

4 Billion New Customers!

Think about that! If you had access to 4 billion customers, how would that impact your marketing, your strategy, your vision, your opportunities, and your profit potential? Well it's coming, and I see it happening right before my eyes.

Let me back up for a moment and give you some perspective. As I write this, I am at my office in Pondicherry, India. I started [Efficiency](#) with my partners April and Rich back in 2004 and came to India shortly after to set up the office. We started with one full time team member and one intern and then quickly added five more. We have now grown to 40 bright, enthusiastic, hardworking men and women.

When I started coming to India, none of the team members had cell phones. Cell service existed here, but the phones were expensive, and most didn't see the value in having one. This continued for a few years. Now all our team members, from the lowest to the highest paid, have cell phones. At this point, eight of them have smartphones, and I see the rest upgrading in a year or so. I can see this new global customer base growing right before my eyes.



You may remember reading the [Software Monster](#) blog I wrote about how new software applications, Software as a Service (SaaS) tools, and apps are eating up the legacy business of a huge number of mainstream industries. This was based on an article that [Marc Andreessen](#), founder of Netscape, wrote in the Wall Street Journal. Now, he has another article out that deals with the expansive opportunity that putting a handheld computer or communication tool connected to the entire world

is offering by bringing customers to your doorstep.

In a CNet article called [Marc Andreessen Predications for 2012](#), Marc discusses how smartphones are now in the hands of about 2 billion people in the developed world, and in three to five years they will be in the hands of 6 billion. Can you imagine what to do with 4 BILLION New Customers? I have been advocating the power of connectivity since the early '90s, and this adds an exponential growth factor to that, which compounds the potential. If you read any futurist thinkers like [Ray Kurzweil](#), it looks like we are much closer to that [Singularity moment](#). You can check out his book [here](#).

Marc ends the article with how opportunities and growth wrap around smartphones saying, "Local merchants, like local restaurant owners, are going to have a smartphone app they can use to dial up customers on demand. Whether that's from [Groupon](#) or [Foursquare](#) – any of these companies can do that. A lot of small business owners are going to start running their businesses from their smartphones."

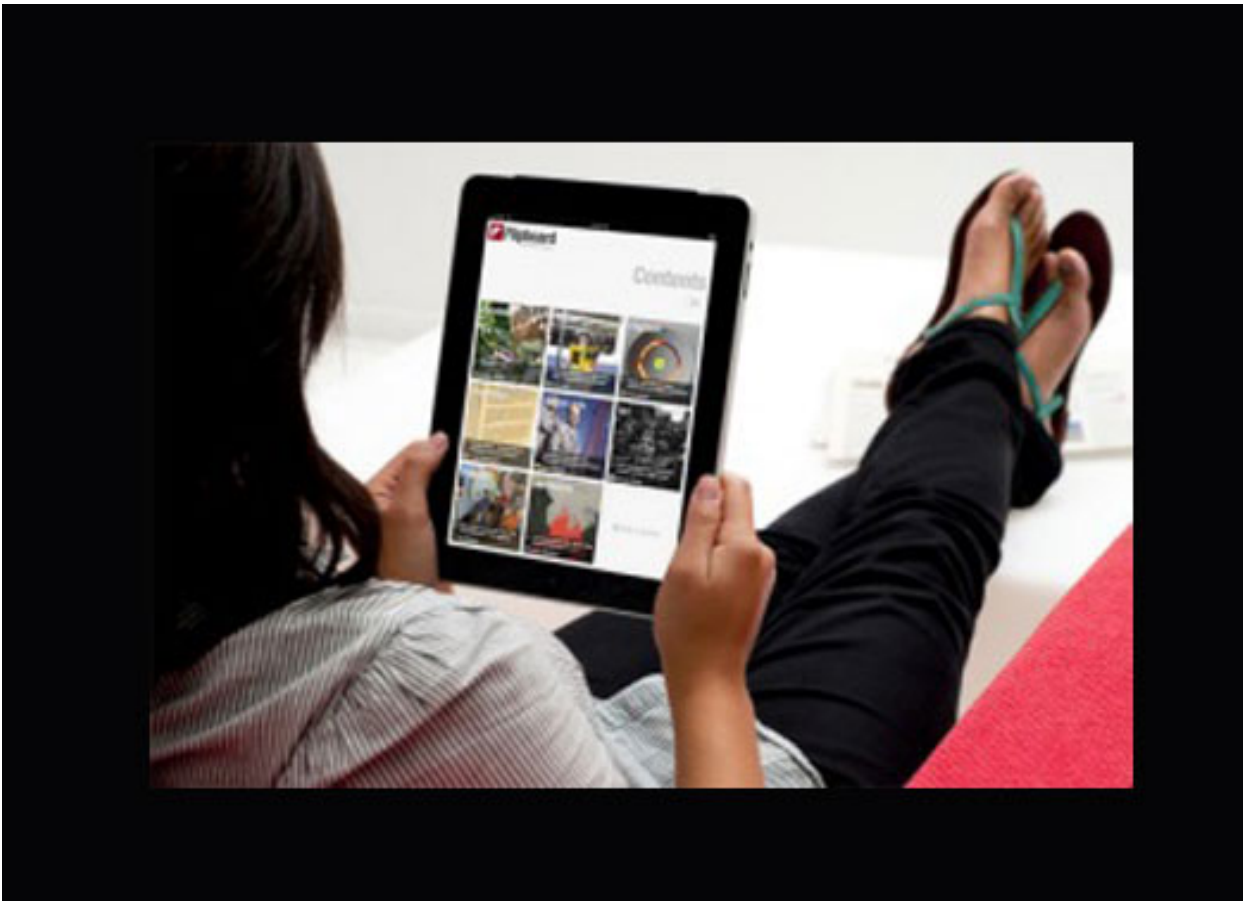
Your marketplace is not your backyard anymore; it's not even your country. We recently launched a requirements gathering tool called [Sluice](#), and it gets 60% of its sign-ups from outside the US. I can already envision all kinds of great opportunities with this mobile expansion, and we are moving our company in that direction for the potential it offers. What are you doing to go after the soon-to-be total of 6 billion new customers?

The Mobile Future is Right Before Our Eyes!

Last week, I traveled to Dallas, TX for a guys' weekend with my son Tony, his close friend Steven, and my brother Mark. While there, we also attended the Bills vs. Cowboys football game. Having grown up in Rochester, NY, I am a Bills fan, which is often difficult to endure. That weekend was no exception. Even after a great start to the season, the Bills lost 44 to 7. Other than that, we had a great time, and the Cowboys' stadium is off the charts!

You seem to open your eyes more to what is around you when you're in a new environment, so being a bit more observant, I watched the nonstop mobile usage around me. These observations made me want to share some recent research that has been released. Based on the research and my own thoughts, mobile devices are becoming a powerful force in our lives.

As we went to restaurants, the social watering holes, the tailgate party, and even in the stadium, I noticed how many people were using their mobile devices to stay in touch, update Facebook and Twitter, and take pictures to upload or send out to everyone. Sitting in Cracker Barrel next to a table filled with the 60 plus crowd waiting on their food, I watched all of them tapping away, or reading what was on their phones. This is universal and will expand as speed increases and apps are introduced, making our lives easier as well as more resourceful and connected.



In a previous [blog](#), I discussed the research of [Mary Meeker](#), a leader in mobile technology research. She released new data at the [Web 2.0 Summit](#) recently, and it showed the continued surge of mobile usage, traffic, and e-commerce.

In the area of e-commerce, she discussed how [eBay](#)'s mobile sales have reached \$4-billion, [Paypal](#) has hit \$3-billion, [Amazon](#) has made \$2-billion, and [Square](#) is at \$1-billion. All had big increases with Square up 20,000% year over year growth! From what I observed, it is just going to continue to be off the charts!

Meeker explained that over the past year, the use of mobile search has increased four times, and the mobile app and advertising revenue combined has been growing at 153% annual compound rate since 2008. At that time, the revenue was at \$700-million, and now it has hit \$12-billion! This is amazing growth!

For internet services like [Pandora](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#), a

large portion of their traffic is from mobile devices. Actually, for Pandora and Twitter, the majority of their traffic is mobile with Pandora generating 65% of traffic and Twitter gaining 55% of traffic this way. Approximately 33% of Facebook traffic comes from mobile devices, and it is increasing dramatically.

This all means we are entering a world much different from where we have been, and it is changing fast. We will be doing so much more on our mobile devices, and this will drive how we work and play. How does this affect you and your business? Can you improve your service to allow easier access to your products and services over mobile devices?

As I contemplated these questions over the weekend, I had an idea dealing with mobile devices and connecting people that has been brewing for awhile now, but it was solidified in Dallas. What ideas do you have to connect people, share information, or simplify things? The next [Gates](#), [Jobs](#), or [Zuckerberg](#) is brewing and will show up soon. Why not you?