

## When You Give Up Control, You Win

Jeff Jarvis is a journalism professor at the City University of New York and the author of *What Would Google Do?* The Post's Ron Nurwisah asks Mr. Jarvis how other businesses can think more like Google.

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Ron Nurwisah

**Q What's the secret to Google's success?**

A In a sense, the book really isn't about Google, it's about the changes in the world. I figure the best way to understand these really fundamental, volcanic changes that are going on in the economy and society is to look at it through the viewpoint of Google.

Google grows by building networks and platforms that enable other people to succeed. And as they succeed, Google succeeds. That's a fundamental change in the way that companies operate.

The other important thing about Google and Craigslist and eBay is that they build a different relationship with their public -- a relationship of respect and trust and collaboration, ultimately.

**Q You start the book with an anecdote about Dell and how much power the consumer seems to have now. Can you talk about that?**

A We've always said the customer's in charge, the customer knows best. We didn't really mean it. We didn't have to face the customer that directly. But now we have to because the customer has a voice and a megaphone on the Internet. The first reaction for most companies to that is absolute fright and terror because they've lost control. The real lesson here is that when you give up control, that's when you win. It's a hard lesson to learn but once you do it's amazing. The example of Dell, going from worst to first in the customer service world -- when they created Dell IdeaStorm and their customers started helping them make products and then started telling the world-- that's a good thing.

**Q How does a manufacturing-heavy industry like autos use some of these ideas?**

A Google is lucky it deals in digits, not atoms. Atoms are a pain. But there are lessons that car companies can learn from Internet companies and Google. Primarily, that is changing how they deal with their customers. Every single time I get into my car, I curse how I can't plug in my iPod. If they had been listening to us, we would've told them what we wanted.

I start that idea in the book about the unpainted car and painting it myself What if I can put my own seats in the car? We're in a post-industrial age. How do we make an industrial company, which is built for tremendous efficiency to churn out everything the same, recognize the new efficiency of not having to build everything themselves?

What if, instead, you have 100 or 1,000 car companies disaggregate the car company and put us at the centre instead of GM? Yes, you can assemble my car GM, but I choose you to use this seat and that dash. GM, you're not going to control all those transactions, but you're also going to have a far lower cost structure. In essence, I'm taking some of this risk too, because if I don't like it, it's my fault.