

@ Emergent Futures | New Around the World | What Are We Writing About

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*Welcome to the April edition of What's Emerging. This month check out 'What we are writing about' for two book reviews and a commentary on food, inflation and forecasting. As well as the links in this edition there are more on our website - see extras at [newsletter downloads](#).*

*We hope you enjoy this edition.*

*Cheers*

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## Business Tips

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### Help with publishing books

Blurb is a website where you can self publish a book. They have now introduced a service where people that have successfully published a couple of books and have particular skills can offer their services to others on the site. For example you can get proof reading, design or graphic work done through the site.

### 10 things you should do to a new PC before connecting it to the internet

A Microsoft Windows PC that has not been updated for security vulnerabilities will be compromised by some form of malware within minutes of connecting to the Internet. Take steps to protect yourself before you start Web surfing.

### 10 more useful programs

For all of you that liked our business tip on 10 useful computer programs here is another list. Some of these are more technical but there are also very useful ones such as Foxit, a free PDF Reader, and 7-zip, a free file compression program. We hope you find something in there that is useful to you

### 7 deadly sins of email

This article by Andrew May, author of Flip the Switch, offers a range of tips to cut down on email traffic and manage it more efficiently – quite important really when you consider that the average email user in business spends 2 hours plus a day dealing with email and research shows it costs \$25,000 annually on paying senior managers to read and write emails – and to make matters worse, worldwide email traffic will triple over the next few years with 331 billion emails predicted to be sent and received per day by 2009!



## What's Emerging

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## **State of the world 2008**

If you are interested in climate change and sustainability you can download chapters for the Worldwatch State of the World 2008 report from this site - they are regularly adding chapters.

## **Hello, gorgeous! Meet the laptop you'll use in 2015**

A lot has changed in the 20 years since the first laptop computers appeared, however, one thing that has stubbornly stayed the same is the conventional clamshell format with its hinged display lid that opens to reveal a mechanical keyboard. That's about to change. The rules of notebook design and the components that go inside are being rewritten to make the road a better place to work and play.

## **Mobile projecting**

Microvision is just one of a number of companies that are working on mini projectors that you can use to project from your mobile phone or hand held device. Imagine how the world changes if you can project web pages, movies and even virtual computer screens from your hand held device.

## **First British human-animal hybrid embryos created by scientists**

Britain's first human-animal hybrid embryos have been created, forming a crucial first step, scientists believe, towards a supply of stem cells that could be used to investigate debilitating and so far untreatable conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's and motor neurone disease.

## **Smart appliances report real time energy use**

Users could soon be able to determine how much energy each electrical appliance at home is consuming - on the fly.

## **Nanotechnology to produce electricity from nuclear waste?**

US researchers say they have developed highly efficient materials that can convert the radiation, not heat, from nuclear materials and reactions into electricity.

## **Smarty pig**

Could not resist this one - SmartyPig is a simple, smart, fun way to save for a specific goal. Using groundbreaking technology and the latest in security standards, SmartyPig allows you to invite family and friends to contribute to your account, gives you additional incentive boosts from top retailers who sell exactly what you're saving for AND \*4.30% (APY) interest on the money you're saving.

## **Wind energy generators far offshore may alleviate coastal environmental concerns**

Blue H exclusively focuses on developing economic wind energy sites far offshore. The company brings together expertise in wind energy, marine construction generally and tension legged platforms in particular, to develop offshore wind farms with large turbines (5 MW or more) which are difficult to site on shore.

## **Project better place to replace all oil based cars in Israel by 2020**

Renault Nissan will build cars powered by lithium-ion batteries running purely on electricity and delivering performance on par with a 1.6 liter gas engine. These electric car models will become available as of 2011. A key component will be the preparation and development of a national infrastructure to access electric power. "Project Better Place" will arrange for the installation of 500,000 charging hook-ups throughout Israel. It is estimated electric power charging costs for the lifetime of this car will approximate the cost of fueling an equivalent gasoline powered vehicle for some two years at current gasoline prices.

## **Y Combinator**

Y Combinator is a new kind of venture firm specializing in funding early stage startups. They help startups through what is for many the hardest step, from idea to company.

### Smart clothes: textiles that track your health

Garments that can measure a wearer's body temperature or trace their heart activity are just entering the market, but the European project BIOTEX weaves new functions into smart textiles. Miniaturised biosensors in a textile patch can now analyse body fluids, even a tiny drop of sweat, and provide a much better assessment of someone's health.

### 25 environmental threats of the future

Forget genetically modified crops - the great environmental concerns of the future should be nanomaterials, manmade viruses and biomimetic robots.

### Ricardo - a different kind of engine

Ricardo and a consortium of automotive partners have announced the completion of an advanced prototype research programme based on the highly innovative 2/4SIGHT engine concept. This gasoline engine concept uses novel combustion, boosting, control and valve actuation technologies to enable automatic and seamless switching between two- and four-stroke operation, with the aim of delivering significant performance and fuel economy improvements through aggressive downsizing.

A quote from one of our frequent readers and responders Lindsay Leveen who knows much more about this stuff than us "***this is a smart idea as 2 stroke has lower mass and better efficiency the 4 stroke. The problem has always been oil for lubrication and hence smog in a 2 stroke engine. If they are also going with high compression ratio and direct injection they could get 25% better efficiency. They have to have rapidly responding controls to do the switch and with microprocessors this is now possible. Coupling this type of engine with battery hybrid will give further improvement and will be far better than hydrogen and fuel cells***" (<http://www.greenenergyexplained.com/>)

### Consuming nanotechnology

The science of nanotechnology is already revolutionising the worlds of medicine and construction. Soon it could be doing the same for our food - but after the backlash against GM foods, will consumers swallow it?

### As prices rise, farmers spurn conservation program

In the US thousands of farmers are taking their fields out of the government's biggest conservation program, which pays them not to cultivate. They are spurning guaranteed annual payments for a chance to cash in on the boom in wheat, soybeans, corn and other crops.

### International call for a 'greener' agriculture

Global agriculture must undergo a new revolution that makes farmers the custodians of the natural environment and the basis of stable societies, according to a major new report from 400 scientists.

### Four nations in race to be first to go carbon neutral

Iceland, New Zealand, Norway and Costa Rica are all hoping to turn their economies green, but the challenges they face are formidable.

### **Environmental monitoring by bike**

Cellphones used by bicycle couriers are monitoring air pollution in Cambridge, UK, and beaming the data back to a research lab. The project, called MESSAGE, is developing low cost sensors to provide data for the planning and management of environmental impacts in urban areas. Sensors are embedded on vehicles and people to act as "mobile, real-time environmental probes, sensing transport and non-transport related pollutants and hazards." One very practical application: working with doctors to correlate their patient's asthma symptoms with the air pollution around them.

### **Socially networked consumption - CarrotMob**

What if the most important step you could take to help solve the world's most challenging problems was to drop into the corner store on a certain week and buy a certain brand of toothbrush? This is the question posed by *Carrotmob*, a new non-profit that organizes consumers to make purchases that reward companies who make environmentally friendly choices. The big idea is to improve the world by helping companies embrace socially responsible choices, leveraging the power of "socially networked consumption" to do so.

### **Physicist says time travel is not only possible, but likely**

Kaku, a professor at the City University of New York, is creating quite a stir in Britain with the release of his new book, "The Physics of the Impossible." Kaku, one of the earliest proponents of string theory, still a contentious issue among physicists, divides the most common science-fiction tropes, or "impossibilities," into three categories - possible soon, possible in the far future and really, truly impossible.

### **Go slow - its good for you**

Our culture has conditioned us to think that slow is evil. Modern life says that faster is better. Speed is king and our lives are measured in bits and bytes, milliseconds and micro-detail. Is it any wonder our health, relationships, sex lives and performance begin to suffer? Leading performance expert, Andrew May, tells us how to slow down and get more out of life.

### **Money does buy happiness**

New research has found it is possible to buy happiness after all: when you spend money on others. Researchers at the University of British Columbia and Harvard Business School found individuals are much happier if they spend money "pro-socially" - that is, on gifts for others or charitable donations - rather than spending on themselves.



## What We Are Writing About

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### **Food, Inflation and Forecasting**

There have been a lot of articles in the media over the last few weeks that have centred on the issue of the effects of food price increases on the inflation rate and how that is feeding through into the local economy and housing loans. Some of this culminated in comments in the weekend press that the reserve bank should change its inflation target and attitude to monetary policy because the old system does not apply when international food and oil prices are the key drivers behind inflationary pressures. Putting aside the fact that getting this call wrong could have huge consequences for the economy and the lives of lots of ordinary people this is something that should not have blindsided anybody. Last July we wrote that there were grave dangers of subsidies on biofuels around the world pushing up food prices and because food prices are such a large part of the CPI basket that there was a significant inflationary risk. You can read the article by downloading it at <http://www.emergentfutures.com/page.php?pid=10700&wpid=37>

We are not putting this in the newsletter to grandstand or to say that we are infallible as we clearly and consistently state that people are inherently poor at forecasting. However it is a timely reminder that with the right skills and processes you can improve your hit rate on what might happen and open your mind and your organisation to different possibilities of what might happen. Please contact us if you think we can help you with this.

## **Book Reviews**

### **The 4-Hour Workweek: Escape 9-5, Live Anywhere, and Join the New Rich by Timothy Ferriss**

When I first picked up this book to have a quick flick through it while browsing at a Border's book shop I thought that it would be just another American hype book, like an Anthony Robbins marketing tool. To some extent that is true but the book is also crammed with practical tips and tools on how to achieve a whole range of outcomes.

Those of you that know me well will scoff at the thought of me getting to a four hour work week and you would be right. I am interested in the clash of ideas and being involved in that clash and you cannot do that in four hours a week. However, while that is the aim of the author, what gives this book great value is that you can take the tools that are contained within it and apply them to whatever your goal and desires are. Frankly I find some of the goals that the author has to be inane and nonsensical but doubtless he would think the same of some of mine.

The initial part of the book details how the author went from working 80 hours and hardly making any money to working 4 hours a week and making far more money. After that it is about how to achieve these things by using practical tools and he divides the process up into a useful acronym - DEAL (Definition, Elimination, Automation, Liberation). Within this structure the things that I found most useful were:

#### **Definition**

On page 54 the author describes a process he calls dreamlining where you set some goals for the next 6 months and 12 months in a very defined but ambitious way. There is too much detail to describe here but I found this very useful.

#### **Elimination**

This is all about getting rid of what you don't need to do, or being more efficient at what you do need to get done. The most useful tip I found here was his tips on email management. Email threatens to overwhelm me and I am sure many of you. By taking some of the tools I have managed to get more email done in less time and get less addicted to it.

#### **Automation**

This section is largely about outsourcing your work and automating income so it is not dependent on your time. There are some great tips on outsourcing some of what you do, even if you are a paid employee. There are also some great tips and tools on how to create products, licensing systems, advertising and marketing systems, etc.

#### **Liberation**

This is about freeing yourself up from being tied to an office or having to go into work. It is also about how to get mini-retirements/sabbaticals and it is amazing what can be done for a low cost.

This book has totally changed how I work and live my life and I would heartily recommend you read it. It may not do the same for you but if there is just one good idea you pick up and use it is well worth the read and the expense. If you want to go and get some initial resources and ideas then you can go to the website first <http://www.fourhourworkweek.com/>

## **Competing in a Flat World: Building Enterprises for a Borderless World by Victor K Fung, William K Fung and Yoram (Jerry) Wind**

This book is basically about Li and Fung which is a company based in Hong Kong that facilitates networks in the global garment manufacturing and retailing industries. Without owning any factories they have managed to grow in turnover from US\$531 million in 1992 to US\$8.72 billion in 2006. It is an amazing and compelling story of how global supply chains now work and what skills are needed to orchestrate and manage a network within those global chains.

Li and Fung has over 3000 manufacturing suppliers that it deals with on a regular basis and it creates temporary, medium term or long term networks to deal with a customer. If for example you wish to place an order for a certain number of garments then the network that you get to supply those garments will vary depending on which day or week you contact Li and Fung with the order. The companies that supply the raw materials, the design capabilities, the manufacturing process and the logistics support will all be different depending on your needs and how busy the various suppliers are the day or week they are contacted.

By not investing in manufacturing plants Li and Fung have freed up capital to expand rapidly and not be tied down to any one location or factory. This has given them phenomenal growth. While a Sci-Fi novel may not be a business reference book, the ideas contained in this amazing novel help us shift our perspectives on ideas of humanity using a simple idea that human minds can be digitised and stored. This idea leads to a number of possible changes in how humans can live:

- Reduced their core vendor numbers by 40%
- Reduced average manufacturing costs by 15%
- Increased on time deliveries from 40% to 95%
- Reduced lead times by 21 days
- While improving overall quality

The book gives amazing insight into the overall strategy but understandably little operational detail as to how this all works in practice. The overall story is compelling although the second half of the book is much less interesting and slides into a few stories that do not have much value and rely on platitudes rather than hard facts and research. One question that shines through though is what effect will climate change and carbon trading have on the supply chains described which are often extended and tortuous in order to access the lowest costs at each step and get around trade laws. Extra costs in transport will reshape how this works but I am sure that Li and Fung and their ilk will nimbly change what they do, albeit leaving behind quite a lot of wreckage in the form of invested manufacturing capital which is no longer in the right place.

I would heartily recommend this book to anybody who wishes to understand how these global supply chains and their orchestrators work. It is worth the price and the effort for just that information and understanding.

If you are genuinely interested in this area then I would also recommend reading [The World Is Flat 3.0: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century](#) by Thomas Friedman. It is referenced several times in the text of Competing in a Flat World and gives a more detailed and nuanced discussion of the drivers that underpin some of the change.