



Honored as one of Newsweek's "Women Shaping the 21st Century," Tiffany Shlain, the founder and creative director of **The Webby Awards**, recently gave **The Creative Group** an exclusive preview of 2005's technology trends – and how those changes will offer exciting new opportunities for those in creative professions.

"NAPSTER FOR IDEAS"

Using the Web as its platform, a growing movement to moderate copyright laws will change how all of us share creative materials, from music to photographs to patents.

Similar to the open source or free software movements, groups like Creative Commons (www.creativecommons.org) will make creativity easier by making more "raw material" available online. Under the rallying cry of "Some Rights Reserved," an artist can establish if and how their work may be used. At each artist's discretion, photographs could be free to use as long as the photographer is credited and songs could be copied, distributed and sampled without any restrictions or threats of legal action.

What It Means For Creative Professionals:

The growth of more reasonable copyrights will break down barriers to creativity by providing artists and designers an easy way to incorporate innovative ideas into their work. At the same time, it will also provide them with a new way to ensure that they have control over how and when their work is used, providing exposure without exploitation.

REVENGE OF THE RATINGS

Americans already love sharing and comparing their opinions online; more than 25 percent of adult Internet users have rated a product or service at sites like Amazon.com, eBay, and Moviefone.

In 2005, look for use of online rating and reputation systems to skyrocket as more and more sites empower users by letting them give a thumbs-up – or down – on everything from teachers to hotels to lawyers.

Shlain says that interactive word-of-mouth networks will become increasingly sophisticated and could eventually lead to ordinary consumers playing a more influential role in choosing political candidates and deciding public policy.

What It Means For Creative Professionals:

The growth of rating systems means that anything can be reviewed, including your own work. When creating any product, whether it is a Web site or a book cover, keep in mind that your supervisor is no longer the sole judge of your work. Always put your best foot forward, as your work could wind up being debated and critiqued by the masses online.

SCANNING FOR BARGAINS

Powerful new search services will transform shopping – online and off.

No longer just for chatting, your cell phone will become a bargain-hunting tool with the addition of barcode scanners. Scan a book or CD at the mall or a friend's home and your cell phone will tell you where you can find it cheaper online.

Shlain says to also watch for software that can transform your digital video camera into a barcode scanner and enable you to create a digital library of all of your books, CDs and movies, including cover images and liner notes.

For those in need of immediate gratification, a boom in local search engines will provide bargain-hunters with the best prices at nearby stores by simply plugging in a zip code and the name of the product they are looking for.

What It Means For Creative Professionals:

Think about what else a consumer could learn about a product beyond just its price. By embedding additional information in a barcode, companies could create stronger relationships with their customers. For example, a barcode for a T-shirt could tell consumers where it was made, what it was made of and whether it was produced in an environmentally-responsible way – and if they liked the T-shirt's design, they could also find out who was responsible for making it through a credit imbedded in the barcode.

MOBLOGS RULE

Blogs have become so familiar that your grandmother probably has one. In fact, "blog" was crowned Word of the Year by Merriam-Webster dictionary and will make its debut in the 2005 edition.

Now, get ready for the next generation – Mobile Blogs, or Moblogs.

The next best thing to a live personal broadcast, Moblogs are updated constantly throughout the day with photos, video and text directly from cell phones.

Shlain says Moblogs will explode in 2005 thanks to a boom in both camera phone sales (more than 160 million camera phones were sold in 2004) and in community sites like **Fotolog.net**, **TextAmerica.com** and **Flickr.com**, which make it easier for people to instantly publish and share photos and thoughts with the world.

What It Means For Creative Professionals:

As technology becomes increasingly portable, creative professionals will need to create new interfaces that free people from the desktop and allow them to access technologies from anywhere, whether it is the kitchen, the car or the street. No matter what you're working on, consider how your designs will be used differently when people are mobile and how you can better meet those needs.

DAYS WITHOUT TECHNOLOGY

Overwhelmed by bleeps, bings and rings?

Shlain says that addiction to IM, Blackberrys, and cell phones is leading to CDD, or Communications Deficit Disorder. In fact, according to a recent study, one hour of time spent using the Internet reduces socializing with friends, co-workers and family by 23.5 minutes. In 2005, Shlain predicts that gadgets, new workplace policies and a little common sense will come to the rescue.

Watch for keychain devices that can turn off any TV anywhere and for theaters and restaurants to install cell phone jammers, which block cell phone service. At the office, expect to see more workplaces encourage face-to-face interaction by following the lead of a Chicago firm that banned employees from sending e-mail on Fridays. Shlain also says you'll see more and more people observe "Days without Technology" – self-imposed technology time-outs for those controlled by their gadgets.

What It Means For Creative Professionals:

For creative professionals who depend on technology to make a living, a "day without technology" might not go over too well with the boss. However, on your day off or lunch break, Shlain suggests taking time to visit a museum, gallery, library, bookstore or park for both relaxation and inspiration. Technology time-outs like these are critical to keeping your creative juices flowing.

For 2005 overall, Shlain says, the wall between life online and offline will continue to blur, with the Web becoming as indispensable a tool as the telephone. And creative professionals will keep leading the way by humanizing the technology that makes it all possible.

For more information on The Webby Awards, please visit www.webbyawards.com.

The Creative Group is a specialized staffing service placing creative, advertising, marketing and Web professionals on a project basis with a variety of firms.

For more information, please visit www.creativegroup.com.