Book Reviews: *Anywhere: How Global Connectivity is Revolutionizing the Way We Do Business*

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Green does an exceptional job of illuminating the intricacies of the ‘Brave New World’ we are inescapably entering in a way that is accessible to a wide range of readers, including those with minimal understanding of many of the concepts she explains. She makes absolutely no presumptions about the knowledge base of her readers and takes the time to educate those who may be unfamiliar with even the most rudimentary aspects of the technological revolution she is describing. If you have no idea what is meant by terms such as ‘hot-spot’, ‘bundling’, ‘fixed/mobile convergence’, or even ‘broadband’, you will feel that you understand them intimately by the time you finish the first part of Anywhere. (Green includes an extensive glossary of terms in the back of the book that is immensely helpful for the novice.)

The second section of the book, ‘The Anywhere Consumer’, deals with how the Internet is becoming incorporated into just about every feature of our existence. But rather than exerting a homogenizing influence, Green asserts that the enhanced capabilities of the emerging technologies actually provide a more individualized and personal experience for everyone.

‘It’s already very clear that while we all share basic desires like connecting with each other, there are differences in what people do and think about mobility that reflect diversity in their education, income, lifestyle, age, profession, and more,’ notes Green (p 88). She sees the revolution as being more human than technological, and includes numerous case studies that serve to bring this idea to life.

Part three, ‘The Anywhere Enterprise’, focuses more exclusively on how broadband is significantly altering the essential nature of work. As everything continues to become more interconnected, how we accomplish our jobs will inevitably change in many ways. ‘The way people work in 2020 will be profoundly different as work life becomes more thoroughly integrated and intermingled with personal life,’ Green argues (p 142). ‘The office will be more a choice than a necessity, because executives and managers will be able to monitor the work of their employees from any location.’

‘Everyone stands to gain, and blue-collar workers may well gain more,’ Green adds (p 142). ‘After all, it’s the construction worker and the farmer who have been starved for information because of device constraints…’. Her point is that, as interactivity can increasingly be facilitated via more and varied appliances, it is less and less the exclusive domain of desktops and laptops. Indeed, the smartphone has already made these gateways to the Internet seem rather quaint and even old-fashioned.

In the final section, ‘Profiting from Anywhere’, Green discusses how instantaneous access to information by everyone at any moment affects business strategy. The Internet has already fundamentally changed the way products and services are marketed; Green argues persuasively that so far we have seen only the tip of the iceberg. ‘Beyond winning new customers within existing markets, you’ll be able to take advantage of the billions of potential customers in new markets that are now joining the global digital network fabric,’ she observes (p 187).

It should be noted that the book is not as comprehensive as it could be in its treatment of some emerging issues and trends. For example, one of the most important technological developments on the horizon, at least from a business perspective, seems to be ‘cloud computing’. As Green notes, this involves ‘moving all applications and services out of the company’s data center and into the network itself’ (p 148). Leading-edge companies such as Amazon and Google have experienced phenomenal success by adopting cloud computing as their primary conceptual and technological framework; it is one of the innovations that make much of what Green describes possible. Yet she hardly mentions the practice in her book.
Similarly, security is another area that does not receive much attention in Anywhere. All of the business advantages that Green describes can be realized only if end-users can be assured that all their transactions will take place in an environment that is absolutely secure. Green notes that ‘many connectivity opportunities ahead will present privacy, security, and regulatory challenges in the near term, requiring the market at large to adapt’ (p 203). But she does not follow up that assertion with any realistic discussion of this critically important consideration. As business continues to become more virtual, ensuring that personal data remain secure will become even more important than it is now. It was somewhat frustrating that Green did not devote more attention to this area of concern.

Anywhere concludes on both an optimistic and a cautionary note. Green is fully aware of the uncertainties that lie ahead as a result of the new global connectivity she is working to create. Regarding the issue of open access, she comments (p 214), ‘If you’ve grown up with the Internet, perhaps this feels obvious – the way the world should work. But it’s a distinct shift in mindset from twentieth-century single-purpose networks.’

Overall, Anywhere accomplishes Green’s purpose in writing the book. By the time you have finished it, you definitely feel a lot more knowledgeable and confident about the world we live in – and where it is probably headed.

Of course, the question of whether this direction will ultimately prove to be in our best interest, either individually or collectively, has yet to be answered. As is the case with almost everything in life, only time will tell.

Leo-Paul Dana, Entrepreneurship and Religion. Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, 2010, 442 pp

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This book, edited by Leo-Paul Dana, is a rich source of understanding of the way in which religion has influenced entrepreneurs throughout the world. By introducing religion as a variable, we are invited to look at the values and cultures of communities where the synthesis of faith and culture has combined either to encourage the development of entrepreneurial behaviour or to restrict it.

The scope of the research, by 27 different authors, takes the reader on an interesting journey through many countries and many faith groups.

The book is divided into five parts and has an introduction by the Editor. It begins with a previously published article by Dana (2009). This is a good introduction to the subject matter and covers a wide number of faiths, giving insight into the causal effect of religion on communities where enterprise has flourished and enriched the lives of those who participate in it. It also examines the dominant theories of the past, inviting us to compare Weber (1930) with Rokeach (1973). We are challenged to learn about religion and the distinct and different sets of values held, and to examine the different patterns of entrepreneurship each yields.

Part One looks at the ‘old values’ of the religious merchants, the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and the Mizrahim. The business history and religion of India illustrate the golden age in the fourth century of the Guptas, the Jains, Jews, Sindhis and Ismaili, who all contributed to the prosperity of trade, finance and mercantile entrepreneurship within their communities. The extent to which these early traders travelled to Europe, the Arabian Gulf and China makes interesting reading, and this is indeed an area in which further research is desirable, especially as India emerges as a growing world economy. The tribal peoples of the Pueblo economy, which is centred on agriculture, have embraced Catholicism while retaining their original faith and culture. The Mizrahim, who are described by Dana as anglicized Orientals with transnational networks and ‘ethics capital’, are a fascinating race – the descendants of the Judeans, who were exiled from Babylon. This is a rich source of information, full of historical facts, photographs and family trees.

Part Two looks at various ‘Christian communities’. The authors use their knowledge of history, sociology, anthropology and economics to increase our understanding of how entrepreneurship was shaped by religious values. The Greek Orthodox Church, from its earliest beginnings, promoted a strong work ethic and self-sufficiency. The Franciscan missions in San Diego began to develop a self-sufficient community with the native population, which carried on from 1769 until Mexican independence in 1830. Much has been written about Weber’s notion of the ‘Protestant work ethic’ (PWE), and this section includes a discussion of it. The author, Ivan Light, offers an engaging and intellectually strong discussion, which shows both the strengths and weaknesses of the debates surrounding the idea of the PWE. He also gives an insight into Quaker entrepreneurs and how they reconcile business decision making with the ‘will of God’.

In Part Three, which is entitled ‘Islam’, the first contribution offers a clear explanation of Islamic entrepreneurship that will be of benefit to undergraduates studying the development of Islamic businesses in areas where Muslims are an ethnic minority. In contrast, the research carried out in Xinjiang, where Han Chinese, non-Han, Uyghurs, Kazakhs and Kirghiz all live, produces a colourful and rich description of the entrepreneurial business of Muslims in a country where the basic infrastructure and communication networks are either absent or underdeveloped.

Part Four examines five minorities in host societies. The Druze women of Israel, and in particular, Jamila, have been very successful, despite pressures from work–family conflict. Sephardic middlemen in Morocco are portrayed in a sensitive yet colourful description of the life of the Berbers in a pluralistic society. The Ashkenazi, the Jewish middlemen, were the merchants in Alsace who dominated the livestock trade. These entrepreneurs...