

The Coming Robotic Revolution

We are headed into another major revolution, the Robotic Revolution. We have already seen the impact of the Information Revolution with retail stores failing left and right. The Robotic Revolution is just starting and it will have just as deep an impact on our society. To properly survive this revolution, we need to know what robots can do and what only humans can do. As with the Information Revolution, there will be winners and losers.

Robots are going to cause major changes to the job market. As happened with the Industrial Revolution and the Information Revolution, a lot of people are going to see less work and less pay. This will result in social

and political problems. Smart companies will work with current employees to train them how to work with and around robots. Our society will need to deal with people who do not adapt to this revolution.

Robots are great at doing repetitive work. Robots also are great at taking a past trend and projecting that into the future (such as stock trading 'bots).

Humans can do certain things that robots can't. Humans do a lot better job of coordinating people and activities. We can see futures that robots cannot. Creative activities that other humans will pay for are totally outside the scope of what a robot can do. Compare a live band or even a DJ to a premixed tape to see the difference.

The first few generations of robots were

high priced, precision robots currently being used in car manufacturing. But just like how computers moved from high priced to home use, robots are being designed for much easier training and use and at a much lower price. Some new robots can be easily programmed or can navigate home or workplace environments. The ease of training means that even though they are not real cheap, they can be used in places that the precision robots can't.

Humans Can Do Creative Activities

Robots in Japan are being designed to work in "caring" fields where they cannot get enough workers. For social reasons, Japan is dangerously low on workers who can help care for the elderly and for children. Thus, Japan is working on robots that can do some elderly and child care.

Part of the social problem will be not just the robots, but the interconnected networks that stand behind those robots. It won't just be the automated server behind the bar that can recognize you when you walk in and remembers your preferences, it will be the databases behind that server that sell that information to those who either want to sell more to you, or those who use that information against you.

That automated server that recognizes you when you walk in is also the technology that can be used to track you throughout the day even when you might want a bit of privacy. Our society needs people who "break the rules". People who want enough surveillance to be safe lose out on the healthy risks that are needed to move our society ahead.

We need to balance the coming robotic revolution with a healthy society.

Rethinking Social Networks

For a while now, researchers have thought that the person with the most social connections was a key player in any social network. This has led to the LinkedIn phenomenon of a person with thousands of "connections". Yet, that person rarely is able to capitalize fully on all those connections. This has led to new studies that show more details about which connections matter. These studies can shed light on why diversity is profitable.

A recent study found that it wasn't the number of connections that was the most important, but the way that connections were made across local groups. People who are able to connect across social classes, cultures, and insular groups are the ones that have the most influence. Similarly, the companies that best connect different people are often the most profitable.

This has profound impact for today's world. We have groups that are pushing for more closed societies. We have efforts to break connections between populations. That will result in lower lifestyles for all of us.

This may also be the reason why diversity in management is beneficial. Diversity in company management and in company boards bring in connections to more groups. These extra connections can help see the needs of the different groups. The companies that are able to meet the many diverse needs are far more likely to be profitable. It certainly can help prevent the "tone deafness" that some ads or outreach efforts have shown.

Connecting with many different groups can help identify new trends in time to be able to capitalize on them. It is having a broad perspective that helps the company the most.

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Risky World

Those of you using Chrome or Firefox browsers will start seeing a lot of sites that are "Not Secure". Part of the problem is that somewhere close to 30,000 invalid site certificates have been issued by several companies and Google has decided to "distrust" all certificates issued by those companies. You will be warned but you can choose to continue if you believe the site is ok.

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