

Kate Alexander

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**The Democratisation of Ideas**

Chances are, most of you reading this 100th issue of *ProDesign* remember the desktop publishing revolution. For some, computers may be the only tool you've ever used, others may still be able to feel the fear that crept over us as our clients began to question, "why does it cost so much when a computer is doing all the work?"

Desktop Publishing changed our industry for good, but it didn't kill it.

Neither will the democratisation of ideas. Let me explain myself.

No doubt you've heard something about Threadless, Ponoko, Stumbleupon and Wordpress, to name but a few. Online shops, services, portals and networks that enable general Joe Blogs users to try their hand at tasks normally the domain of professionals.

Colliding trends and over a billion clicks per day are creating a breeding ground for 'websites' that can do the job of a graphic designer, writer, product designer, illustrator - any number of creative talents. And they're appearing fast. (Since first researching this topic in August 2008 one of the 'ideas' I suggested has eventuated and is no longer a possibility but a reality).

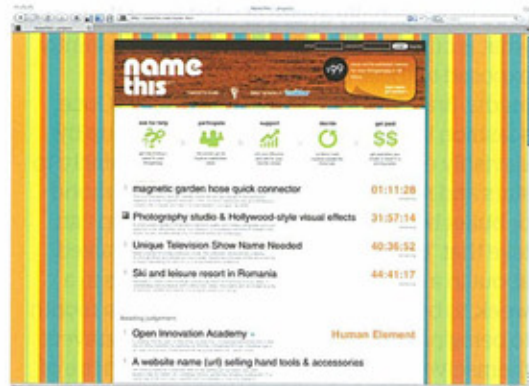
Surely this can't be a good thing? There's a high probability that the democratisation of ideas will lead clients to thinking that ideas should be free. That good ideas = good design. That DIY is easy. Chances are, they'll know a lot more about what we do than they do now and we'll need to work even harder at proving our value.

On the plus side, it's now normal to have clients anywhere in the world. It's a lot easier to become famous - you can get global community opinion in real time and new career opportunities are opening up (I quite like the sound of being a 'blog strategist and online reputation manager'). Or you could start a website to sell those ideas and designs that never made it (actually, that's already been done).

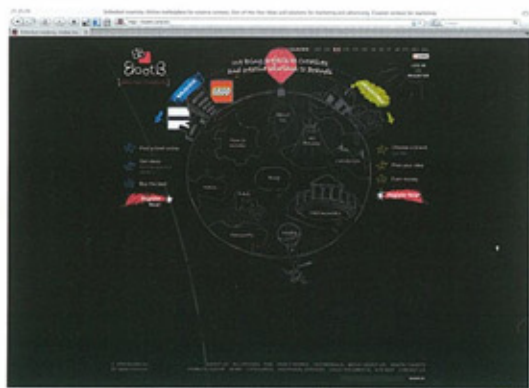
No matter what the url is, ideas will always need creative execution. Brands will always need to differentiate. Good design will always win the hearts of customers. And effective communication will always require skill.

So log on, stay tuned, be in touch, sign-up, join, register and log-in to the new world of design.

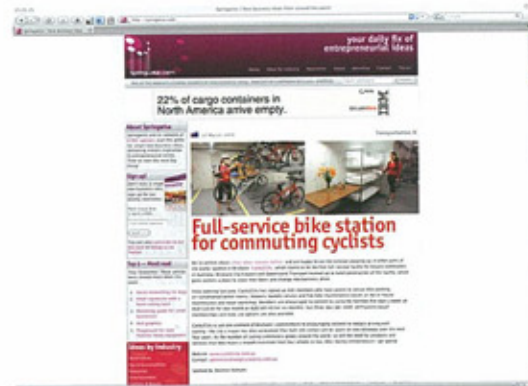
The websites and terms listed at right are just a small selection. If there are any urls you think I might be interested in, send a message on twitter to 'etakrednaxela'. This topic was first discussed at the inaugural Design Assembly (designassembly.org.nz).



**namethis.com** Where anyone can be a wordsmith. "Makes the otherwise time-consuming process of finding a market-ready name quick and painless. Why spend time and money gambling on the ideas of a few, when you can have the market bounce ideas for you?" But, how do you know the people on namethis.com are your target market or know anything about you?



**bootb.com** Online pitching engine. Client uploads brief, creative uploads ideas, there's a match, chosen creative gets paid. No corporate barriers, an even playing field, but what about the time spent on ideas that don't make it? In this climate we're increasingly being asked to provide ideas for free... without a proper brief how can we be sure those ideas will work?



**springwise.com/trendwatching.com** Infact "trendeverything.com". Analysing the ideas. What used to take years to cement and spread now takes a matter of days. Trendblogs, lists of trend blogs, tips on how to run a trend blog... finding the latest and greatest stuff is easy, or is it? What do you do with it once you find it? And is it actually a trend or just an idea that might become one?



**stumbleupon.com** User-generated and -voted content. Spreading the word... viewers decide what websites are worth showing and there's an element of surprise and trust that the click will be worth it.



**ponoko.com** Design, make, sell online. Now you can do it all without even leaving your desk. But does it really break down the barriers and make idea realisation more accessible? You still have to find the time to do it.



**incspring.com** Pre-designed logos for sale. "IncSpring lets you avoid the huge mark-ups and exorbitant fees normally charged by high-priced advertising agencies. Select from thousands of pre-made brands, get it customised to suit your exact needs, purchase and then download. It is as simple as that... or is it?"

**The DIY revolution:**  
 DIY design it yourself  
 MIY make it yourself  
 PIY photograph it yourself  
 WIY write it yourself  
 BIY brand it yourself  
 SIY sell it yourself

**A glossary of colliding trends:**  
 Participatory design  
 Crowdsourcing  
 Buzzwords  
 Citizen science  
 Collective intelligence  
 Crowdfunding  
 Distributed computing  
 The long tail  
 Mass collaboration  
 Mass customisation  
 Social commerce  
 Toolkits for User Innovation  
 Wikinomics