



## **THE INFORMATION AGE (HOW "JOE BLOW" IS BREAKING THE BIG STORIES)**

Have you ever wondered how some people seem to know about major events and news stories before not only you do but even mainstream media outlets? Also how some people have already heard unreleased music titles or seen episodes of TV shows and movies which are yet to air. Well this is all a result of us being firmly in the Information Age. The Industrial Age is almost a distant memory and it may be a good while yet before the world hits the next big revolution.

The utopian ideal of the Information Age is that we all can be learned citizens because we have unlimited access to knowledge from around the globe and thus make the world a better place. I guess even the most optimistic of person would say we haven't reached this status but from the moment Guttenberg invented the printing press about 500 years ago, the Information Age was destined to occur and the world change forever, for better or worse, because of it.

The Information Age has already redefined the way we do many things and made us able to access, be aware and form opinions on events happening on all four corners of the globe. It has made business totally overhaul methods of service and how we view things like copyright and intellectual property. This is best illustrated in recent times by the battle between record/film companies and file sharing program producers and consumers who download and copy music and movies. There are a lot mistruths being put forward by both sides in this argument. On the consumer side, the claim that they are either unaware that sharing, copying and downloading copyrighted material is illegal, or that at some point because someone purchased the item legitimately, they are free to do with it as they please is clearly false. However the claim by the record and film companies that all this is affecting sales and profits is also false as 2003 was the highest sales year for records ever and more people are going to the movies and buying DVDs than ever before. Additionally via the legal download sites like Bigpond, Ninemsn and the new Apple iTunes, legitimate music downloads as well as the DVD mail order business like The Age operates, has recorded phenomenal growth. However if the record and film companies think they will be able to conduct business and utilise their copyrights and intellectual property as they have for the past century then they will be fighting a losing battle. Just like manufacturing businesses who didn't convert to factory line and machine based production in the Industrial Age failed, businesses who don't adapt to the all access information society we live in now will also probably fail.

The biggest change and impact has probably occurred in the communications and media sector. While in days gone by we waited for the morning and evening paper or the 6:00 news, now we can receive our news and information from any source in the world including individual people who may be eyewitnesses to events. These are people who are posting blow by blow descriptions of current events along with photos and video from their digital cameras to their own websites. These sites are recording very high readership and is best illustrated by the recent Tsunami disaster where most of the best and accurate early reports, pictures and footage came from these personal web journals. In fact larger media outlets even began using the footage and pictures from these sites. This is becoming an even more common occurrence all over the world and thus the age of keeping secrets and single source media are slowly disappearing.

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