



BUSINESS TRENDS SPECIAL REPORT 2008



BUSINESS TRENDS SPECIAL REPORT *2008*



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Welcome!

Tracking global trends – how nine key developments are shaping the business world. This is the core focus of our latest Business Trends Special Report 2008. As these trends change the ways in which businesses operate, grow and compete, winners and losers inevitably will emerge. We certainly hope that your business will be one of the winners in this fiercely competitive landscape.

As we examine each of these nine business trends in details, we have included specific examples of businesses and companies who are riding on the trends to their massive advantage. At the end of each narrative, we ask ourselves some thinking questions about how best we can exploit the business trend to the fullest.

We hope you will join us in this thinking exercise. And apply the key takeaways to your business idea or concept.

If you want more, be sure to check out our blog at <http://www.CoolBusinessIdeas.com>. Updated daily with the latest business ideas which we've spotted worldwide, we're sure you'll find it an enjoyable read. Don't forget to share this report with your friends and colleagues. We hope you enjoy this free report!

The CoolBusinessIdeas.com team - Marcel, Steven and Yuelin

<http://www.coolbusinessideas.com>

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Easier Life Online



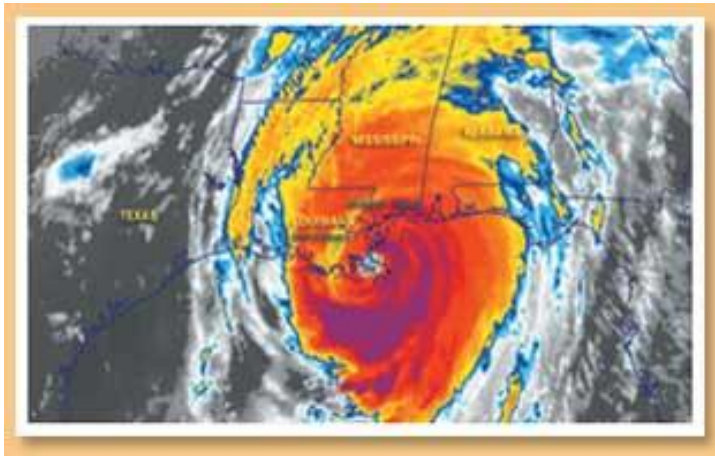
In the Web 2.0 age, the online world has entered the smallest tasks in our lives. We now have online solutions and services that make everyday activities simpler and easier.

Didn't know you needed help with something? Wait until you see what's available to make your life easier:

- Lost a bet and owed your buddy a drink? BuyYourFriendADrink.com (pictured above) was launched to make it easier to buy someone a drink – online. Log on to the website, purchase a round of beer for your friends online, and they can easily redeem their drinks at participating establishments by flashing a text message with the promotional code. It's great to treat your buddies to drinks when you can't be around for the celebrations.
- If you're finding it hard to remember the birthday of a close friend, let alone mail over a birthday card, then Boston-based [Jack Cards](http://JackCards.com) might save you. The online service lets you save birthdays and important dates related to your loved ones and close friends. You can schedule 1, 2 or 4 weeks in advance of the big day for ready-to-go greeting cards to be sent to you. Write a personal greeting, mail out the card, and you're done!
- Maybe you don't like the hassle of planning for a big party at your place. Then you might find [MyPunchBowl's](http://MyPunchBowl.com) new party planning service useful. As party creator, you make a list of things you need for the party which is made public to all your invitees. Party goers will then respond and bring the needed items to the party. They can even add their own items via the online service.
- Searching for that blueberry cake that the birthday girl absolutely adores? If you're clueless about where you might be able to find cakes, pastries and baked items within your locality, let [CakeAmerica](http://CakeAmerica.com) help you. The online search service is dedicated to help web users find cakes and other baked products in their localities. To search, simply enter any words related to the cake that you're searching for, specify your zip code, select the number of miles within the specified zip code and click 'search'. You might find some success looking for that blueberry cake.

What other online services do you use regularly to help you in your daily tasks?

The New Tourism



Tourists used to be content with just sightseeing around the various places of attraction in the countries they happen to be visiting. With changing consumer demands and heightened industry competition, tourism players around the world are getting more innovative in their business approach. We've seen a few fresh tourism themes and concepts sprouting up around the world that deserve special mention:

- If you're traveling in Rome, you might want to sign up for "sightjogging" to please the fitness-conscious athlete in you. [Sightjogging](#) offers visitors a chance to put on their jogging shoes and take a guided tour of Rome's main attractions. Multilingual trainers will meet you at your hotel and take you jogging along predefined routes based on your interests (be it artistic, historic or naturalistic).
- Jogging not your cup of tea? Then check out "devastation tourism" with bus tour operator [Gray Line New Orleans](#). The company's new idea is a 3-hour "*Hurricane Katrina — America's Worst Catastrophe*" tour of the hurricane devastation of 2005. Tour route includes visits to Canal Street, the Superdome, and some of the neighborhoods affected badly by the disaster.
- Want to visit the Colorado mountain range, but too worried to leave behind the baby? The [Colorado Mountain Mamas](#) hiking club is an ideal solution for mommies who want to go hiking with their babies on board. Each hike is led by an experienced guide certified in CPR and trained to take special care of the mom and toddlers. There are also special trail experiences designed to engage babies in the discovery of the outdoors.

Have you taken part in any interesting, unusual tourism activities? Have they triggered ideas for new business opportunities?

Wacky Gizmos



Talk about gadgets, and everybody is after the same things: the latest, the fastest, most powerful, most advanced, etc.

Yet makers of gizmos and gadgets are looking into fresh ways to make geeky consumers get excited about their products. They are increasingly incorporating unusual, wacky and maybe even fun ideas into their gadgets.

Let's have a look at some interesting ideas:

- The [Jelly Click inflatable mouse](#) (pictured above) is a godsend for travelers who have to pack tons of gadgetry into their luggage and gadget bags. Save yourself that extra bit of space for your beloved iPod by flattening the Jelly Click before stuffing it into your bag. Just remember to inflate it up for use later.
- Fancy an USB-powered massage while at work? The [USB Far Infra-Red Pad](#) is powered from a spare USB port, and it claims to emit infrared light onto your arms, back or biceps to remove the weariness and leave you revitalized after a long day at the computer desk. Compact and lightweight, you can get it from US\$21.99.
- Another USB-inspired idea, the [USB calculator mouse](#) might prove useful for all you business executives who are always poring over spreadsheets and crunching numbers. It's a useful device for laptop users especially who don't have a user-friendly keypad. Priced at £14.95, this integrated calculator mouse shows you the results of your calculations instantly without having to run additional apps to crunch your numbers.
- The next idea is somewhat ridiculous, but Hello Kitty's fans could be interested in it. The [USB Kitty](#) is a watch-cat for your computer. It comes with two infrared sensors to help alert any intruders by shaking its head and producing many different sounds. Helpful perhaps in warning people to leave your PC alone when you're away for a bathroom break.

What other unusual gadget ideas can you think of or have seen lately? Share them with us!

Design is King



Design is the new mantra for many business executives and owners. Apple's business success is due partly to the irresistible yet practical design of its products, including the bestselling iPod line.

A winning product design is key to attracting influential customers who will in turn spread it virally to the mainstream crowd.

Let's review some products below which are making heads turn with their brilliant design:

- Cheska's ceramic [Lung Ashtray](#) (pictured above right) is too elegant to be an ashtray for smokers to snub out their cigarettes; it deserves to be on a display shelf for good design products. It's also a clever reminder to smokers of the consequences of their habit. Makes a pretty present for a loved one whom you wished would quit the cigarettes.
- Created by ABS, the [Icon Wrist Watch](#) pays homage to the blocky 8-bit graphics you'll never forget from playing classic retro console games such as Space Invaders. Pure, simple, and good-looking, the watch face does not have numbers; basic features such as date display and stopwatch function are also missing. But this makes the Icon Watch all the more appealing for purists.
- New Era also has introduced [gaming-inspired caps](#) to the market. Featuring boldly colored Pacman and Space Invaders motifs, these caps give you the geek cred that you might be desiring. The targeted group of consumers are obviously the geek types, but who knows, the gaming inspiration might just infect the masses.
- The humble stationary on your desk is undergoing a design revolution. Designed by [Jac Zagoory](#), these elaborately detailed metal staplers have definitely turned desk stationary into an art form. Designs come in gorilla, bear, dragon, lion and more. Makes you way more cool than the executive with the latest Blackberry gadgets.

What other brilliantly designed products have you seen lately?

Super Supermarkets



Supermarkets in the future will be very different from the way we know them today. Modern technology has allowed us to re-invent the way we shop and pay for our groceries and daily essentials. Here are some highlights to pique your imagination:

- At Price Chopper's Burlington store, checkout lanes are equipped with automated "Easy Scan Checkout" machines. Only a few employees are present to verify age for alcohol purchases, witness credit card transactions and assist shoppers. Customers manage their own checkout. They weigh their vegetables, scan the barcodes, package the food, and pay via cash or credit cards at the automated self-checkout machines. Shoppers are reporting a greater sense of participation and achievement with this [self-checkout concept](#).
- Europe's Metro AG is revolutionizing the shopping experience by introducing cutting-edge technologies at its [Future Store](#) in Germany. At the supermarket, you'll receive a device called the Personal Shopping Assistant which allows you to manage your own shopping. Your recent shopping history can be easily retrieved, and you can even use the intelligent scales that recognize, weigh and price fruit and vegetables automatically. Interactive multimedia kiosks are located throughout the supermart so that you can obtain detailed information easily.
- Pick n' Save Metro Market in San Francisco (USA) has rolled out a new payment service to allow its customers to [Pay By Touch](#). At check-out terminals, shoppers scan their finger, enter a search code, swipe rewards cards and/or payment cards, and add their checking account information to build a personal Pay By Touch wallet, which is stored at secure IBM data centers. Next time you shop, simply do a finger scan to pay for all your purchases conveniently.

Have you seen any smart, innovative technology being utilized in your local supermarkets?

The Power of Many



Two heads are better than one. Now you can imagine how powerful the wisdom of crowds is, when business start to leverage on the expertise and effort of a group of people to create products and services or to solve problems. Termed “crowdsourcing” by [Wired Magazine](#), this trend looks set to be exploited by businesses and entrepreneurs who appreciate the power of crowds and communities:

- [Nvohk](#) is a community-managed, eco-friendly, surf-inspired clothing company. Pronounced ‘invoke’, the company combines the best of crowdsourcing and crowdfunding to develop its business. Nvohk is aiming to recruit 20,000 – 40,000 members to contribute \$50 a year to build the Nvohk brand. Members will make major business decisions such as logo design, product design and advertising.
- [TribeWanted](#) (see image above) is creating a global tribe that not only exists online, but also on a leased island in Fiji. There are three types of membership to choose from: Nomads, Hunters and Warriors; each package differs in length of membership and privileges. When the membership count reaches 5000, the tribe will be formed and tribal decision on important matters such as island infrastructure will be made through online voting.
- Independent music site [Amie Street](#) knows economics inside out. It uses demand-driven pricing to let the community dictate the pricing of the tracks it sells on the website. Prices begin at zero and rise up depending on demand and supply factors. Community members recommend their favorite music and give back 70% of proceeds to artists after the first \$5 in sales. We like it because it encourage musicians to mobilize their fan bases to support their music.
- [Wanted: football fans](#) who would like to pool money together to buy a professional league football club. At [MyFootballClub](#), football fans currently register for free, but they are committed to paying GBP 35 when 50,000 like-minded people have registered. With a purchase fund of GBP 1,375,000, plus GBP 375,000 for operational costs, MyFootballClub will then make the move to purchase a football club owned by its members.

How do you think you can utilize the wisdom of crowds in your business?

More Than Shoes



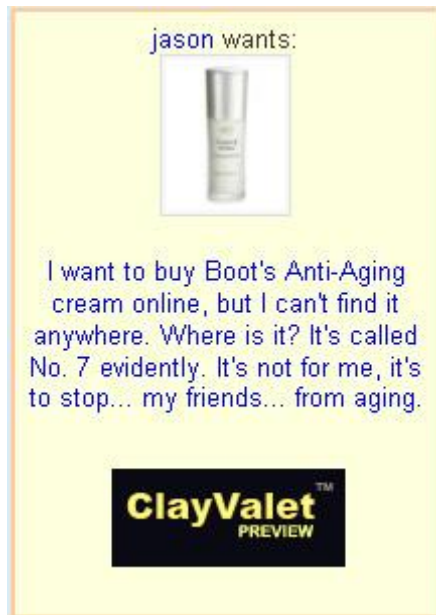
It's hard to imagine entrepreneurs achieving mass market success with shoes. After all, shoes are everyday items and not very exciting as the latest gadgets.

Despite this, entrepreneurs around the world have come up with winning shoes ideas that have captured the attention of today's consumers. You've probably seen countless people wearing the colorful Crocs shoes in your city. Here are more interesting footwear ideas to pique your curiosity.

- Designed for physical exercise, the [Kangoo Jumps rebound exercise shoes](#) are loaded with springs so that you can jump higher than on your own two feet. You need not worry about adverse side-effects as the shoes reduce impact by 80% so they're really easy on your joints, hips and spine.
- The [FiveFingers shoes](#) (pictured above) target outdoor sports fans who prefer to go barefoot during their activities. These glove-like shoes permit you to safely enjoy your various physical activities such as running while retaining the sensation and effectiveness of being barefoot.
- Get rid of smelly feet with Italy's [Geox shoes](#), created by Italian entrepreneur Mario Polegato. Fitted with a patented membrane, these Geox shoes are designed to leave toes cool and eliminate the bad smell because the soles are specially made to allow feet to "breathe" elegantly.
- Walkers are standing up and taking note of [Masai Barefoot Technology \(MBT\) trainers](#). Based on the erect barefoot stride of Africa's Masai tribe, the chunky-soled shoes create a rocking motion that improves posture and balance. Professional sportsmen apparently use MBT trainers to speed up regeneration, optimise their running style, and for speed and power training.

Have you seen any creative and innovative footwear ideas lately in your country?

New e-Shopping Ways



Electronic commerce has come a long way since the granddaddy of all online stores, Amazon.com, started selling books over the Internet way back in 1995. Since then, the Web has continued to evolve, with new ways and methods of selling goods and services online developed by online stores.

We've spotted these new e-commerce ideas lately which deserve a mention for their innovative thinking:

- Everybody loves a good deal, but tracking coupon-based discounts can be time consuming. Here comes new coupon aggregator site CouponCowgirl.com. The website targets popular apparel, consumer electronic and flower and gift brands, serving consumers by compiling online discounts for hundreds of retailers in one location.
- Clayvalet (pictured above) is a Seattle-based startup on a mission to simplify the way people find products online. At ClayValet, real people research your shopping inquiries. The company's shoppers scour the Internet to find the best products at the best prices, and you receive a free personalized report with product recommendations, expert opinions, customer reviews and links to purchase within 24 hours of your request.
- With the popularity of social networking sites these days, it seems that an online store that combines e-commerce, social networking and instant messaging would be a winner. Buddy Shopping allows consumers to shop for products online simultaneously with friends in real-time. With their special software, online shoppers can lead or follow friends in co-browsing sessions.
- How many of you have gone ahead to buy that plasma TV, only to find out that it's cheaper by 500 bucks at a sale 3 days later? Let PriceProtectr.com protect you. On the website, online shoppers can enter the URL of the product from the retailer's online store and PriceProtectr.com will track its price. If the product you're eyeing gets cheaper, the service will email you a notice.

Do you have any smart, brilliant ideas about e-commerce and online stores?

Green Cuisine

Tapping into increased environmental awareness these days, restaurants and food outlets are mixing food and beverage (F & B) ideas with the wave of green, save-the-earth messages. Have some good food and drinks, and do your part for the health of our world. It's a great combo, judging from the responses consumers have to these green F & B ideas below:

- Save the Earth by eating a pizza from [Pizza Fusion](#). The company offsets 100% of its energy usage by drawing on renewable wind energy and hybrid vehicles. They use 100% certified organic ingredients in their sauce, dough, and vegetables. Even the beef is free of any hormones, pesticides, and antibiotics.
- [Picknick](#) is a new sustainable food kiosk that serves sandwiches, salads, and sweets. It prides itself on being a “mini-model of consumer and eco-conscious food service.” After all, Picknick obtains most of its ingredients from small farms and local businesses. Their takeout containers, cutlery and cups are made from biodegradable bioplastics, and a small part of the company’s profits is donated back to conservation charities annually.
- Based in Colorado, [Solar Roast Coffee](#) uses only 100% organic or fair trade coffee beans. Not only that, the company also uses a special solar-powered roasting technique in the production process. The company has created a buzz for producing environmentally friendly coffee using clean abundant solar energy, winning over many green-minded consumers.
- New York’s [Habana Outpost](#) restaurant serves Latin American food and more; environment activism and community is on the menu, too. Habana Outpost is an avant-garde eco-eatery and gathering place for green-minded customers. The solar-powered restaurant has a courtyard with recycled plastic picnic benches and uses plates made of biodegradable materials. Workshops organized by green lifestyle experts are held on the premises regularly.



How do you think you can mix food and beverage business ideas with green-friendly objectives?

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