

Nobody's listening now, so be honest, please: How well do you understand the implications of new social networking tools, such as Blogs, Podcasts, Wikis, YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, RSS, Second Life, or Cyworld, for your company? Do you know what they are and how people use them?

If your answers are 'no' for the most part, read *Groundswell* by Charlene Li and Josh Bernoff. In this book, the two Forrester Research employees, whose jobs entail understanding such trends, explain what it means when, for example, consumers you have never even met are rating, even slamming, your company's products in public forums. More importantly, they suggest proactive and reactive strategies based on the encouraging premise is that you can actually turn such threats into opportunities – if you know how.

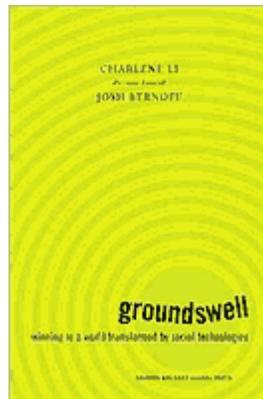
Companies and individuals trying to censor posts on the internet have found that they usually achieve the opposite, creating a huge wave of negative publicity and accelerating the dissemination of the very information they tried to suppress. The value of this book lies in the authors' recommended strategies for tapping this 'groundswell,' as they call the social move-

ment using new networking technologies: by listening, talking, energizing, helping and embracing it.

Book and corresponding website present a wealth of 'social technographics profiles', summaries of user statistics by country, age group, and numerous other criteria. These profiles provide strong evidence of a global trend. Wisely, the authors caution that the widespread use of such technologies around the globe does not indicate a uniform trend, stating that "People in India don't use the same social networks as people in Germany. [...] But the fundamental emotions that drive people to the groundswell –the desire to connect, to create, to stay in touch, and to help each other– are universal."

A valid point of critique may be that *Groundswell* does not do a good job analyzing the overall trend and predicting its future. However, the authors' intentions are obviously much more narrowly focused: to help companies understand and successfully deal with this new global movement.

This book will not solve your social media problems. What it will do, however, is help you understand your challenges and provide valuable ideas for possible solutions.



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