

Call it 'Crowd-forging'

We Media Game Changers ignite the spark of motivation

By DORIAN BENKOIL | The We Media Game Changers inspire us to give our most precious resources: time, energy, money and ideas. They compel us to be a part. They do much more than "crowdsourcing." Call it "Crowd Forging" -- igniting passion around a theme, a cause, a cure, a game, even historic political change. Our award winners not only gather communities but inspire them, using "we media" to enhance the power of individuals gathered in ways unimagined before. They use the giant lever of technology as a force multiplier.

"Game Changers are the architects of the creative age," says Dale Peskin, co-founder of the We Media conference and the Game Changer Awards. "They design and build futures."

In the process, they are preserving lives and saving the planet (see sidebar). By fueling the spark of motivation, these Game Changers thrive on addressing a community's needs, finding common ground, cleaning the environment, extending our life spans. Their creativity is often astonishing. Every time we look at what they've done, we learn new things, find new ways of accessing and leveraging the knowledge of millions of we media participants.

"Discovery is seeing what everybody else has seen and thinking what nobody has thought," says Peskin. "This year's winners show us how to think about innovation. Each reveals a must-



GAME CHANGER 09 THE WINNERS

Here is a quick rundown of the We Media Game Changer Award-winners. (See following pages for full essays on each.)

Social Vibe spurs social networkers to choose charities they can reward financially with dollars from sponsors who get a deeply engaged audience.

Ze Frank is a poly-talented performance artist-cum-Web designer with an overdeveloped aptitude for getting people to reach across technological, political and media barriers — making them laugh and curse in the process.

Twitter is the progenitor of a communications ecosystem that's created both a virtual industry and a charity infrastructure riding on its back before the company itself even has a clear business model itself.

have ingredient — the secret sauce, if you will — that makes their work soar above the rest."

They also find ways to make money while doing it. For our winners, profit and social conscience go hand-in-hand. There's a new openness, a flowering of enlightened capitalism that's a generation beyond simply plowing earnings into community programs to earn a tax break and get good PR. Twitter has not only excited the investors that back it, but its co-founder has also foresworn traditional advertising while pledging to lead the way in corporate responsibility.

Innocentive sees no reason to value scientific solutions that help cure a disease any more than ones that help solve an industrial puzzle. "It's hard to separate where social ends and where business ends and begins," says VP of sales Jon Fredrickson. Ushahidi consults to earn money, then uses those funds to ameliorate conflict in the developing world.

We media technology gives Ze Frank the ability to earn a living from the crowd with his outlandish creations. Freewheelin's backer, a health insurance company, openly wants bicycle sharing to not only improve its bottom line but also our health, and the environment.

These Game Changers are bringing an end to apathy. They go beyond buzz-words and the conventional to push us into new realms we hadn't considered before. They not only make the outlandish seem possible, they prove it is. Where media once dulled the senses and made us a passive audience, it's now used to help us invent solutions, knit collaborative stories, and bring us together across once-deep geographic and conceptual divides.

The We Media Game Changers have phenomenal reach and are able to grasp more than they and their communities imagine. They are giving us a glimpse of what the future can be.

The Knight Foundation

invests millions on media experiments that may fail in the short run but will ultimately keep journalism, the information fabric of our communities, alive.

David Plouffe is the campaign manager without whose media efforts Barack Obama wouldn't be president. He shows how ground-up, grass-roots organizations can use personalized media to move the world.

Ushahidi helps individuals in crisis zones — from Kenya to Gaza to stricken American cities — connect to the world, and helps the world reach out to them in times of dire need.

Innocentive's 165,000 "solvers" cure disease, bring light to African villages and prove that for-profit science is made more forceful with the tools of we media.

Freewheelin uses we media get us riding shared bicycles, improving our health, decreasing our waistlines and lessening the carbon we spill into the atmosphere.