“Wikinomics” is defined by Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams as “the art and science of mass collaboration”---or “the art and science of peer production.” The inspiration, of course, is Wikipedia---the online encyclopedia created by ten thousand volunteer authors, ten times larger than the Encyclopedia Britannica, and fact-checked to roughly the same degree of accuracy.

Tapscott and Williams argue that today’s IT collaboration tools are bringing about radical changes in business and beyond. The successful business leader/manager will of necessity understand and utilize the new powers and possibilities of the wiki (Hawaiian term for “quick”) world.

Four basic principles run through this “wikinomics”: openness, peering, sharing, and acting globally. Openness means that transparency replaces secrecy. Hierarchy, in turn, is replaced by self-organizing peering relationships within and between organizations. Sharing replaces proprietary thinking. Acting globally represents a step beyond acting multi-nationally.

Tapscott and Williams describe seven models of wikinomic collaboration. (1) “Peer production” is exemplified by Wikipedia and Linux. (2) “Ideagoras” are forums in which both problems (without solutions) and solutions (without applications) are openly shared---inviting outsiders as well as insiders to invent answers. (3) “Prosumers” brings consumers into the design and production process, not just the purchase and use stage. (4) “The New Alexandrians” (e.g., the Human Genome Project) invite collaborative research among laboratories and between university and industry and see amazing advances in scientific knowledge. (5) “Platforms for Participation” describes things like Amazon’s reader review section, and other collaborative knowledge sharing sites. (6) The “Global Plant Floor” describes how not just parts but whole modules are produced in different places, shipped and snapped together at the last moment (e.g., Boeing’s newest planes). (7) The “Wiki Workplace” is exemplified by the “Geek Squad’s” development and subsequent incorporation into Best Buy.

All of Don Tapscott’s books (with several different co-authors) have been fascinating and insightful reading, including *Wikinomics*. I give this book a “buy” recommendation. Tapscott is a bit cheerleader as well as journalist---breathless with excitement about the possibilities (is it just me that feels exhausted at the thought of more info and chaos at a higher pace?). Tapscott acknowledges that there will be inevitable growing pains and adjustments but he really sees wikinomics as an irresistible trend.

Among the problems and challenges of the open, free, anonymous, wiki-world: If everything becomes common property, where does the profit motive get to do its motivational work? If everyone has equal access, how are things like expertise and truth preserved (e.g., Amazon reader reviews are notoriously unreliable; political sabotage of Wikipedia entries is not unknown)? As thought and action become more global and less local, what happens to cultural- and bio-diversity? Do we really want results that represent a homogenized, common denominator world? One universal account of the human genome seems like a wiki-win. But would mass collaboration confine us to a world of Olive Gardens, Starbuck's, and CNNs? Oh joy.

Bottom line for me: some things will always best be done by individuals acting under their own inspiration and genius; most things benefit from collaboration at various stages; and some things benefit from mass collaboration of the wikinomics type. But not everything. To paraphrase Cisco (“no technology religion”), *No wikinomics religion!* Say Yes and embrace it when it aligns with your personal or corporate mission; say No when it doesn’t. Sometimes mass collaboration will lead to breakthroughs; other times it will lead to mediocrity and paralysis.