

Prophetic Nerds

I am an Internet creative writer and journalist and yet knowledge of the technical side of computers still eludes me. As I work with tech-heads I've always had a feeling that they were a different breed of people, with their strange language of numbers and abbreviated terminology. I've also had the egotistical belief that because they are always sitting at their computers, that somehow they were missing out on life, as opposed to people like me who try to spend as much time in fresh air as possible. Well, I had a wake up call today when I asked a few of my colleagues about the changing world of communication, television, film, and advertising that has begun to evolve at an alarming rate since the advent of the Internet.

First of all, after a short discussion I realized these people are just like me, they do all the things I do in their spare time. Secondly, I came to understand that a lot of these so-called 'nerds' are actually at the forefront of this revolution of technology and ideas that are changing our world for the better. Their well-kept secret is this: As they are the people designing these technologies that harness the power of the human imagination, they are actually prophets who can see into the future. I'm not saying that they are gurus who have mastered all aspects of life, on the contrary, I still believe that most of contemporary society still needs to focus much more time and attention on internal growth and understanding of our emotions and thought processes. However, as the tech-head jobs are usually based around ideas about how to make the world function better, they are miles ahead when it comes to knowing about which systems are going to be implemented in the future.

Take communication for example. When the telephone was first invented by Alexander Graham Bell a lot of people questioned the worth of being able to speak to someone that they couldn't see face-to-face. Of course after the benefits were discovered, the whole paradigm of communication drastically changed. Everyone now felt that it was 'necessary' to have a telephone. Many, many years later came satellites and with them the ability to talk to people on the other side of the world. Recently we've had huge cables constructed of optical fiber laid along the ocean floor, and with them came light-speed telephone and Internet connections. Well, the future of communication is now on the verge of a new revolution in paradigm as voice-over-Internet communication comes into existence and evolves.

A good example of this technology in its early stages can be found at <http://www.skype.com/>. Skype is a company whose service of computer-to-computer and even computer-to-phone communication has already had around 115 million downloads off the Internet. The reason that it is so popular now is that compared to a normal landline phone call, it is super cheap! A few of my friends and colleagues use it regularly so I'll tell you how it works. In the case of computer-to-computer voice communication, each person needs either a headset with built-in microphone and headphones, or a combination of microphone and computer speakers/headphones. At this stage you both also need a Broadband Internet connection, but let me tell you, until the big telephone and Internet corporations put a block on the current system (some US companies already have), you can now talk to people on the other side of the world for relatively free! The only cost seen is where the amount of time you speak is subtracted from your allowable download limit. Talking to someone for an hour on the other side of the globe hardly takes any download usage and as the Internet is the medium, the 'phone call' is actually better quality than a landline but with equal speed so there's no time delay of speaker to listener like in the days of satellites.

The computer-to-phone service does have a fee but it still costs less than the rates on a normal telephone, although my friend says that the quality isn't as good as the other Skype method yet. What does this mean for future communication in our world? It means eventually telephone companies will probably have to become Internet communication providers, and by that stage they will probably raise prices, as they will be losing so much of the revenue that they make now from overcharging on telephone services. It's kind of like the situation we have with fossil fuels versus environmentally friendly energy production. Even though the technology exists, the oil companies aren't going to bring it out until they've made every cent they can from the old technology.

However, as the Internet is a new medium where the general public has much more power and freedom from corporation and government constraints, this new technology has a much better chance of being implemented into our society straight away. 115 million downloads of Skype alone means that if the phone companies try and block this sort of communication completely, people probably won't stand for it. This is also an important fact as it means that Internet nerds have a much better chance of bringing their ideas to reality, compared with nerds in other areas of human progress that are controlled more by big money-makers. As for now, if I were you I'd get onto Skype or another Internet voice communication provider and save your hard earned cash for as long as you can.

About the Author

Jesse S. Somer M6.Net <http://www.m6.net> Jesse S. Somer doesn't like being called a nerd, but if nerds are creating a better life for the world, he might just deal with it.

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