

HOME | U.S. | POLITICS | WORLD | BUSINESS | TECHLAND | HEALTH | SCIENCE | ARTS | TRAVEL | PHOTOS | VIDEO | SPECIALS | MAGAZINE | NEWSFEED

TIME
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH **ON**

SEARCH TIME.COM



[Subscribe to TIME » Give a Gift »](#)

Specials

Main Person of the Year Best Websites Worst Cars TIME 100 TIME 100 Roundtable Design 100
Best Inventions Best TV Shows Top 10 All-TIME 100

ADD TIME NEWS

MOBILE APPS

NEWSLETTERS

Samsung
GALAXY Tab

feel free to Tab™
with the Android™ 7-inch tablet.



learn more

10 Ideas That Will Change the World

Our best shots for tackling our worst problems, from war and disease to unemployment and deficits

Story | [All Best and Worst Lists](#)

Today's Smart Choice: Don't Own. Share

By **BRYAN WALSH** Thursday, Mar. 17, 2011



ILLUSTRATION BY NEIL WEBB FOR TIME

MORE

Like 3,255 people like this. Be the first of your friends.

Someday we'll look back on the 20th century and wonder why we owned so much stuff. Not that it wasn't great at first. After thousands of years during which most human beings lived hand to mouth, in the 20th century the industrial economies of the West and eventually much of the rest of the world began churning out consumer goods — refrigerators, cars, TVs, telephones, computers. George W. Bush won re-election as President in 2004 in part by proclaiming an "ownership society": "The more ownership there is in America, the more vitality there is in America."

Even as Bush was announcing its birth though, the ownership society was rotting from the inside out. Its demise began with Napster. The digitalization of music and the ability to share it made owning CDs superfluous. Then Napsterization spread to nearly all other media, and by 2008 the financial architecture that had been built to support all that ownership — the

subprime mortgages and the credit-default swaps — had collapsed on top of us. Ownership hadn't made the U.S. vital; it had just about ruined the country.

(See our best shots for tackling our worst problems.)

Maybe we're all learning though. You're not likely to be buying big-ticket items if you're out of work, and even if you have a job and a house, good luck taking out a second mortgage to help you scratch that consumerist itch. That's especially true for the young, who've borne the brunt of the recession, with a jobless rate in the U.S. of about 20%.

And it's the young who are leading the way toward a different form of consumption, a collaborative consumption: renting, lending and even sharing goods instead of buying them. You can see it in the rise of big businesses like Netflix, whose more than 20 million subscribers pay a fee to essentially share DVDs, or Zipcar, which gives more than 500,000 members the chance to share cars part-time.

(See how motivated youth will change the world.)

Those companies, however, while successful, are essentially Internet-era upgrades of old car- and video-rental businesses. The true innovative spirit of collaborative consumption can be found in start-ups like Brooklyn-based SnapGoods, which helps people rent goods via the Internet. Or Airbnb, which allows people to rent their homes to travelers. There's a green element here, of course: sharing and renting more stuff means producing and wasting less stuff, which is good for the planet and even better for one's self-image. And renting a power drill via SnapGoods for the one day you need it is a lot cheaper than buying it. It's a perfect fit for an urban lifestyle in which you have lots of neighbors and little storage.

BACK NEXT

8 of 10 | [View All](#)



Recommendations

10 Ideas That Will Change the World - TIME
Rachel Botsman, Michelle Williams, one other friend and 3,156 people shared this.



A Call from the Colonel: Gaddafi and His Bunker
442 people shared this.



How the Bahrain Regime Wants to Erase Its Bad Memories
469 people shared this.



Why Some People Will Pay \$20,000 For a Date
602 people shared this.

Facebook social plugin

Latest Lists

[More Lists »](#)



TIME's Complete Coverage: The Japan Quake



10 Ideas That Will Change the World



Top 10 Royal-Wedding Souvenirs



Top 10 Songs with Silly Lyrics: (Clue: 'Fun, Fun, Fun, Fun')

Around the Web

But the real benefit of collaborative consumption turns out to be social. In an era when families are scattered and we may not know the people down the street, sharing things — even with strangers we've just met online — allows us to make meaningful connections. Peer-to-peer sharing "involves the re-emergence of community," says Rachel Botsman, co-author of *What's Mine Is Yours: The Rise of Collaborative Consumption*. "This works because people can trust each other."

We yearn to trust and be trusted — one researcher has found that people get a spike of the pleasant neurotransmitter oxytocin when they're entrusted with another's goods. That's the beauty of a sharing society — and perhaps the reason it might prove more lasting than one built on ownership.

See how digital romance will change the world.

View the full list for "10 Ideas That Will Change the World"

Sponsored Links

Free Volatility Webcast

Learn Volatility from The Options Industry Council. Stream it today.
OptionsEducation.org

Business On Main

Articles, Tools & Resources for Small Business, Connected by Sprint!
www.BusinessOnMain.com

Stocks Ready to Surge

#1 Penny Stock Newsletter, Join for free
www.MadPennyStocks.com

[Buy a link here](#)

[MORE](#)

[BACK](#)

[NEXT](#)

8 of 10 | [View All](#)

Lists by Topic

SEARCH LISTS



Topics

U.S.	World
Books	Music
Politics	Health & Medicine
Top 10	Travel

Most Popular

Barack Obama	Environment
Michael Jackson	Cars
TIME 100	iPhone
Movies	Holidays

Lists: World



Top 10 Royal-Wedding Souvenirs



10 Ideas That Will Change the World



The Royal Wedding



The Middle East in Revolt



The Japan Quake

Alyse Lahti Johnston, Tiger Woods' New Girlfriend (PHOTOS)

From THE HUFFINGTON POST



Wyclef Jean Shot In Haiti, Released From Hospital

From THE HUFFINGTON POST



Are Audiences Ready to Forgive Mel Gibson? [VIDEO]

From AOL NEWS

Disaster in Japan Could Cause iPad 2 Shortage [VIDEO]

From AOL NEWS

[Subscribe to TIME » Give a Gift »](#)



More News from Our Partners

- Building in Gadhafi compound hit
- Protesters, security forces clash in Syria
- Japan restricts food products from nuclear area
- Alyse Lahti Johnston, Tiger Woods' New Girlfriend (PHOTOS)
- Wyclef Jean Shot In Haiti, Released From Hospital
- Libyan Journalist Mohammed al-Nabbous Killed; Al-Jazeera Crew Arrested
- Are Audiences Ready to Forgive Mel Gibson? [VIDEO]
- Disaster in Japan Could Cause iPad 2 Shortage [VIDEO]
- New Domain of Life, New Domain of Scientists? [VIDEO]
- Box Office Guru Wrapup: Bradley Cooper More Popular Than Lawyers and Aliens
- Weekly Ketchup: Jennifer Lawrence Cast in The Hunger Games
- Critics Consensus: Paul Is Sweet Sci-Fi Fun
- SXSW 2011: Reviewing All the Fantastic Midnight Movies
- 'Limitless' Leapfrogs 'Lincoln Lawyer': Box Office Report March 18 - 20
- SXSW 2011: Even Local Films Are Bigger In Texas

Stay Connected with TIME.com [Learn More »](#)

Subscribe to
RSS Feeds

Sign Up for
Newsletters

Add TIME
Widgets

Read TIME
Mobile on
Your Phone

Become a
Fan of TIME

Get TIME
Twitter
Updates



Subscribe...
SAVE up to 56%
Plus FREE GIFT



© 2011 Time Inc. All rights reserved | [Privacy Policy](#) | [RSS](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [TIME For Kids](#) | [LIFE.com](#)

[Subscribe](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Media Kit](#) | [Reprints & Permissions](#) | [Opinion Leaders Panel](#) | [Help](#) | [Site Map](#)

