

Invasion of the Amazons

By Sam Vaknin, Ph.D.

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The last few months have witnessed a bloodbath in tech stocks coupled with a frantic re-definition of the web and of every player in it (as far as content is concerned).

This effort is three pronged:

Some companies are gambling on content distribution and the possession of the attendant digital infrastructure. MightyWords, for example, stealthily transformed itself from a "free-for-all-everyone-welcome" e-publisher to a distribution channel of choice works (mainly by midlist authors). It now aims to feed its content to content-starved web sites. In the process, it shed thousands of unfortunate authors who did not meet its (never stated) sales criteria.

Others bet the farm on content creation and packaging. Bn.com invaded the digital publishing and POD (Print on Demand) businesses in a series of lightning purchases. It is now the largest e-book store by a wide margin.

But Amazon seemed to have got it right once more. The web's own virtual mall and the former darling of Wall Street has diversified into micropayments.

The Internet started as a free medium for free spirits. E-commerce was once considered a dirty word. Web surfers became used to free content. Hence the (very low) glass ceiling on the price of content made available through the web - and the need to charge customers less than 1 US dollars to a few dollars per transaction ("micro-payments"). Various service providers (such as Pay-Pal) emerged, none became sufficiently dominant and all-pervasive to constitute a standard. Web merchants' ability to accept micropayments is crucial. E-commerce (let alone m-commerce) will never take off without it.

Enter Amazon. Its "Honour System" is licensed to third party web sites (such as Bartleby.com and SatireWire). It allows people to donate money or effect micro-payments, apparently through its patented one-click system. As far as the web sites are concerned, there are two major drawbacks: all donations and payments are refundable within 30 days and Amazon charges them 15 cents per transaction plus 15(!) percent. By far the worst deal in town.

So, why the fuss?

Because of Amazon's customer list. This development emphasizes the growing realization that one's list of customers - properly data mined - is the greatest asset, greater even than original content and more important than distribution channels and digital right management or asset management applications. Merchants are willing to pay for access to this ever expanding virtual neighbourhood (even if they are not made privy to the customer information collected by Amazon).

The Honour System looks suspiciously similar to the payment system designed by Amazon for Stephen King's serialized e-novel, "The Plant". Interesting to note how the needs of authors and publishers are now in the driver's seat, helping to spur along innovations in business methods.

Sam Vaknin is the author of "Malignant Self Love - Narcissism Revisited" and "After the Rain - How the West Lost the East". He is a columnist in "Central Europe Review", United Press International (UPI) and ebookweb.org and the editor of mental health and Central East Europe categories in The Open Directory, Suite101 and searcheurope.com. Until recently, he served as the Economic Advisor to the Government of Macedonia.

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The Phenomenon of Russia

By Vadim Smolyanov and Valentina Smolyanova

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Translated from Russian. We shall be glad to receive your remarks on stylistics, grammar, and content issues.

The Chinese proverb says: Before going somewhere, find out where you are. Having paraphrased on Russian, we shall receive: Before asking "What to do?" find out who you are.

The basic problem of the Russian society is the following: we do not know who we are. We as a society are in unconsciousness. Let will address to a history. Russians did not understand itself and therefore searched the help at outside of during many centuries. The first fact known to us is the invitation of Scandinavians to a board, because the Russian "democratic" control system through Veche has given failure. In the first centuries of Scandinavians board a lot of famous actions have been made in Russia. Main from it are creation of statehood and expansion of Christiania on the ancient Russian ground. But Scandinavians did not differ from Russians through some generations and were a reason for chaos of domestic wars. It was a major factor of Russia capture by Tatars. With all negatives that invasion from the East carried Russia have received positives: the authority, the order and the East culture. The obvious fact, the Tatars invasion promoted the collecting of Russian grounds around the Moscow and further to a birth of Great Russia. As soon as east experience has been mastered and it has been embodied in Ivan Groznyi's despotisms, unconsciousness of Russians was appearing once again and plunged the country into Vague time. After a short rest at M. F. Romanov's board, unconsciousness had again an effect in Great split and crisis of authority down to Peter I's board. Peter's greatness consists that he has combined West and the East, the western technologies and east values. Cultural explosion of the XIX century has been appeared due to Peter's reforms. Unfortunately Alexander II's reforms had only the Western basis; it had enabled the Russia unconsciousness to appear in the beginning of XX century during Russian revolutions. What is our way now? Where will this way result? It would not be desirable to be mistaken once again. This work is attempt to reply: "Who are we?"

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The part of article is created on the initiative of the experts with experience in the field of control systems, managements of projects and psychologies. Our purpose is self-improvement and self-actualization of the person. The article contains the concept of person development on the basis of traditional religions and modern achievements in the world of science.

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