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Friends, Followers and the Future: How Social Media are Changing Politics, Threatening Big Brands, and Killing Traditional Media

Rory O'Connor

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There’s a revolution going on, as ever-accelerating developments in digital information technologies change nearly every aspect of how we live, work, play, do business, and engage in politics. Share and share alike—the numbers say it all as billions of people worldwide flock to online media and use social networks to discover and spread news and information.

In the process, ever-growing networks of “ordinary people” are using these powerful new tools to trim the influence long held by Big Business, Big Government, and Big Media. No longer just passive recipients, participants in social networks now regularly make and break news while organizing civic and political actions that bypass censors, outpace traditional media, attract massive audiences, and influence the rise and fall of brands, industries, politicians, and even governments.

In this insider’s look at how social media are transforming our world, Rory O’Connor explains the trends and explores what tech visionaries, media makers, political advisers, and businesspeople are saying about the meteoric rise of the various social networks of friends and followers, and what they bode for our future.

"Rory O'Connor is one of the smartest media guys around. He knows who's spinning, who's pandering, and who's putting money in his own pocket at the expense of logic, reason, and the public good."—Michael Wolff, *Vanity Fair* media critic

"This is a timely book about a vital subject: How do we get information and is it reliable? With a 'cold eye,' author Rory O'Connor shows how traditional journalism cheapened its value by sabotaging its trust, and how the digital revolution wonderfully democratizes information yet often removes the journalistic curator, creating more noise, more ME and less WE news. If you want to understand the future of news, its opportunities and its pitfalls, read this book." -- Ken Auletta, author and *New Yorker* media writer

"If Glenn Beck keeps a J. Edgar Hoover-esque blacklist under his bed pillow, journalist Rory O’Connor is probably on it, appearing before Nancy Pelosi and George Soros. O’Connor turns a skeptical yet pragmatic eye to the likes of Facebook. He examines how such online networks empower citizens to create counternarratives to bullsh*t punditry, political spin, and corporate PR, while warning of the dystopian echo chamber they could realize, where every citizen becomes a bullsh*tting pundit, partisan hack, or corporate flak." --*SF Weekly*

"In his lucid examination of the effects of digital technology, the author asserts that the evolution of web-based platforms and the rise of the Occupy movement has caused a marked decrease in our culture’s dependence on 'traditional models of organization' . . . O’Connor pulls no punches and effectively tracks the gains and losses of the movement in clear, energetic language. An erudite, constructive analysis."--*Kirkus Reviews*

Rory O’Connor, co-founder of MediaChannel.org, is the author of *Shock Jocks: Hate Speech & Talk Radio*.

He has won two Emmys and a George Orwell Award, among many other honors.

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