

'Anywhere' tackles our technological evolution

Quick quiz: What impact has technology had on your life in the past five or 10 years?

I can probably guarantee you have personal experience with: the Internet, the cell phone and the digital camera. Each one has been a game-changer, transforming what we do, how we do it and when and where we do it."

So begins "Anywhere: How Global Connectivity is Revolutionizing the Way We Do Business," by Emily Nagle Green, the president and CEO of Yankee Group, a global technology research company. Green also serves as vice chair of the Massachusetts Innovation and Technology Exchange, the largest Internet advocacy council in the United States. She has a bachelor's degree in linguistics from Georgetown University and a master's in artificial intelligence and computer graphics from the University of Pennsylvania.

"Anywhere" is comprised of 12 chapters organized into four sections. The first part, "Welcome to Anywhere," describes the transformation that is taking place as a consequence of the proliferation of broadband access to the Internet. More than just a matter of amplified speed, the ubiquitous presence of the Internet is redefining everything about our world; i.e., it is fundamentally changing the nature of all human interaction.

"The truth is that we've just begun a journey that will take us to a future very different from today's sometimes rewarding, sometimes bewildering connectivity experience," Green writes. "It's been sparked by a potent trio of forces — a common digital network, the availability of broadband capacity, and the powerful economics of wireless transmission."

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 part 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.

Green notes that "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." 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 notes. "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. "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 inter-activity can increasingly be facilitated via more and varied appliances, it is less and less the exclusive domain of desktops and laptops. Indeed, the smart phone has already made these gateways to the Internet seem rather quaint and even old-fashioned.

In the final section of the book, "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 only seen the tip of the iceberg.

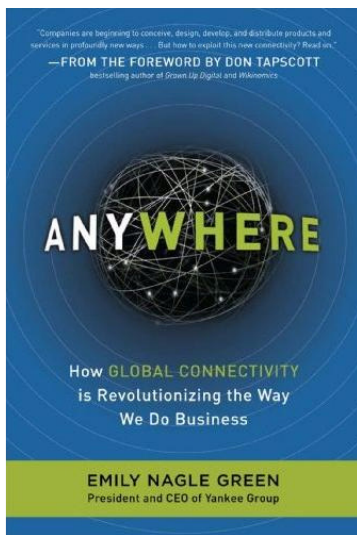
"Beyond winning new customers within existing markets, you'll be able to take advantage of the billions of potential customers in new markets that are now joining the global digital network fabric," Green observes.

"Anywhere" concludes on both an optimistic as well as 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, Green comments, "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 20th century, single-purpose networks."

Overall, "Anywhere" accomplishes Green's intended purpose in writing the book. By the time you finish it, you definitely feel a lot more knowledgeable and confident about the world we live in — and where it's 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 determined. As is the case with most everything in life, only time will tell.

— Reviewed by Aaron W. Hughey, Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, Western Kentucky University



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