

# Clay Shirky

## Quotes

*Technology, Thinking, People, Tools, Groups, Revolution, Information, Mean,  
Interesting, Needs, Way, Past, Jobs, Social, Media, Behavior, Motivation,  
Inspiration, Wikipedia, Years*

It's not information overload. It's filter failure.

~Clay Shirky

Time Warner has called and they want us all back on the couch, just consuming - not producing, not sharing - and we should say, 'No.'

~Clay Shirky

There's no such thing as information overload-only filter failure.

~Clay Shirky

The waterfall method amounts to a pledge by all parties not to learn anything while doing the actual work.

~Clay Shirky

Civic participants don't aim to make life better merely for members of the group. They want to improve even the lives of people who never participate.

~Clay Shirky

We systematically overestimate the value of access to information and underestimate the value of access to each other.

~Clay Shirky

Institutions will try to preserve the problem to which they are the solution.

~Clay Shirky

A revolution doesn't happen when society adopts new tools. It happens when society adopts new behaviors

~Clay Shirky

The change we are in the middle of isn't minor and it isn't optional.

~Clay Shirky

[C]ollaborative production is simple: no one person can take credit for what gets created, and the project could not come into being without the participation of many.

~Clay Shirky

Communications tools don't get socially interesting until they get technologically boring.

~Clay Shirky

It is the people who figure out how to work simply in the present, rather than the people who mastered the complexities of the past, who get to say what happens in the future.

~Clay Shirky

When we change the way we communicate, we change society.

~Clay Shirky

Tools get socially interesting after they're no longer technologically interesting.

~Clay Shirky

Prior to the internet, the last technology that had any real effect on the way people sat down and talked together was the table

~Clay Shirky

Unlike sharing, where the group is mainly an aggregate of participants, cooperating creates group identity.

~Clay Shirky

Our social tools are not an improvement to modern society, they are a challenge to it.

~Clay Shirky

The more people are involved in a given task, the more potential

agreements need to be negotiated to do anything, and the greater the transaction costs.

~Clay Shirky

Human beings are social creatures - not occasionally or by accident but always. Sociability is one of our lives as both cause and effect.

~Clay Shirky

A Wikipedia article is a process, not a product.

~Clay Shirky

We are in a world where most American citizens over the age of 12 share things with each other online.

~Clay Shirky

Upgrading one's imagination about what is possible is always a leap of faith.

~Clay Shirky

If someone around you is multitasking, you pick up distraction like second-hand smoke.

~Clay Shirky

The more ideas there are in circulation, the more ideas there are for any individual to disagree with. More media always means more arguing.

~Clay Shirky

If it's a revolution it can't be predictable. And if it's predictable it can't be a revolution.

~Clay Shirky

We have lived in this world where little things are done for love and big things for money. Now we have Wikipedia. Suddenly big things can be

done for love.

~Clay Shirky

When you make the claim that something on the Internet is going to be good for democracy, you often [hear], 'Are you talking about the thing with the singing cats?'

~Clay Shirky

Curiously, once technology gets boring, the social effects get interesting.

~Clay Shirky

Egalitarianism is possible only in small social systems. Once a medium gets past a certain size fame is a forced move.

~Clay Shirky

One of the biggest changes in our society is the shift from prevention to reaction.

~Clay Shirky

How we put our collective talents to work is a social issue, not solely a personal one.

~Clay Shirky

It used to be expensive to make things public and cheap to make them private. Now it's expensive to make things private and cheap to make them public.

~Clay Shirky

Algorithms don't do a good job of detecting their own flaws.

~Clay Shirky

Wikipedia is forcing people to accept the stone-cold bummer that knowledge is produced and constructed by argument rather than by

divine inspiration.

~Clay Shirky

We're not good at thinking fast. We are good at feeling fast.

~Clay Shirky

When you adopt a tool you adopt the management philosophy embedded in that tool.

~Clay Shirky

More interesting than thinking about what's possible in 10 years is thinking what's possible now but that no one has built.

~Clay Shirky

Society doesn't need newspapers. What we need is journalism.

~Clay Shirky

There is no news industry.

~Clay Shirky

Society is not just the product of its individual members; it is also the product of its constituent groups.

~Clay Shirky

We use the word 'organization' to mean both the state of being organized and the groups that do the organizing.

~Clay Shirky

We are moving from sharing to cooperation to collective action.

~Clay Shirky

What you need for a participatory system to work: "a plausible promise, an effective tool, and an acceptable bargain."

~Clay Shirky

Anybody who predicts the death of cities has already met his spouse.

~Clay Shirky

There is no larger collective-action problem than the environment. The three biggest lies of the environmental movement is that every little bit helps, you can do your part, and together we can do it.

~Clay Shirky

Our social life is literally primal, in the sense that chimpanzees and gorillas, our closest relatives among the primates, are also social.

~Clay Shirky

It is possible to think that the Internet will be a net positive for society while admitting that there are significant downsides - after all, it's not a revolution if nobody loses.

~Clay Shirky

The whole, 'Is the internet a good thing or a bad thing'? We're done with that. It's just a thing. How to maximise its civic value, its public good - that's the really big challenge.

~Clay Shirky

Fame is simply an imbalance between inbound and outbound attention.

~Clay Shirky

A firm is successful when the costs of directing employee effort are lower than the potential gain from directing.

~Clay Shirky

The real gap is between doing nothing and doing something.

~Clay Shirky

It is our misfortune, as a historical generation, to live through the largest

expansion in expressive capability in human history, a misfortune because abundance breaks more things than scarcity.

~Clay Shirky

Knowledge, unlike information, is a human characteristic; there can be information no one knows, but there can't be knowledge no one knows.

~Clay Shirky

Multi-taskers often think they are like gym rats, bulking up their ability to juggle tasks, when in fact they are like alcoholics, degrading their abilities through over-consumption.

~Clay Shirky

Publishing isn't a job anymore. It's a button.

~Clay Shirky

Wikipedia [...] is the product not of collectivism but of unending argumentation.

~Clay Shirky

It's not a revolution if nobody loses

~Clay Shirky

The great tension in media has always been that freedom and quality are conflicting goals.

~Clay Shirky

Amateur production, the result of all this new capability, means that the category of 'consumer' is now a temporary behavior rather than a permanent identity

~Clay Shirky

Curation comes up when people realize that it isn't just about information seeking, it's also about synchronizing a community.



~Clay Shirky

The loss of control you fear is already in the past.

~Clay Shirky

In a profession, members are only partly guided by service to the public.

~Clay Shirky

The future presented by the internet is the mass amateurization of publishing and a switch from 'Why publish this?' to 'Why not?'

~Clay Shirky

Curation comes up when search stops working.

~Clay Shirky

Even with the sacred printing press, we got erotic novels 150 years before we got scientific journals.

~Clay Shirky

If what you're doing is valuable for people, they will find a way to pay you to keep doing it.

~Clay Shirky

Behavior is motivation filtered through opportunity.

~Clay Shirky

Any system described by a power law [...] has several curious effects. The first is that, by definition, most participants are below average.

~Clay Shirky

There are three things you need to be a good writer: you need to read a lot, you need to write a lot, and you need a lot of feedback.

~Clay Shirky

Trying to express implicit and fuzzy relationships in ways that are explicit and sharp doesn't clarify the meaning, it destroys it.

~Clay Shirky

One of the best ways to know you're completely wrong, is to behave as if you're complete right.

~Clay Shirky

Collaboration is not an absolute good.

~Clay Shirky

The transfer of [...] capabilities from various professional classes to the general public is epochal.

~Clay Shirky

When you got a cell phone you stopped making plans. 'I'll call you when I get there.'

~Clay Shirky

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