

J W T

**WORK IN PROGRESS**  
**THE RISE IN DIY**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DIY isn't just what you do after a shopping spree at IKEA. Today, do-it-yourself is influencing a range of categories, including entertainment, food, beauty and fashion. From locals organizing and promoting their own parties and events to teens formulating at-home beauty treatments, the ethos of DIY is becoming increasingly pervasive.

A confluence of factors is shifting this movement from the fringe to the mainstream, chief among them the anxiety brought on by the Great Recession—DIY is simply cheaper than the alternatives. DIY also seems like the savvy, even chic thing to do at a time when frugality and anti-consumerist sentiment are proliferating. The Internet is also a key factor, helping DIY-ers learn from and inspire each other. And in a world where mass-produced goods dominate, DIY allows for a sense of discovery and a way to stand out from the crowd.

This *Work in Progress* explores how DIY ideas and attitudes are affecting consumer behavior and purchasing habits in a range of categories, and looks at what it means for brands and marketers.

### Key Questions

- How is the DIY trend translating across a range of categories? And how is it helping to encourage entrepreneurialism?
- What factors are driving this trend?
- What does DIY mean for brands and marketers? How can they participate in this space?

### Key Findings

DIY is a trend that was building before the recession, and the downturn is only helping to accelerate it. This may seem like bad news for brands—after all, if DIY means doing it yourself, where does this leave companies that sell ready-made goods? But brands and marketers can benefit if they understand how to become part of the trend and build the DIY experience into their marketing.

Indeed, DIY doesn't mean consumers are opting out of the economy; instead, they're reconfiguring it, taking a greater stake in the production process. Marketers that can complement consumers' DIY efforts, serving as partners in this reconfiguration, will serve their brands best.

**T**he party began in the most unlikely of places. While there was food, a DJ and crowds of good-looking people, the event took place not in some swanky club in New York's meatpacking district but along the smelly Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn. Nonetheless, hundreds of New Yorkers visited BKLYN Yard that day for food, music and a relaxed family- and pet-friendly atmosphere.

The party's promoters, MeanRed Productions, make it their mission to "highlight the importance of DIY entertainment and alternative venues." This DIY (do-it-yourself) entertainment subculture began in the 1970s as a statement of punk ideology and anti-consumerism. Today, it's simply a way for music lovers to experience something outside the world of established performers, pushy bouncers and exorbitantly priced Ticketmaster tickets. For performers and their friends-turned-promoters, the DIY ethic is an alternative to the club and concert scene in cities like Berlin and New York as well as towns and suburbs everywhere.

DIY isn't just what you do after a shopping spree at IKEA. Today, this trend is influencing a range of categories, including entertainment, food, beauty, fashion and entrepreneurialism. From locals organizing and promoting their own parties and events to teens creating at-home beauty treatments, the ethos of DIY is becoming increasingly popular around the world.

A confluence of factors is shifting this movement from the fringe to the mainstream. Chief among them is the economic anxiety brought on by the Great Recession—DIY is, by and large, simply cheaper than the alternatives. Party promoters can throw events with low overhead, foodies can enjoy a restaurant-quality meal on the cheap, and spa lovers can replicate the experience of a facial at home.

DIY also seems like the savvy, even chic thing to do at a time when many once-indulgent consumers are feeling "luxury shame"—splurging on big-ticket, discretionary items now seems like a reckless waste. Those who can afford to keep spending feel that it's vulgar to flaunt their success.

Anti-consumerist sentiment and declining respect for big business had been building even before the downturn, which is now fueling these attitudes. Fewer and fewer people trust corporations and the brands attached to them—according to the 2009 Edelman Trust Barometer, 62 percent of 25- to 64-year-olds from 20 countries said they trust corporations less vs. last year. DIY is a way to bypass these corporations: Make your own clothes rather than patronize big retailers, make your own meals rather than worry about the ingredients in the packaged alternative.

The Internet is also a key factor: It's helping DIY-ers connect, and they're learning and getting inspiration from each other. And thanks to social networks

powered by community blogs, MySpace and the like, people can pool resources and take advantage of economies of scale. With digital word-of-mouth, an amateur chili cook-off is transformed from a low-key event among friends to a serious contest attended by a fellowship of foodies.

Finally, in a world where mass-produced goods dominate and the same chain stores seem to proliferate in every urban center, DIY allows for a sense of discovery and a way to stand out from the crowd. It's a backlash against globalization—consumer goods feel increasingly generic and commoditized. Yes, many consumers like to know exactly what they're getting—which explains why some tourists visit McDonald's wherever they go. But more and more people are seeking out the road less traveled, something that offers a bit of adventure or uniqueness.

This *Work in Progress* explores how the DIY ethos is affecting trends in entertainment, food culture, beauty, fashion and entrepreneurialism. We explore how DIY is manifesting itself in consumer behavior and purchasing habits, how it will evolve in the near future, and what this means for brands and marketers looking to participate in this trend.

## ENTERTAINMENT: BROUGHT TO YOU BY YOU

Think DIY and what comes to mind is more likely to be Home Depot than indie rock. But the term is being applied to a vibrant community of artists who produce their work without the benefit of corporate sponsorship and to events that function outside the mainstream entertainment business.

DIY performers, who lack the capital or connections that more established artists have secured, are leveraging free or low-cost services online to share their music or earn a little income from it. Musicians can collaborate with peers on sites like Indaba, sell their music via services like Amie Street and generate publicity through networks like MySpace Music, which helps them stay in touch with fans and promote their work.

Offline, DIY entertainment tends to lack the slickness of mainstream events: Think parties and performances in garages, lofts and other alternative venues, organized by locals through grassroots efforts. Margaret Garcia-Couoh is one example: This DIY-er from Crescent Mills, California, initiated a monthly event for writers and musicians in her rural town, using an old dive bar for a venue and her Facebook account as a publicity machine. She wrote about the experience on [Wisebread.com](#)—a blogging community focused on “living large on a small budget”—explaining that she enlisted performers “good enough to be entertaining and willing to pitch in for free beer, but obscure enough not to demand big money or billing.” After several months, the event started drawing a decent crowd, in part because it's free.

The frugal, no-frills style of DIY entertainment is in tune with the times. As one Chicago DIY promoter told the Web site [Chicagotalks](#): “People feel more

comfortable in a shitty house on the South Side than a legit venue with high ticket prices ... and expensive drinks.”

The appeal of DIY entertainment goes well beyond its low cost, however. Its low-fi, experimental aesthetic draws in a wide spectrum of musicians and other performers seeking a platform, and fans love the discoveries it makes possible. Established acts such as the Animal Collective are direct products of this freeform subculture.

While DIY may sound like a bunch of amateurs throwing a cool party (and sometimes it is just that), the music industry can learn a few things from this trend. With worldwide music sales down 8 percent last year, according to the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, labels are exploring alternative revenue streams like touring and live shows, since the main product is no longer physical but experiential. In other words, it’s about the party.

Lauren Piper and Paolo De Gregorio sum it up nicely for *The Deli* magazine: “If nobody is buying records anymore, if radio play requires spending thousands of dollars to hire a radio promotion agency, if the amount of bands saturating the Web confuses listeners, then putting together a rad, unforgettable party becomes the only viable way to gather an audience and build a following. Word of mouth, after all, is the best form of advertising.”

While a record-label-sponsored party won’t necessarily bear much resemblance to a DIY party, what’s needed is a creative, grassroots approach to performance that supplements an equally creative distribution and marketing strategy. Bands can surprise fans with “secret” shows, for example, or performances in intimate or unexpected venues. MySpace is a key player in this area: In the U.S., MySpace Secret Shows boasts nearly 500,000 members, who are offered opportunities to attend free shows in small venues with artists like The Cure, The Killers, Franz Ferdinand and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs.

What does this mean for consumer brands, especially those that have traditionally reached out to certain demographics by sponsoring arena concerts and other mainstream shows? How can they participate in a subculture that prides itself on independence?

One way brands can engage DIYers is by embracing alternative venues and encouraging grassroots efforts. In the U.K., that’s what MasterCard is doing by sponsoring The Big Lunch, a nationwide block party of sorts that’s set to take place July 19. The goal of The Big Lunch is simply to “sit down for a day with 61 million, to eat, meet and share music.” The event is all about DIY: The Web site ([thebiglunch.com](http://thebiglunch.com)) provides information on growing your own produce in preparation for the lunch and encourages locals to provide their own entertainment by recruiting neighborhood musicians.

Toyota has embraced grassroots, community-oriented marketing for a while now. In addition to sponsoring music festivals like the Stagecoach country

## THE KITCHEN IS FOR COOKING AGAIN

music fest in Indio, California, Toyota is sending out street teams to “lifestyle” venues such as bars, clothing stores and recording studios in major cities to connect with local fans. It’s also partnering with MySpace Music to provide a platform for DIY musicians; unsigned artists can submit an original song to its “Rock the Space” competition for a chance to win a recording contract with MySpace Records.

As DIY entertainment flourishes both online and off, watch as more brands become integrated into this phenomenon or start to emulate its ethos and approach to reaching fans.

At one time, eating was synonymous with do-it-yourself-ism. To prepare meals, people dressed meat, selected seasonings, cleaned and chopped vegetables—perhaps even grew their own. But in the past half-century, people increasingly microwaved frozen meals, heated the contents of a soup can, added water and eggs to baking mixes, opened bags of washed lettuce. Often meals are even simpler, a matter of buying prepared foods at the supermarket or picking up takeout.

Today, however, factors including the recession, nutritional concerns and the popularity of TV chefs are bringing DIY back to cooking. The DIY ethos is changing people’s relationship with food, moving diners away from convenience foods and toward a healthier, more quality-driven mind-set.

Consumers around the world are cutting back on dining out, especially in North America and Europe, which have felt the impact of the financial crisis more sharply than Asia. In April, JWT conducted an online survey of 1,769 Americans, Australians, Britons and Canadians for our “Balancing Health, Wellness and Budgets” study. A majority of respondents reported spending less on eating out vs. a year ago, ranging from almost two-thirds of Americans to just over half of Canadians. Most said the main reason was to save money, but about 4 in 10 of those who had reduced their dining out budgets said it was because home cooking is more nutritious.

At home in their kitchens, people can take inspiration from TV chefs like Gordon Ramsay and Jamie Oliver, who remind viewers that cooking need not be a chore but rather a fulfilling creative outlet and a way to wind down. Today, men and young people are more likely than they were 20 or 30 years ago to be interested in cooking and home entertaining. Their viewership has helped fuel the popularity of competitive cooking shows such as *Iron Chef*. In the U.S., an average of 2.9 million people watched the fifth season of Bravo’s *Top Chef*, up from 1.1 million when the show debuted in 2006, according to Nielsen Ratings. While these aren’t your typical instructional cooking shows, they do stimulate people’s enthusiasm for cooking.

Newly inspired home chefs are learning their way around the kitchen. Last September, the Institute of Culinary Education in Manhattan saw a 32 percent enrollment increase in classes for non-professionals, followed by a 17 percent

increase in October, *The New York Times* reported. Year-over-year traffic at Condé Nast's Epicurious.com, home to recipes from magazines including *Bon Appétit*, *Gourmet* and *Self*, was up 10 percent in January 2009 to 4.4 million visitors. And cooking magazines are doing well at a time when most magazines are not—*Saveur*, an upscale food, wine and travel magazine, saw year-over-year subscription sales rise 11 percent in March, and *Bon Appétit* is at an all-time circulation high of 1.4 million.

For especially ardent DIYers, there's more to this trend than simply preparing meals the old-fashioned way. Growing one's own produce is becoming increasingly popular, as is canning foods. In the U.S., First Lady Michelle Obama has started a White House vegetable garden—saying that it's meant to teach children about healthy eating and locally grown produce—and the National Gardening Association projects that the number of homes growing vegetables will jump 40 percent this year compared with 2007. In the U.K., vegetable seed sales are soaring: At home-improvement retailer Homebase, they're up 85 percent year-over-year, and they've more than doubled at the B&Q chain, the *Financial Times* reports.

Preserving food at home is another old practice that's suddenly new again. In May, Nielsen reported that in the U.S., canning and freezing supplies posted unit sales growth of 14 percent over the previous 52 weeks, making it the lead category in unit sales growth across all mega-categories Nielsen tracks within food, drug and mass merchandising. Canning's newfound popularity ties into several other current trends, including an anti-consumerist backlash ("People want to take back their food and their skills from the industrial giants," a Berkeley proponent of canning told *The New York Times*); a rising appreciation for simple pleasures, often ones that hark back to simpler times; and a greater interest in local goods (since people tend to preserve what's seasonally available in their region).

Another outgrowth of the DIY ethos in food is a new enthusiasm for re-creating the restaurant experience. In the U.K., ambitious home cooks are holding competitive dinner parties, inspired by the four-year-old cook-off show *Come Dine With Me* on Channel 4. Groups of friends take turns serving elaborate meals, and participants rate their hosts' culinary and entertaining prowess. After the series of dinner parties, scores are tallied and a winner is revealed.

In the U.S., DIY foodies are joining or starting supper clubs. They invite friends and, in some cases, strangers over for a sophisticated meal, combining elements of the restaurant experience with the camaraderie of sharing food at home. Cathy Erway, a New Yorker who started a popular supper club that "whimsically integrates Asian flavors and dining traditions with those of the rest of the world," explains the appeal in her blog, *Not Eating Out in NY*:

*"I'm not going to blame solely the recession, which has gotten many folks back into their kitchens (or their friends'), or to their gardens more frequently. Some of these supper clubs run comparable prices to that of a*

*prix-fixe restaurant dinner. But what they have in social prowess is second to none: at a restaurant, you're not supposed to talk to the other people in the room. ... At a supper club dinner, you're automatically geared to chat with your fellow guests, who are too, even though they may have zero ties to the host or hostess or to you."*

As in the entertainment category, DIY is reinventing food culture by helping people establish or cement community bonds.

Brands can become advocates of the mind-set that's propelling DIY food—one that values quality of ingredients (as much as or more than convenience) and time spent cooking and eating with family and friends. And they can help simplify the home cook's job. Supermarkets are encouraging cooks and helping them emulate the restaurant experience on the cheap. The Australian grocery chain Coles, for example, is promoting dinner recipes featuring Coles specials that will feed a family of four for under \$10 AUS.

## A CLOSER LOOK CUSTOMIZATION AND THE DIY CONSUMER

A large part of DIY's appeal is that it allows people to create something distinctly their own in an era where everyone you know may well own the same IKEA bookcase or Gap cardigan. Catering to this growing desire for things that are unique, businesses are increasingly allowing customers to put a personal stamp on products. Below is a sampling of companies that offer such services:

**Ponoko:** "The world's first personal manufacturing platform" helps wanna-be product designers realize their visions. The company's Web site provides tools that allow people to design products including lamps, furniture and jewelry, which Ponoko manufactures and delivers to the designer or an interested buyer. Ponoko also sells products that its users have created.

**Moo:** Moo.com allows people to create business cards, greeting cards, stickers and other stationery that incorporates their own photography. The company's partnerships with Etsy, Facebook and Flickr allow customers to easily import their images.

**TasteBook:** This site lets every kitchen star become a published chef. To create a hard-back cookbook, customers simply select a cover and a book title, then upload recipes (if not their own, then favorites from sites like Epicurious.com).

**Mymuesli:** A German company that allows muesli fans to create a custom morning mix from among 70 organic ingredients, then packages and mails it. Mymuesli has plans for international distribution but currently operates only in Europe.

**Ideal Health:** Over-the-counter multivitamins are like iPod headphones:

They're made for everyone but don't quite fit anyone. Customers of Massachusetts-based Ideal Health take a test at home, send it to the company's lab and receive a personalized multivitamin regimen based on the results.

**Wagner Custom:** These guys couldn't be more on-trend. From their solar- and wind-powered workshop, Wagner Custom builds snowboards and skis to specifications from the customer. The company takes into account factors ranging from skiers' skill levels to where they ski. And, naturally, customers can submit their own decorative graphics.

## **Q&A: DANIEL BLACKMAN, CO-FOUNDER OF HOWCAST**

DIY culture is evolving: No longer do Martha Stewart and other established experts dominate this realm—DIYers are increasingly learning and getting inspiration from skilled amateurs in an interactive culture, and DIY Web sites are flourishing. One of these is Howcast, a source for “fun, free and useful how-to videos and guides.” We chatted with Daniel Blackman, co-founder and chief operating officer of Howcast Media, Inc.

**What inspired Howcast.com?**

While working at Google building strategic-content relationships for the YouTube and Google Video teams, my colleague Jason Liebman came up with the idea to create a “how to” media company. We had already seen that informational content, and specifically how-to video, performed very well on Google Video and YouTube. This type of content is very useful and also targets extremely well for advertisers. However, there was a lack of professional-quality video that worked across multiple platforms—and no one was running the gamut across categories. We wanted to fill that gap. And we wanted to offer brands and clients a solution that cost a fraction of a typical TV campaign but has a much longer shelf life and connects with consumers across all platforms. We were joined by a third colleague, Sanjay Raman, and we launched in February 2008.

**What are some of the factors contributing to the rise of DIY sites online?**

First, there is the usage behavior—people have been seeking out information on the Internet since its inception. Second, there is the shift from interacting with text to interacting with video online. Third, there is the downturn—people are doing more things themselves.

The trend has also been driven by the ease with which consumers can manipulate, self-program and produce media: The ease of access to information enabled the DIY movement to take hold and is empowering consumers in general.

**Do you think the ethos of DIY and frugal living will live on past the recession?**

Yes. People will always want to know how to do things themselves. Before the recession, consumers wanted to learn how to do things. Now, because of the recession, there is also a real need.

There is also an emerging subculture of household hackers—people want to learn how to do DIY modification and put odd things together to create fun objects, such as a water-gun alarm clock. We actually did a video on that, and it’s very popular. The DIY culture has really evolved and branched into niche subcultures covering everything from entertainment and technology to crafts. And the recession has certainly spurred the movement forward.

**How does personal expression fit into the DIY movement?**

Uniqueness is important. Look at sites like Etsy, where handmade goods can be sold directly; Threadless, which sells graphic T-shirts; and other DIY sites, like Instructables. All these sites represent expressions of the creators’ interests. On

### What is the role of expert opinion and authorities in a DIY economy?

Howcast, crafts and gadget videos also do well. People are increasingly motivated and empowered to personalize and make things on their own.

This extends to media as well. People want to make and share their own media, they want to self-program. Never before in our history have we had so many media creators with the ability to easily distribute their content. Related to this, we have our Emerging Filmmakers Program, which helps to democratize the media process. We are building a network of very talented filmmakers, to whom we are giving hundreds of assignments per month—and it's growing fast. The fact that our program is run online allows us to scale content in a very streamlined way.

Today, there is a mix. For example, we have a guy named Justin Seeley who makes great Photoshop tutorials. He is a trusted authority to his viewers. There are many more long- and mid-tail authority figures who are threatening the hegemony of big, establishment media gatekeepers.

Not all big companies know how to leverage getting their content out. Some scrappy and aggressive young guy will know how to get his stuff out on lots of sites, conduct search engine marketing and hit all the blogs. Big brands eventually will catch on, but they need help.

One thing Howcast does is bridge the rising gap between big brands and online content. We talk to big brands and say: "You should be using how-to video to reach your consumers because it provides a bonding experience between your customers and your brand. It creates opportunity for consumers to spend time engaging with your product and services in a meaningful way." We then create the right content and broadly distribute it to all our partners.

### What is the next step for the DIY movement?

Right now, making and selling things for yourself is not at the scale of normal product manufacturing. An interesting trend is companies that are figuring out how to enable short- and medium-run production of DIY goods.

There is also the question of how to mass-produce DIY goods. As more people have access to information and their comfort level of doing things on their own increases, this trend will only expand.

Brands also need to recognize that creating awareness isn't enough. They need to figure out a way to connect with a user and solve their problems and alleviate needs. Today, people are weighing that decision to purchase a digital camera a lot more than they were a year ago. They will be asking how different the cameras are and collecting lots of information. With that understanding, brands can use how-to video and DIY culture to their advantage; they can use information and instructional content to connect and bond with consumers in a very meaningful and effective way.

## THERE'S NO SPA LIKE HOME

We predicted the rise of homemade beauty treatments in our “90 Things to Watch in 2009” list, noting that women around the world are increasingly interested in formulating their own products. In tandem with this phenomenon is a DIY approach to beauty treatments, with growing numbers of women opting to save money by foregoing salon, spa and dermatologist visits and taking care of their beauty needs themselves.

eBay reports that based on year-over-year Q1 sales from nine EU countries, more of its customers are tackling beauty treatments at home. In Spain, for example, there has been a 48 percent increase in sales of nail polishing kits, and a 44 percent increase for waxing kits. Italy has seen a 33 percent rise in sales of hair products, and sales of hair care appliances in Poland have more than doubled. In Ireland, sales of cellulite treatments are up 75 percent, while exfoliators are up 61 percent.

In the U.K., Sainsbury's saw a 50 percent rise in sales of nail polish last summer and a 20 percent increase in sales of hair dye, anti-aging moisturizers and leg, arm and bikini waxes. At Superdrug, sales of nose strips for deep-cleansing facials were up 7 percent, and sales of false nails and eyelashes rose by 15 percent. This year, retail chain Tesco reports that hair dye sales have increased 20 percent in recent months and its 99 pence line of hair color has seen a 200 percent rise.

In the U.S., the number of women using at-home hair coloring is expected to increase 10 percent to 40 million between 2008 and 2013, according to a recent report from Packaged Facts, based on Experian Simmons National Consumer Study data. And sales of hair-salon appliances increased by 8.5 percent in 2008, according to a study by hair-salon consultants Professional Consultants & Resources, which attributes the rise primarily to “huge increases in home hair styling during the recession.” Meanwhile, the estimated \$46 billion hair and nail salon industry was down 2 percent last year from 2007, according to research firm IBISWorld, and the slump is expected to continue this year.

Another way to save is by making homemade beauty treatments. So women are using simple ingredients like olive oil, oatmeal, honey and avocado to create traditional formulations for everything from hair conditioning treatments to facial masks and exfoliators.

The appeal of DIY products extends beyond the budget factor, however. As with DIY food, it's less convenient but can be fun and satisfying, and aligns with today's emphasis on scrutinizing ingredients—natural is in, chemicals and preservatives are out. With growing concern about the safety of parabens, sulfates and other common chemicals and preservatives used in beauty products, it almost seems easier to make your own product than to figure out which brands are best to buy. And while natural beauty brands are increasingly sought-after (the global natural cosmetics market is valued at \$8 billion by beauty analysts), claims of “natural” and “organic” are often disputed.

Finally, DIY beauty is also appealing because it's about consumer empowerment. As Packaged Facts notes in regard to coloring one's hair at

## PROJECT RUNWAY

home, the trend is tied into “aspects of consumer psychology that extend beyond pure economics.” DIY beauty allows for the mixing and matching of ingredients, colors, products and techniques, giving women more options, more control and, frequently, greater emotional fulfillment:

*“You get the satisfaction of knowing you created that homemade (and much better for you) product.” —geminizer, kiwibox.com*

*“I like my homemade skin care products. I can customize the ingredients to suit my specific skin type. Toners are easy to make and customizable.”  
—Carol Belanger, shine.yahoo.com*

Beauty brands looking to leverage this trend should make the case that their products can give the creative control with natural ingredients and the budget-friendly prices beauty DIYers seek.

DIY fashion is about eschewing readymade looks re-created from magazine pages in favor of a more frugal but also more creative and personalized approach. This may mean making and even designing one’s own pieces, it may mean tailoring old pieces to look fresh again, or it may mean crafting one’s own unique style by mixing thrift store finds with new purchases and recycled pieces.

For some, DIY fashion is simply about looking stylish for less, but there’s also an anti-consumption attitude that’s a key driver of the trend. In part it’s a backlash against excess and indulgence—the years when shopaholics bought the latest fashions in a nonstop frenzy, the bigger the designer name, the better—and in part a bid for greater sustainability. The ethos prizes thrift and conservation of resources.

“It’s this whole notion of prestige from being frugal—there’s almost been a backlash against the materialism of the 1990s,” Australian social analyst and consultant David Chalke told Sydney’s *The Daily Telegraph*. In the DIY mind-set, the fashion industry now seems out of touch with the times: After reading about New York’s spring Fashion Week, blogger and pattern designer Sarai Mitnick commented on her Web site Colette Patterns: “When people are concerned about their future and making a living, the lavish pretension of ... [the fashion industry] seems so showy and ... well, stupid.”

In the do-it-yourself fashion economy, value is not associated with a garment’s price tag—what’s important is creativity, quality and personalization. Consumers are embracing what’s unique and special rather than what’s merely expensive, having tired of seeing the same cookie-cutter ensembles bought off the rack—and with globalization, these same ensembles can often be bought in cities around the world.

Empowered by shows like *Project Runway* and guided by how-to videos online, the most ambitious DIYers are going back to basics—making clothes based on their own designs or patterns available online. Others are tailoring what they already have, giving older garments a new spin, and some are re-appropriating

“must haves” from seasons gone by, turning torn tights into necklaces and old yoga mats into flip-flops.

In some markets, DIY fashion has stimulated sales of sewing materials and stirred interest in learning how to sew. In January, British department store chain John Lewis reported a 20 percent jump in haberdashery sales and a 45 percent rise in sewing machine sales year-over-year. In January, Hotcourses.com—the largest course provider in the U.K.—found that Internet searches for sewing and dressmaking tuition had risen 84 percent compared to the previous January. In the U.S., national retail chain Jo-Ann Fabric and Craft reports that over the past 18 months its “Sewing 101” course has seen enrollment increases “in the double digits.”

The blogosphere has been hugely influential in driving DIY fashion. It has given rise to niche communities of influencers, shifting a modicum of power away from traditional fashion authorities. Personal fashion blogs, created mostly by young women, catalogue what the blogger is wearing each day in photographs and notes about each garment’s origins. Outfits generally mix of cheap-chic brands such as H&M and Forever 21 with homemade items, thrift store finds and a designer accessory or two.

Fashion brands can play a role to that of these bloggers, helping to guide and inspire consumers by encouraging creativity and showing people how to personalize their look. The trendy U.K.-based chain Topshop does this with its fashion advisers, who are akin to personal shoppers at high-end stores but focus on helping young customers craft a personal look. The advisers themselves embody a spirit of creative customization; as one told *The New York Times*: “We are the brand ambassadors in a way. ... We can all wear [the same skirt] on the same day and never know it. Someone will wear it as a top. Someone will wear it as a hat.” Topshop manages to embrace a DIY aesthetic even as it sells the same fashions in outlets around the world.

With interest in secondhand goods heating up, nonprofit thrift store operator Oxfam International is showing customers how to create their own styles from thrifted items. It has teamed up with celebrity stylist Mrs. Jones (aka Fee Doran), who works exclusively with secondhand or re-appropriated items; at the new DIY Oxfam International store on London’s Camden High Street, Mrs. Jones hosts “come-and-play workshops” that focus on turning Oxfam finds into unique pieces, such as skirts made from men’s shirts.

Brands can also help to sponsor the online conversation. Suzanne Xie, co-founder of personal fashion blog *Weardrobe*, is pushing the idea of “micro-product placement”—having brands distribute new products to the most influential users, who would then wear the items in their posts. Xie told *LiveMint*: “Imagine having a bunch of real girls who like a brand so much that they wear and style it for free!” By targeting influencers who can then demonstrate cool ways to incorporate a product—ways the marketer may not have imagined—brands can weave themselves into the fabric of this aesthetic.

## STARTUP NATION

Today's job market is a daunting one. Fewer young people have the option of falling into an entry-level job with a big corporate employer, and fewer established workers are finding openings that match their skill sets. So more people—especially members of the Millennial generation—are re-evaluating old concepts of job security and risk, and taking the do-it-yourself approach: becoming entrepreneurial freelancers and self-starters.

While there is a pervasive sense of resentment among Millennials, who feel they've been dealt an unfair blow because of the recession, they are finding advantage in adversity. A good portion of twentysomethings sees this as a market for entrepreneurs, according to "The Recession and Its Impact on the Youth Market," a multi-market study that JWT conducted in spring 2009. Roughly a quarter of 18-29-year-old respondents in Australia, Canada, the U.S. and the U.K. said they will start their own business if they lose or have trouble finding a job. In Brazil, as many as half of Millennials said they would start their own business.

Recessions have historically encouraged entrepreneurs and given rise to successful ventures, including FedEx, Trader Joe's and Microsoft. What's different about this downturn—what's giving so many people the idea that they can strike out on their own—is that entrepreneurialism has become a more entrenched idea in mainstream culture at the same time that people are feeling a greater distrust of and disillusionment with corporations. And, importantly, it's much easier to get an operation off the ground than it used to be, given the proliferation of low- or no-cost business solutions.

Indeed, technology has been a key driver of entrepreneurialism. It's pushed down startup costs in various ways—today's entrepreneurs can draft basic legal documents without paying for a lawyer thanks to sites like LegalZoom.com; buy professionally printed promotional materials at minimum cost from online vendors like Moo.com; and easily find other entrepreneurs to partner with through Web sites like LinkedIn.

The basic tools needed for running many businesses are often the ones people already have in their home offices. And the same technologies used daily for socializing and entertainment are also useful for business: Facebook is the new contact management software, Twitter the new PR wire. And with the advent of mobile apps and smarter phones, business is also easier to manage while on the go—today's entrepreneur can juggle much more single-handedly.

The key in this environment is ingenuity. Take a laid-off Web developer profiled by *The Wall Street Journal* who uses Twitter to track Web development troubles among users in order to offer his services; within a month of "Twitter consulting," he'd made \$1,400 from referrals alone.

With enough ingenuity, people around the world can find opportunities to leverage. Easy access to global communications systems and low-cost business solutions are helping to democratize the entrepreneurial landscape. As entry costs plummet, "entrepreneurs can now come from almost anywhere, including once-closed economies such as India and China. And many of them can reach global markets from the day they open their doors," observes *The Economist*.

# WHAT IT MEANS

DIY is a trend that was building before the recession—driven by factors including the Internet, anti-globalization and anti-consumption sentiments, and sustainability concerns—and the downturn is only helping to accelerate it.

This may at first seem like bad news for brands—after all, if DIY means doing it yourself, where does this leave companies that sell ready-made products? But big brands and marketers can benefit if they understand how to become part of the trend and build the DIY experience into their marketing.

For some brands, the answer is to give customers a canvas and let them customize the product. Swarovski, for example, has embraced the DIY ethos at its flagship stores in New York, London and Shanghai, which feature crafting spaces where customers can design their own jewelry. The stores sell the items (which are priced comparably to readymade pieces) and customers get a fun, hands-on experience.

For some brands, the answer might be to empower customers by guiding their DIY efforts. Kitchen-goods retailer Williams-Sonoma holds free cooking workshops in its stores, serving as a tutor to home chefs. Apple uses its stores for workshops on such DIY topics as video editing and sound production—all done on Apple software, of course.

DIY doesn't mean consumers are opting out of the economy; instead, they're reconfiguring it, taking a greater stake in the production process. Marketers that can complement consumers' DIY efforts, serving as partners in this reconfiguration, will serve their brands best.



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