discusses the concepts of "Googlethink" and "Googlejuice". He also suggests that Google is a platform for success. Being a "platform" for other people to improve on and adopting the collaborative open-source mindset is what got it to be where it is today. He also explains and touches on his personal first rule which shows the relationship between Control and Trust. A few other ideas are also explored.

In the second part, Jeff provides some examples of the various services/products in our world that can truly benefit from the Googlethink way of doing things. Airlines, cola companies, hospitals, restaurants, media, etc. can all adopt the Google mindset of openness and collaboration which will ultimately transform these services into platforms of success by keeping customers and users involved. Although some ideas seem far-fetched. It's the idea that counts.

An enjoyable read, especially the second part of the book which answers the title's question.

Hinch says

What Would Google Do? is not a book about Google. At least not directly. This is a manifesto for the social web. A book arguing for transparency, openness, and collaboration. A book imploring that we think differently; beseeching businesses to hand over control to their clients; to share and innovate; to develop platforms and networks of trust; to encourage discovery and diversity over secrecy and authority; to adopt a mindset of abundance over the scarcity models of the past. Google is positioned as the poster child of this new paradigm, the exemplar of the modern company. And the question, What Would Google Do?, is our call to action. A call challenging our assumptions of what is required to succeed in a world that is increasingly

public and interconnected.

I came to this book dragging my feet. I've followed the work of Jeff Jarvis on his blog, buzzmachine.com, and on the weekly technology show, *This Week in Google*, for over 12 months. I'm a computer engineer, and an over zealous consumer of everything "web". I like Jeff. He is an insightful and opinionated professional, and although I respect his work, I feared he would deliver a book that had little to offer but the well trodden ground espoused in contemporary works such as *Here Comes Everybody*, *The Long Tail*, and *The Wisdom of the Crowds*. I was wrong. It is true that the themes and case studies are rarely original, but the accompanying analysis is uniquely compelling. There is no filler in this book. There is no preamble. No stage setting. No summaries and other secondary text. The formalism that frequently paralyzes non-fiction books is replaced by a rich and engaging conversation. Jeff is comfortable in this space, and it shows.

The first half of the book outlines the principles that underpin the companies that have originated and prospered in the internet age. The second half of the book considers how these principles can be applied to other industries: journalism, retail, insurance, politics, and even religion. And it was within this latter section that I started to grow unsettled. You see, Jeff is a futurist. In his words, an "internet triumphalist". He is the kind of man who doesn't see the glass half full, but rather overflowing. He is incessantly positive. Painfully hopeful. He is also a limitless fountain of ideas. And this is where I came unstuck. For his ideas, many of which are undoubtedly brilliant, are offered up like the rapid fire of a machine gun - so hastily that they are never considered critically. The fact that these ideas are often impracticable, or even contradictory, fails to stem his enthusiasm.

At one point I was reminded of a blog post by Seth Godin, in which he listed tips for increasing traffic to your web site: 1. write short posts, 2. write long posts, 3. write about your kids, 4. don't write about your kids, etc. The point was "there is no formula", but, like many internet evangelists, it appears Jeff has over extended the principle, and confused the incredible success of the few, with the guaranteed success of the many. Google, Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, etc, are astounding success stories. This is undeniable. And yet for every winner, there are thousands of us who tweet into an empty void. A willingness to be social is no guarantee of friends. A desire to share is no guarantee that someone will listen.

In one part of the book Jeff presents options for introducing "socialness" to the restaurant industry. Whilst discussing ideas for crowd sourcing menus and personalizing service models, I began to ponder my most cherished dining experience: a small family-run restaurant in Rome without a menu and without choice. You walked in. Sat down. And a meal was placed on your table. This was not a menu by committee. It wasn't an open source recipe. It was an experience welded to the history of a single family, shrouded in secrecy, and founded on authority. We can be sentimental creatures. Indeed the quirks of human psychology, our irrationality, and our stubbornness, may be the difference between an the success or failure of an open and collaborative project. Unfortunately, like the engineers at Google, operating solely at the direction of raw data at the expense of aesthetics and subjective decision making, Jeff does not stop to consider such subtleties. As Leo Laporte (the host of *This Week in Google*) has said to Jeff on many occasions - "your call for openness and standardization is admirable - even desirable, but Jeff, your dreams of utopia are not always feasible".

These criticisms, however, do little to dent the overall message of the book. Jeff's insight into the changing nature of our world is mesmerizing. His words are delivered with the certainty of experience, and with the wonder of a man still on the journey to a charmed future. Even for those convicted to the philosophy of the web, this is a frequently challenging, and always engaging read. Definitely recommended.

Dave says

Posted on my blog at <http://blog.liftdevelopment.com>:

I recently finished reading the book "What Would Google Do?" by author/blogger/journalist Jeff Jarvis. Jarvis is probably recognized primarily as proprietor of the popular blog Buzzmachine.com. I had an interest in this book right from the start because I am fascinated with the approach Google takes to everything they do: Offering premium services for free and finding alternative ways to make their money. A lot of money.

Without giving too much of the book away, Jarvis first dives into the "Google Rules." These are concepts which he feels Google (and other successful web companies) follow which make them successful in the growing world of social media and instant search.

One of the firsthand stories that really summed up the status of marketing and customer relations in the Googlefied world today was Jarvis' own example of typing "Dell sucks" on his blog after a bad customer service experience. The buzz from that single post grew and grew, and it eventually reached the front page of Google for the keyword "dell," at which point Jarvis got a call from Dell and they tried to make it all better. Dell has since changed their approach to service and actually uses Twitter to keep a finger on the pulse of their customer base. Marketing has become less of a bullhorn and more of a conversation.

The concept that I really took away from this book was the idea of being a platform. Google is a platform. Facebook is a platform. Twitter is a platform. We as users of the web can create our own online brand using these tools. Businesses can do the same. Give people control to create and improve...and they will. From my own standpoint, so much of my business is Google-based. Get up in the morning, check my Google-hosted Gmail, read my favorite blogs on Google Reader, browse news topics from the past 24 hours on Google search, etc. The platform is alive and well.

As for making money, Jarvis argues that the idea of a "side-door" is where it's at in the Web 2.0 world. If your platform itself is not free or at-cost, someone can easily come in and undercut you. However, if you are running free services and able to create a side-method for income (think Google's ad-words/ad-sense concepts), your user base will be much greater and your income will instead be generated from marketers.

The last half of the book was Jarvis' attempt to apply Google concepts to other business types: media, advertising, retail, utilities, manufacturing, airlines, real estate, money, welfare, etc. Some of these were really interesting, and some were kind of "out there" in my mind. But Google is an "out there" company and I guess that's why they're so successful.

I enjoyed reading this book and would recommend it to anyone interested in the direction of business in a Web 2.0 world.

Natali says

Although I think this book is about 50 pages too long, I still highly recommend it to anyone trying to understand modern economy and culture. I was afraid that it would be a big bowing down to Google, which I see enough of in my career. It isn't. Instead, it is a series of case studies proving how companies like Google

are leading a civil movement against closed-system corporation culture.

I didn't feel like I needed this paradigm applied to so many industries. Jarvis uses the Google template to discuss real estate, insurance, public relations, law, media, journalism, and more. Towards the end it becomes slightly formulaic but it does help if you want to apply this line of thinking to your own business. For my thoughts on how it applies to my own industry, see my blog post.

Deniz says

I can't tell you how happy I am to be done with this book. Since I cannot let a book go without finishing it, this one became an obstacle that prevented me from moving on to other books. It was so repetitive and hollow that I wanted to punch the author for wasting my time and money.

The main idea of the book is really interesting and worth delving into, because what Google does is truly great. But Jarvis shouldn't be an author, or, he shouldn't write *books*. I'm sure he's doing fine writing his blog and all, but the book was a pain to read. First of all, two thirds of the websites and products mentioned in the book has some ties with Jarvis, whether it's a startup he's involved with, or an institution he's been teaching. He doesn't sound very sincere, he uses the book to market things that will benefit him. He always intervenes whenever the narration gets fluent by saying "(blah blah blah) is a company I invested in. The other, I'm on the board of directors. And this one is my son's company." Dude, I'm not here to listen to the list of companies you've worked for. Then the last half of the book turns out to be very unnecessary because it just repeats the first half under the pretense of interpreting the ideas into reality (which doesn't happen). The last half basically reads "yada yada yada".

I'm so super glad I'm done. All of the brilliant ideas in this book, you probably know already.

Florin Pitea says

Ce ar face Google într-o mare gam? de domenii? (Detalii la ?es?torul.)
<http://tesatorul.blogspot.ro/2017/12/...>

Ryan Chapman says

It may be unfair to give this book a rating since I couldn't finish it. For all I know, my complaints were resolved in the second half. So with that in mind...

It was interesting to read this book soon after a reread of Clay Shirky's *Here Comes Everybody*, as both are recent offerings by major publishers on our changing internet culture. However the strengths of Shirky's book and the faults in this one can be traced, I believe, to the two men's backgrounds. Shirky has been a professor at NYU for about six years, and writes as an academic approaching a mass audience. Shirky's book is dutifully chockablock with interviews, statistics, and endnotes. Jarvis is one of the founders of *Entertainment Weekly* and, later, the blogger behind Buzzmachine.com and internet case study "Dell Hell" (mentioned in both books). He's coming from writing for a mass audience to, well, writing for a mass audience. But he's coming from writing blog entries to composing a book. Herein lies the problem.

While on paper the thesis is intriguing--Since Google is now one of the world's biggest companies, what if we applied their practices and ethos to other industries?--the execution lacks any evidence of sustained research or in-depth interviews. What we have then is the author's preliminary conceptions of Google repeated ad nauseum, without challenge or expansion, over the course of the book. As he takes on different industries, such as transportation or, yes, publishing, he jumps to pie-in-the-sky proposals with anecdotal evidence for justification: his prescription for the airline industry is to mimic RyanAir's wishes to make tickets free in exchange for revenues earned via in-flight gambling. The author seems to believe that we will agree with his arguments purely on the basis that they exist instead of the usual persuasions of rhetoric.

I'm very interested in what the critical reception to the book will be, especially from other tech journalists and bloggers. Even in my department at work (online marketing in publishing), this book has been defended and excoriated in equal measure.

Laila says

"?tiraf ediyorum: Ben bir riyakar?m. E?er kendi kurallar?ma uymu? olsayd?m, bu kitab? ?u anda okumuyor olacakt?n?z, en az?ndan bir kitap olarak. Onu linkler ve aramalar arac?l???yla bulup online'da ve ücretsiz okuyor olacakt?n?z. Siz bu kitapta yapm?? oldu?um hatalar? düzeltebiliyor olacakt?n?z ve ben Google ile ilgili son istatistikleri kitaba ekleyerek onu güncelleyebiliyor olacakt?m. Bu kitaptaki fikirler etraf?nda bir diyalog ba?latabilecektik. Bu proje, blogumun okurlar? sayesinde ?u anda oldu?undan çok daha fazla i?birli?i üzerine kurulu olabilecekti. Hatta Facebook'ta bir Google dü?ünürleri grubu kurabile-cektik ve böylece sizler daha çok deneyiminizi, daha iyi tavsiyelerinizi ve benim burada tek ba??ma dü?ünebilece?imden çok daha farklı bak?? aç?lar?n?z? benimle payla?abilecektiniz. Yay?nevinin verdi?i avans? almam?? olacakt?m fakat dan??manl?ktan ve konferanslardan para kazanabiliyor olabilecektim. Fakat yay?nevinin verdi?i avans? ald?m. ??te bu nedenle ?u anda bu çal??may? bir kitap halinde okuyorsunuz. Üzgünüm. Karn?m? doyurmam laz?md?. Gazetelere bask? makinelerini kapatmay? tavsiye etti?im gibi, kitap yay?nc?l???na da bir tavsiyem var: Kitaplar? kurtarmak için onlar? yok etmeliyiz. Kitaplar?n esas sorunu onlar? çok sevmemiz. "

Bu sat?rlar? okurken enayi yerine kondu?uma m? sinirleneyim, yazar?n çeli?kisine mi bilemedim... Zaman kayb?, bildi?imiz basit ?eylerin uzat?larak yaz?lm?? versiyonu...

UZAK DURUN
