

No passing fad

## Adapting to the iPhone revolution

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**D**ON'T MISS the significance of the impact of the iPhone. I read Prof. Jonathan Wright's Aug. 6 piece here ("Adam Smith and the iPhone") with amazement — his use of the iPhone for an expression of unwonted consumerism is a clear example of an academic swing and a miss. Professor Wright whiffed on this one and many others in business will miss the transformative features of this small piece of technology.

If you thought the Internet changed the way business communicates and sells, the iPhone will make the 10-year growth of the Internet look like a minor pre-global-warming glacier shift. The iPhone and the corresponding technology applications that will follow will create far more compelling and transformational opportunities for businesses to communicate their services and products via video, instantly, and through a range of options — podcasts, Internet, e-mail and YouTube.

If you don't get all the hype, you will. Grab the phone of an early adapter and experience the range of media options. Fail to understand the possibilities and it is analogous to being a manufacturer and continuing to claim that China will never be a threat.

Reports put estimated sales of the iPhone at about 200,000 phones during the initial weekend of sales, which may exceed 5 million by the end of the year. Regardless of the number, the device creates a new relationship between consumers and communication media — a deeper, comprehensive relationship that is not replaceable, only expandable.

Yes, there are weaknesses, but they are temporary — the known functionality will only continue to grow. Sure, the carrier is true to its name: Cingular. Only one of us can be on the network at a time, but that will be resolved as the phone is unlocked and the range of carrier choices further drives the pace of the adaptation rate.

I am not an Apple junky — a PC man through and through. No stock ownership either. Cynics may assert that the device is no more than a phone with bells and whistles, just as back in the 1940s when those TVs weren't much more than radios with poor-quality picture. It is far more.

The iPhone and its successive devices will not only reinvent the relationship between "man and machine" but it will reinvent the relationship between people, and thus the opportunity for business to communicate value. In as little as three years, one in four Americans may be using a fully integrated device like the iPhone, and there will be endless opportunities for business:

Video is now accessible on demand via the Internet — for those who want to demonstrate a product or tell a story, the limitations are now gone — borrow an iPhone and view the resolution quality and of the presentation of the YouTube video platform on the device. If you can't see the business potential, close



shop, let your workers go, and get your Postal Service application ready.

Consumers will be buying billions of dollars of products and services from their "phone" rather than their laptop or desktop. Just as laptops made desktops seem dated and bulky, these devices will change our expectations. Not only will commerce be anytime, anyplace, and wireless — it will become the norm.

Business and consumer Web sites need to be rethought — how they will be viewed in the browser of a phone in which the screen's quality far exceeds existing computer screens, thus creating tremendous opportunity to communicate quality and excellence, yet the screen is only six square inches.

Everyone from health-care organizations trying to teach kids and families about strategies to combat obesity to supermarkets that want to broadcast their own cooking shows, needs to comprehend the possibilities.

Health-care organizations can post workout sessions, create integrated calculators and consumers can access them anywhere. Supermarkets can post a cooking show and then integrate it into a commerce function that lets the consumer order the ingredients. On the way home the order is picked up and ready to go. I won't even go into how the health-care organization and the supermarket could team up to build a healthy diet. Let consumers watch it on their ride home, order it from their device and then get sent an e-mail about its nutritional value.

For every change, businesspeople can take one of two routes — mutter that this is a passing fad (just like those gosh darn mechanical horses) or seek to find the ways to leverage the chaos of opportunity to elevate their businesses, improve their profitability and create new value to customers.

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