



Clay Shirky

AUTHOR · FUTURIST · TED SPEAKER

AI has moved faster than the institutions it is reshaping. Leaders now face a version of the problem that universities are confronting first: when the tools students, employees, and customers use can produce plausible work in seconds, the old boundaries around expertise, integrity, and credentialing stop holding. The question is no longer whether to adopt AI, but which parts of the institution it quietly dismantles if you do.

Clay Shirky is NYU's Vice Provost for AI and Technology in Education and the author of *Here Comes Everybody*, who helps leaders see how digital networks and AI are rewriting the rules of institutional authority and knowledge work.

Clay Shirky's 2026 Biography

Why organisations work with Clay Shirky

- He is running one of the most closely watched AI transitions inside a major research university, giving leaders a live view of how a complex institution is actually absorbing the technology, not a theoretical account.
- His 2008 book *Here Comes Everybody* is still the reference text for how networks dismantle hierarchical coordination. He brings two decades of that argument to the current question of what AI does to professional work.
- He has spent his career identifying the moment a technology stops being a tool and starts changing who gets to do the job. Leaders use him to pressure-test where that line sits inside their own organisation.
- He writes and speaks in plain language. Senior teams come away with a sharper vocabulary for decisions they had been circling: about integrity, expertise, and the parts of the business that AI makes cheaper to replace than to defend.
- Named originator of the Shirky Principle, which is quoted back at boards more often than most of them realise: institutions try to preserve the problem to which they are the solution.

Biography highlights

- Vice Provost for AI and Technology in Education, New York University.
- Associate professor at NYU's Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute and Tisch School of the Arts Interactive Telecommunications Program.
- Former Chief Information Officer, NYU Shanghai.
- Author of *Here Comes Everybody*, *Cognitive Surplus*, and *Little Rice*, published by Penguin.
- Edward R. Murrow Visiting Lecturer, Harvard Kennedy School's

AVAILABLE FOR

- Guest Appearance
- Panel Participation
- Speaking

CLAY'S SPEAKING THEMES

- Artificial Intelligence & Generative AI
- Future of Technology
- Future of Work
- Innovation & Disruption
- Organizational Design

LANGUAGES: English

Shorenstein Center.

- Contributor to The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Harvard Business Review, and Wired.
- TED speaker with multiple talks on collaboration, cognitive surplus, and the politics of networked media.

Biography

The question most organisations are now quietly asking about AI is not technical. It is institutional. If the tools available to a junior employee can produce output that used to require a senior one, what happens to the rungs of the ladder in between? That is the terrain Clay Shirky has been working on for twenty years, first as a theorist of digital networks, now as the person running AI strategy inside one of the largest research universities in the world.

At NYU he is Vice Provost for AI and Technology in Education, with responsibility for how the university teaches, examines, and credentials students in an environment where a generative tool can write a plausible essay in seconds. Before that he was Chief Information Officer of NYU Shanghai. He holds faculty positions at the Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute and the Tisch School of the Arts Interactive Telecommunications Program.

Here Comes Everybody, published in 2008, set out the argument that group action no longer requires a formal organisation to coordinate it. Cognitive Surplus extended the case into what people do with the time that television used to absorb. Little Rice looked at the same dynamics through the smartphone industry in China. The through-line is consistent: when the cost of coordination falls, the shape of every institution that depended on that cost changes.

The Shirky Principle, named by Kevin Kelly, captures the argument leaders take back to their own boards: institutions will try to preserve the problem to which they are the solution. He has made that case to audiences at TED, at Harvard's Shorenstein Center as Edward R. Murrow Visiting Lecturer, and in the pages of the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Harvard Business Review, and Wired. The current application, and the reason senior teams are booking him, is AI.

Key speaking topics

- AI and the future of knowledge work
- Institutional change in the age of generative AI
- Networked collaboration and the economics of group action
- The future of education, credentialing, and academic integrity
- Digital disruption of professional expertise
- Technology policy and the public internet
- Organisational design for a post-hierarchical era

Ideal for

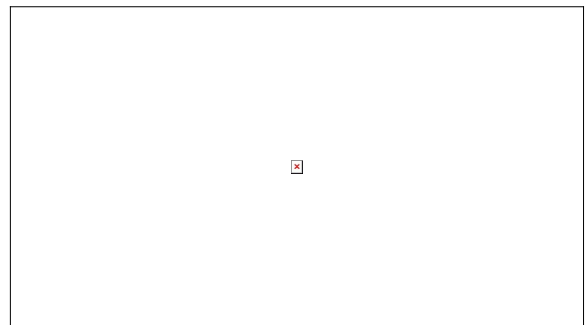
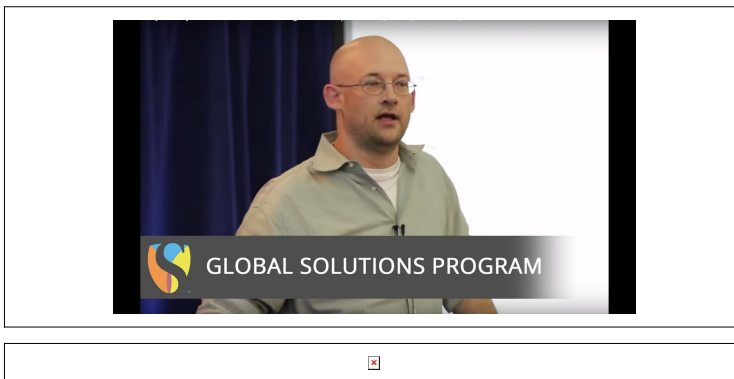
- Boards and executive teams working through AI strategy beyond productivity use cases.
- University, publishing, media, and professional services leaders whose business model depends on credentialed expertise.
- CHROs and learning leaders rethinking how people are trained, assessed, and promoted when AI can do parts of the job.
- Policy and public sector leaders examining how digital networks and AI

are reshaping institutional trust.

Audience outcomes

- A sharper reading of which parts of their organisation AI makes cheaper to replace than to defend.
- A working vocabulary for the decisions leaders are already making about integrity, authorship, and expertise.
- A clearer sense of what a major research university is actually doing about AI, from someone running the work.
- A framework for thinking about institutional change that does not collapse into either hype or fatalism.
- Concrete examples of networked coordination and AI adoption drawn from two decades of original research and current practice.

Clay Shirky's Videos

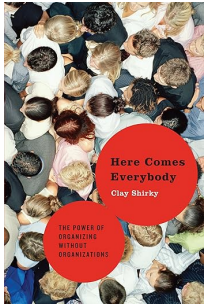


What Clay Shirky's clients say

Shirky is one of the handful of people with justifiable claim to the digerati moniker. He's become a consistently prescient voice on networks, social software, and technology's effects on society.

Wired magazine

CLAY'S LATEST BOOKS



Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations



Cognitive Surplus: Creativity and Generosity in a Connected Age: How Technology Makes Consumers into Collaborators