

The open-source world isn't the only niche community where this kind of learning and innovation now take place. The world of rare books, for instance, has been turned upside down by Amazon's ability to aggregate the offerings of many local special-interest sellers; customers are no longer constrained by the quirky collections of titles assembled by owners of antiquarian bookshops in our-of-the-way physical locations. In extreme sports such as surfing and windsurfing, participants increasingly innovate and cocreate new offerings, such as footholds on windsurfing boards to enhance wave jumping. *And customized cars, or hot rods – automobiles modified to suit individual tastes – rank among the fastest growing segments of the North American automobile market. In each of these cases, consumers are becoming more engaged in the creative and commercial processes.*

Cocreation is powerful engine for innovation: instead of limiting it to what companies can devise within their own borders, pull systems throw the process open to many diverse participants, whose input can take product and service offerings in unexpected directions that serve a much broader range of needs. Instant-messaging networks, for instance, were initially marketed to teens as a way to communicate more rapidly, but financial traders, among many other people, now use them to gain an edge in rapidly moving financial markets.