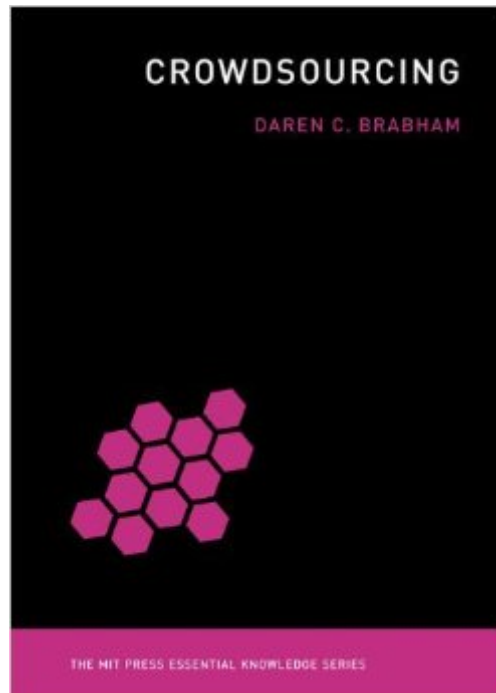# Crowdsourcing (The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series)

Synopsis

Ever since the term "crowdsourcing" was coined in 2006 by Wired writer Jeff Howe, group activities ranging from the creation of the Oxford English Dictionary to the choosing of new colors for M&Ms have been labeled with this most buzz-generating of media buzzwords. In this accessible but authoritative account, grounded in the empirical literature, Daren Brabham explains what crowdsourcing is, what it is not, and how it works. Crowdsourcing, Brabham tells us, is an online, distributed problem solving and production model that leverages the collective intelligence of online communities for specific purposes set forth by a crowdsourcing organization -- corporate, government, or volunteer. Uniquely, it combines a bottom-up, open, creative process with top-down organizational goals. Crowdsourcing is not open source production, which lacks the top-down component; it is not a market research survey that offers participants a short list of choices; and it is qualitatively different from predigital open innovation and collaborative production processes, which lacked the speed, reach, rich capability, and lowered barriers to entry enabled by the Internet. Brabham describes the intellectual roots of the idea of crowdsourcing in such concepts as collective intelligence, the wisdom of crowds, and distributed computing. He surveys the major issues in crowdsourcing, including crowd motivation, the misconception of the amateur participant, crowdfunding, and the danger of "crowdsploitation" of volunteer labor, citing real-world examples from Threadless, InnoCentive, and other organizations. And he considers the future of crowdsourcing in both theory and practice, describing its possible roles in journalism, governance, national security, and science and health.

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Daren Brabham defines crowdsourcing as â œan online, distributed problem-solving and production model that leverages the collective intelligence of online communities to serve specific organizational goal.â • He emphasizes that â œthe locus of control regarding the creative production of goods and ideas exists between the organization and the public, a shared process of bottom-up, open creation by the crowd and top-down management by those charged with serving an organizationâ ™s strategic interests.â •Threadless is a T-shirt company which uses crowdsourcing for product ideas. Doritos sponsors a contest where crowd members develop TV ads for the brand; the winner is aired during the Super Bowl. Peer-to-Patent was a pilot project in which the crowd reviewed patent applications to help the US Patent and Trademark Office identify â œprior art.â •A benefit of crowdsourcing is that â œoutsiders can bring fresh insights to internal problemsâ | A statistical analysis of the InnoCentive serviceâ | found that the Solver community was able to solve 29 percent of the problems that the Seekersâ "all large companies with internal labs and researchersâ "posted after they were unable to solve these problems internally. Moreoverâ | Solvers on the margins of a disciplinary domainâ "outsiders to a give problemâ ™s domain of specialtyâ "performed better at solving the problem.â •Another benefit of crowdsourcing is that it can reduce risk. Threadless T-shirt designs and Doritosâ ™ Super Bowl ad use a â œpeer-vetted creative-production approachâ | Because the crowd is the eventual user of the product, media content, or space, they are empowered to select the best ideas.â •The author writes about what motivates people to participate in crowdsourcing. Managerial commitment is important.

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