



Introduction

The Internet is the single most important development in the history of human communications since the invention of “call waiting.”

Dave Barry, in *Dave Barry in Cyberspace* (1996), p. 121

Virtually—A Different Way to Collaborate

In *Living on the Future Edge* (2010), we discussed the global exponential trends that are altering the very fabric of our society. The explosion of technological power and bandwidth has caused the death of distance. As Thomas Friedman says, “The world is flat.” Distance has never meant less than it does today.

This book is proof of that, and we wanted to share with you the process of its development.

In 2008, Ian was presenting at NECC in San Antonio. After his talk, Andrew introduced himself. Their conversation lasted only a few minutes. Over the course of the next few months, they exchanged several emails. Andrew shared some of his writing and the amazing work he had been doing in New Zealand. Immediately, Ian saw that Andrew was a like-minded character who fit perfectly into our group.

At the time, Lee was living in Italy. On one of their daily Skype video chats, Ian told Lee about this crazy Kiwi he’d met at NECC and how he thought the three of them should write a book together. That was the beginning of this project.

A few months later, Lee met Andrew for the first time—not in person, but on Skype. Through three-way video chats and follow-up emails, the idea for *The Digital Diet* and several other projects took form.

When it came time to write the book, the three authors started working collaboratively through Adobe Buzzword. Whenever one of them logged in and worked on a chapter, they could see who else had been working on it and exactly what the changes had been.

Over the winter and spring, they all got to know each other pretty well. Though they had never met in person, Lee had met Andrew’s children, seen his home, visited his classroom, and watched him interact with his students—all by video chat.

Think about this for a moment. This book was written on the Internet. It never existed on anyone’s computer during the writing process. It was never printed out. And it was written by three people, in three different parts of the world, who had never been together physically in the same place, yet virtually sat down in the same room together.

While the collaborative writing process took place through video chat and online tools, personal relationships were also being developed through the same media.

Does this sound like science fiction to you? Do your friends and colleagues appear to be speaking in strange languages? Have you heard them say, “You should be on Facebook” or “I just tweeted Ryan,” and you are left wondering what they are talking about? Do people ask you if you have Skype or a blog or if you share your pictures using Flickr? Do you get the sense that there’s something going on and that you are being left behind and missing out? Do you feel like you just can’t catch up to hundreds if not thousands of different digital tools and technologies that seem to be appearing every day? Does it appear that your friends are speaking in tongues or need to have their medication increased?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then this is the book for you!

What Is a Digital Diet?

We have all heard of radical diets that promise everything and deliver little. Some will cut out all fats, others will cut out all carbohydrates, still others will have you eat a tiny range of foods, and others will have you eat fillers that set like Jell-O in your stomach and fool you into feeling full and satisfied. But the common thing about most diets is they are not sustainable.

You can’t lose 30 pounds of ugly fat in two weeks if it has taken you years to get to that state. An effective diet is one that is going to make lifelong changes and is not a radical, quick-fix diet. It’s a diet that makes gradual, sustainable changes. It’s a diet that takes you to the goals you want to achieve in small steps.

This is a digital diet. It is not designed to make instant change. Rather, a digital diet outlines a series of steps that will support you as you explore and investigate the amazing digital world we live in. You can’t change the habits of a lifetime in an instant. This is the mistake many traditional diets make. Instead you have to gradually explore taking the steps that suit you and at the pace that meets your needs. In much the same way, you don’t have to devour this book in one sitting. Rather, you should try to slowly enjoy each succulent chapter, sampling the delights that each step on your digital diet brings.

The digital diet approaches each chapter of the book by offering the following elements:

- *Clear goals and objectives*—This book is going to help you use a variety of great tools that will allow you to stay in touch with your friends and have fun. It will allow you to get the information you need easily and efficiently and save it so you can access it at any time from anywhere.
- *Skills*—This book will provide you with a step-by-step guide to setting up and using these new digital tools and technologies. Each chapter takes you through a series of small steps that show you how to use the tools and share the information you have.

- *Incentive*—Incentives are often useful to making change. No matter how good the ideas are, how fantastic the resources and user guides are, and how detailed your plan, you have to want to change. This book provides these incentives.
- *Resources*—This book will provide you with the resources and materials you need to understand the basics of each tool. Each chapter provides links to other online resources so you can expand your knowledge and expertise.
- *A plan*—This book is a step-by-step guide. But you don't have to do every thing! Too often diets require you to choreograph your life to the smallest step. This digital diet doesn't. If the tool or technology doesn't fit your interests and needs, then we suggest you don't use it!
- *Further exploration*—Links to additional resources are provided for those who might want to know a little bit more about the areas that are being profiled.

Where Do I Start?

In this book, we are going to look at all the steps and stages you need to use a selection of stable digital tools to enhance your use of the digital world. Chapter 1 looks at us as digital citizens. This chapter will take you through how to keep yourself, your friends, and your ideas safe while respecting others and their property.

In Chapters 2 and 3, we will look at how to find the information you want and then save it and share it with others. At the time of this writing, it is estimated there are more than 250 million web sites on the Internet. These two chapters will show you how to locate what you need when you need it.

Chapters 4, 7, 9, and 10 will look at different ways of sharing your resources. Whether it's showing your friends your holiday photos, writing an online diary, making a rich presentation of your voice and photographs, or using a short message to stay in touch, these chapters have it all.

Chapter 5 harnesses the power of the Internet to text, talk, and videoconference with your friends and colleagues for free! Using Skype, you can stay in touch no matter how near or far you are from your important people.

Chapter 6 introduces you to the world of Twitter. Twitter is a popular tool used for what is called "microblogging", and it's a whole new way of blogging and staying in touch with your friends and family.

In Chapter 8, we will dive into Facebook. Here you will take small and safe steps that will guide you through the phenomenon of our times—social networking.

In the appendix, we discuss email. Electronic mail is one of the core foundations of everyone's use of the digital world.

Do you have to read it from start to finish in sequence? No! Each chapter stands by itself. Read what suits you and try what sounds like fun in the sequence that feels right for you. Remember to take your time and be patient—this is fun, exciting stuff that can sometimes seem a little challenging. But the rewards are huge. Be patient, relax, and have a good time.

Ready?

Set?

Go!



Further Questions

- What are some of the technologies and digital tools you are using today that you weren't using 20 years ago?
- How have those technologies and tools changed your life during this period of time?
- What new technologies and tools have you heard of, but don't really know much about?
- What new technologies and tools are you interested in finding out more information about?
- Where would you go to find this information?