

# "GENERATION C"



No, this is not about a new niche generation of youngsters born between March 12, 1988 and April 24, 1993; the **C** stands for **CONTENT**, and anyone with even a tiny amount of creative talent can (and probably will) be part of this not-so-exclusive trend.

So what is it all about? The **GENERATION C** phenomenon captures the an avalanche of consumer generated 'content' that is building on the Web, adding tera-peta bytes of new text, images, audio and video on an ongoing basis.

The two main drivers fuelling this trend? (1) The creative urges each consumer undeniably possesses. We're all artists, but until now we neither had the guts nor the means to go all out. (2) The manufacturers of content-creating tools, who relentlessly push us to unleash that creativity, using -- of course -- their ever cheaper, ever more powerful gadgets and gizmos. Instead of asking consumers to watch, to listen, to play, to passively consume, the race is on to get them to create, to produce, and to participate.

Examples?

- It's **Canon** telling aspiring directors and photographers that "professional digital photography is no longer just for the professionals", while Sony speaks directly to Home Movie Directors and DVD Producers.

- It's the **Vodafones** and **Oranges** and **ATTs** and **T-Mobiles** and **O2s** and **Sprints** and **NTT DoCoMos** enticing consumers to go snap-crazy with their camera-phones, uploading pics to dedicated MMS websites. Conservative estimates are that by 2008, more than 380 million camera phones will have been sold worldwide. With the first 1.3 MegaPixel phone already spotted, the upcoming deluge of cam-pics and movies will be of biblical proportions.



- It's **HP** spending USD 300 million on a campaign telling consumers it's all about 'You', and 'You' should be taking pictures, and sharing them and forwarding and printing them, AND posting photographic essays on a HP web site.

- It's **Blogger** offering you "instant communication power by letting you post your thoughts to the web whenever the urge strikes". Which is exactly what 5 million people have done so far, and what tens of millions of others will soon do, too.

- It's **Xingtone.com**, letting consumers compose their own ringtones, and Sony PlayStation2's **Noiseupthesuburbs.com** inviting an emerging generation of DIY music pioneers, from bedroom DJs and producers to pirate radio and independent label founders, to make use of its music-making software.

And so on.

Don't get us wrong: superior tools and no talent still equals useless content. **GENERATION C** is and will continue to create heaps and heaps of crap which, at best, will be appreciated only by inner-circle friends and family.

However, when Canon (see above) tells consumers that its products 'leave one difference between you and a professional. They get paid', they're kind of behind already: talented members of **GENERATION C** actually DO get paid, as their stories, their observations, their articles, their pictures, their songs, and their books are noticed and bought by niche audiences, as well as (increasingly) by mass-media moguls eager for real-time, original content. Think thousands of **'My News' citizen reporters** in South Korea, or tens of thousands of bloggers building personal brands (and thus warranting professional fees, and reaping advertising revenues). Or eBay-style marketplaces for content like **lulu.com** and **redpaper.com**, the latter describing itself as "a place on the Internet where any type of digital content no matter how abstract can be bought and sold by anyone interested in transacting it". Or the guy who recently created a feature length movie on his iMac using iMovie, for USD 218.32, which was apparently good enough to be shown at Sundance last month, with Gus Van Sant's backing.

From a business and money point of view, this trend truly has something to offer to everyone!

## OPPORTUNITIES

**GENERATION C** is where some of TRENDWATCHING.COM's other Big Trends converge: it's fueled by [ONLINE OXYGEN](#) as the required online access to content channels is becoming universal. It's about [OLDBIES](#): hundreds of millions of consumers who, since first dipping their toes into the online revolution a few years ago, are becoming comfortable with digital creation. And it's about [MASS CLASS](#) and [MATURALISM](#) as consumers all over the world increasingly have the means to purchase or download professional-grade, powerful hardware and software needed to become part of **GENERATION C**.

More on **GENERATION C** next month, when we'll be sending you 'part II', including new business opportunities for a host of industries. In the mean time, start thinking about how to jump on this bandwagon: are you asking your customers to consume or to create? Are you partnering with new niche content players? Are you turning this avalanche of data and information into new business intelligence? This trend WILL roll on, with or without you. [>> Email this trend to a friend.](#)

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**MARCH 2004** | As promised last month, when we introduced **GENERATION C**, here are a few more telling observations related to this massive trend of consumers creating content, and companies equipping them with the required professional tools at amateur prices.



• Apple demands (and deserves) the main **GENERATION C** spotlight this month. The company recently launched [GarageBand](#), which is an integral part of iLife 2004, Apple's suite of creativity software. GarageBand is everything from a home recording studio to a practice tool for musicians. It complements Apple's iPhoto, iMovie and iDVD programs, and definitely deserves the award for **GENERATION C** software of the month. A good one for FEEDER BUSINESSES too, but more on that in April!



And in a series of brilliant moves combining **GENERATION C**, retail and the Experience Economy, Apple opened up yet another one of its flagship [Apple Stores](#), this one in San Francisco ([long overdue!](#)). Definitely a big event for Apple lovers in the Bay area: an estimated 1,200 people were in line at the 10 a.m. opening, and nearly 6,000 more passed through the store later that day. Besides showcasing Apple hardware and software, these shrines to creativity offer [popular](#) in-store workshops and presentations, helping customers make the most of Apple's latest content creation applications. So, for our San Fran subscribers: there's a GarageBand workshop every Friday at 1:00 pm!



• Want to feel the power of **GENERATION C** in the world of travel? Spend a few hours this weekend perusing sites like [trekshare.com](#), which allows travelers to post travelogues, and which boasts 10,000 members, 75,000 photos and 15,000 postings. The site is enjoying a monthly 20% growth rate. Of course, you could also travel vicariously by checking out [igogo](#), [sharemytrip.com](#) or [mytripjournal.com](#) (source: Newsweek). TRENDWATCHING.COM would be willing to pay a few bucks for some of these postings, as they deliver the holy grail in travel content: exclusive, up-to-date, real-world travel tricks and tips, from real travelers. Our hunch: **GENERATION C** is about to get paid!

• And finally, for stats lovers: the [Pew Internet](#) & American Life Project recently released a study showing that 44% of US adult internet users (53 million people aged 18 and over) have created content for the online world through building or contributing to web sites, creating blogs, and sharing files. Some quick findings: 21 percent of internet users have posted photos on web sites, and 20 percent say they have allowed others to download video or music files from their computers. Seven percent have webcams that let others see live pictures of them over the net. Now imagine what these stats will look like once the younger crowd (a digital generation if there ever was one) turns 18! [>> Email this trend to a friend.](#)

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JUNE 2004 | Our **GENERATION C** continues to make waves. It was recently featured on the Today Show in the U.S., and continues to get coverage in many offline and online publications. And it won't slow down for a long time. So how about another update, or should we say, extension of this mega-consumer trend!?

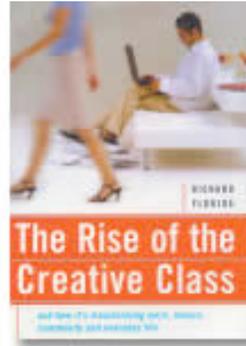


In this update, we'd like to focus on the link between the broad theme -- content creation -- and four other 'C's: Creativity, Casual Collapse, Control, and Celebrity. A brief introduction...

**Creativity:** let's face it, we're all creatives, if not artists! (Notice we didn't say talented artists ;-). And as creativity normally leads to content, the link with **GENERATION C** is obvious. Which then brings us to **Casual Collapse**: the ongoing demise of many beliefs, rituals, formal requirements and laws modern societies have held dear, which continue to 'collapse' without causing the apocalyptic aftermath often predicted by conservative minds. From women's rights to gay marriage to not wearing a tie to work if you don't feel like it!

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What does this have to do with **GENERATION C**? Well, as a new generation of parents is slowly abandoning its obsession with children becoming doctors, lawyers or business executives, they are realizing that creative careers are not necessarily a dead-end road to poverty and family scandal. Creativity is about to be unleashed full force, following a classic **Casual Collapse** path to mainstream acceptance.



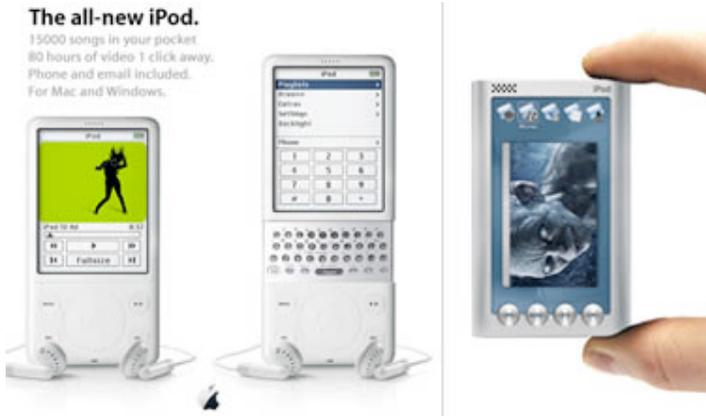
In fact, as Richard Florida, professor of Regional Economic Development eloquently argues in his book 'The Rise of the Creative Class', a society in which the creative ethos is increasingly dominant is already emerging, with tens of millions of professionals in the US, Europe and Asia leading the way.

(Yes, TRENDWATCHING.COM realizes **Casual Collapse** warrants a full trend description by itself, so stay tuned!)

Moving on to the C for **Control**: besides the need to be creative, control is one of man's other fundamental needs. To be in charge, to be master of one's own destiny (or at least have the illusion of control ;-), is a holy grail for many. So... to make a big leap to the world of business: consumers happily find they increasingly have control over what they buy and who they buy it from.

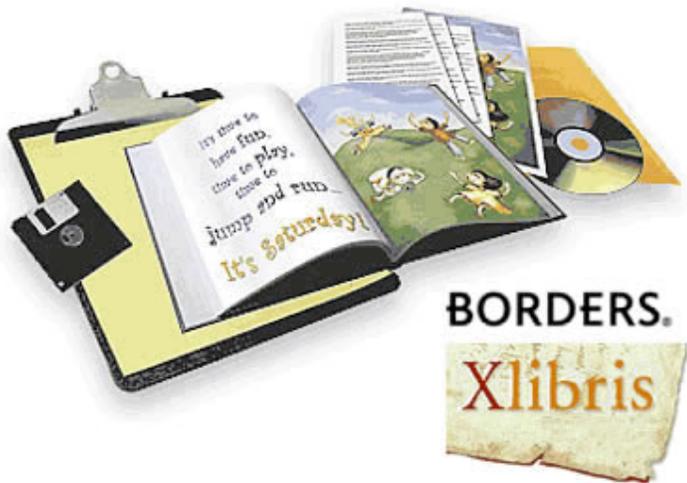
If we link this to **GENERATION C**, we'll see a shift from straight forward consumption to customization, or even co-production. The latter already takes place in a big way in the online world: just think of how Microsoft 'invites' millions to download beta versions of its software to test and improve it, or how a Google community aptly named 'What Should Google Do', attracts hundreds of devotees who will share their smart suggestions, if not ready-to-use content contributions, for all Google employees to read.

And how about [www.ipodlounge.com](http://www.ipodlounge.com) (yes, yet another iPod example)? This is where **GEN C-ers** post iPod concepts they would like to see in stores one day, or have already created in their basement or garage (source: Steve Portugal).



Last but not least, C for **Celebrity**. Not much has changed since Warhol's 15 minutes of fame. Most people still entertain the thought of being a celebrity, even a minor one. What has changed though, is that the implied waiting-time to get one's precious (and short lived) celebrity moment is over: members of **GENERATION C** can produce, display and then distribute to millions their own images, their creations, their 'content'.

In fact, **Borders** -- the US book retailer -- recently launched a **GENERATION C** trial with **Xlibris** ('where writers become authors'), a print-on-demand company that offers writers a USD 500 starters kit, providing them with everything they need to get a paperback to market, including all phases of production and a cover (source: NYT). Borders will sell the Xlibris kit to its customers, and after publication of a paperback, will sell the books (which are printed on demand, not in bulk) in its stores in the author's local market.



### OPPORTUNITIES

So what does the above mean? In order to profit from the **GENERATION C** trend, as a professional or organization, make sure you not only provide consumers with the means to create and distribute content (from USD 999 professional cameras to the free global distribution network that is the internet), but also acknowledge deep human needs for control and for exposure. Get your customers involved with the design of your goods and services,

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have them deliver input on your processes, allow them to customize and personalize your offerings. And above all, never underestimate how much creativity is hidden deep down in all of them. Only 10 years ago, to most companies, the **C** in **GENERATION C** would most likely represent consumption. Times have changed. So... be creative! >> [Email this trend to a friend.](#)



**JANUARY 2005** | Expect plenty of **GENERATION C** thinking and spottings in 2005, as this mega-trend has only just begun to take off. **TRENDWATCHING.COM** continues to identify drivers behind the fast growing number of creative consumers, from affordable 'professional' hardware & software to society finally realizing the economic value of the Creative Class.

In this update we'd like to highlight two other major drivers:

- The increase in classes and courses aimed at improving **GEN C**'s creative skills (after all, what are all those pro-am, prosumer tools and software programs worth if consumers don't know how to use them to their full potential).
- The proliferation of 'personal showrooms' helping **GENERATION C** to instantly display its creations to a global audience.



### COURSES & COURSES

Educating **GENERATION C** on how to make best use of their

creative urges is hot. What good would Apple's iLife software be without courses on how to benefit from [GarageBand](#) or [iMovie](#)? No wonder then, that one of the most popular offerings at Apple Stores across the US (and [now in the UK as well](#)) is The Theatre, where Apple fans can participate in one-hour workshops every day, free of charge. Workshops are divided into three categories: 'Introductory Presentations', designed to provide an introduction to the latest hardware and digital lifestyle applications; 'Workshops', which offer more in-depth information about Apple's applications; and 'Pro Workshops', aimed at professionals looking to get the most out of advanced creative tools like DVD Studio Pro 3, Final Cut Pro HD and Logic Pro 7. The extensive agendas for each Theatre are online: check out the one for the [NY SoHo store](#). Observing dozens of **GENERATION C** members crowd the theatre on a Saturday afternoon will give you a taste of things to come.



Other hardware manufacturers and software developers are also rushing to **GENERATION C**'s help (and selling more of their stuff in the process). Check out [Sony 101](#), which offers free online courses to consumers on a variety of technology and industry topics, including digital photography, HDTV, wireless networking and how to protect their data.

Same drill for [HP Online Courses](#); HP also runs a [Digital Photography Center on eBay](#), helping students to take better pictures, which should then lead to higher sales for **GENERATION C** members with entrepreneurial aspirations. After all, who said all this creation was for creativity's sake only?

### PERSONAL SHOWROOMS

This one was a long time in the making. From the day the web set in motion a virtual world without precedence, futurists, trend watchers, and everyone else obsessing with the dynamics of control, vanity and communications has predicted that individuals would all have their own website one day. After all, where better to show off personal creations and profiles than online, where a global audience is guaranteed. Sure, it took a new generation of

**OLDBIES**, those raised online, to prove them right, but still.



Witness how millions of professionals and digerati occupy blogland, sharing their insights and creative achievements with an ever growing audience, while many younger members of **GENERATION C** choose to open up their own showrooms on younger and funkier platforms like [Cyworld](#). About the latter: this South Korean phenomenon now provides more than 10 million South Korean citizens (25% of the entire population) with their own cyber-outlet, where self made poems, stories, songs, photos, videos and what have you can be shown off to other **GEN C** members and producers, agents, talent scouts and employers alike. Pleasant Cyworld detail: as users can live up their space with funky digital decorations, or spice things up with videos and music, bought with acorns, Cyworld's currency, this is bringing in about 150 million won (USD 160,000 / EUR 116,000) a day. Cyworld plans to conquer Japan, China, Taiwan, the United States, Hong Kong and Taiwan within the next six months.

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Another sign these showrooms are going mass: Microsoft's newly launched [MSN Spaces](#) (blogs for the masses). It might not satisfy

hardened bloggers, but this Show and Tell service has managed to attract more than 1.5 million **GENERATION C**-ers since its launch six weeks ago! MSN Spaces offers basic blogfare like on-line publishing, photo sharing, all kinds of access levels for one's space, postings, automatic updates to registered visitors when one's space has been updated, and so on. Users can update their sites via the web, through e-mail, or with a mobile phone. If they choose, they can publish a feed in the RSS 2.0 format, which will allow readers to view the content in an RSS aggregator. 'Spaces' is available in 14 languages and 26 markets worldwide.

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

Professional hardware and software, skills, showrooms: understanding the **GENERATION C** trend and its many drivers will help you make sense of the many creative outpourings currently sweeping the world. It adds context to crazes-du-jour like podcasting (internet-based radio shows created by **GEN C** members with access to a microphone and a computer, from the comfort of their own home; for more, check out [www.ipodder.org](http://www.ipodder.org)) or the tens of thousands of consumers who have now seen George Masters' do it yourself, 60-second animated [iPod commercial](#).

Next step? YOUR company surprising and delighting consumers with the tools, the software, the skills, and the showrooms to unleash their creative passions. Step after that? Turning **GEN C** customers into co-creators, something we discussed recently in our [CUSTOMER-MADE](#) trend. Ah, so many opportunities and so little time ;-) >> [Email this trend to a friend](#).