

Beyond Tomorrow – A Race Against Technology

Our world is not facing a shortage of big challenges like global warming, mass extinction of life on our planet, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and democracies under threat to name a few. But as an educator, a problem solver and a socially conscious entrepreneur, the issue that will most likely define my life is the race against technology.

Technology is replacing jobs at an alarming and accelerating rate. Some would surely welcome greater efficiency and effectiveness at a tremendous cost savings for all organizations. Others see this trend as a great threat, as technology introduces new risks with unforeseen consequences and as machines replace humans. My views are more nuanced, and as I say good bye to 2016, I suspect that a good part of my life's remaining work would be dedicated to engaging myself and helping others to be more competitive and win the race with technology.

According to recent articles, artificial intelligence, robots, and other forms of smart technologies will replace 6% of all U.S. jobs by 2021 (The Guardian, 2016). Assuming our country has approximately 125 million jobs, that will be 7.5 million jobs lost in just five years (Statista, 2016). One of the reports from the Davos 2016 Summit showed that for technology to replace nearly 7.1 million jobs in the first world, only 2.1 million jobs would be created to support the new technology (CNN, 2016). If this ratio holds, that means for the loss of every three jobs, only one job will be created in this brave new world. What can you do?

Here are the top four points of advice I share with my individual and corporate clients and with my college students:

1. Be Technology Savvy. Technologies of all sorts will play a greater role in all aspects of our lives in the future.
2. Strengthen Emotional Skills. Discover magazine's year-end issue highlighted 100 amazing discoveries and inventions in 2016. What I did not see is a technology that fundamentally changes how humans work and play. When complex problems require solutions, there are few ways that wind up better than assembling a team of very smart people. The world will need emotionally savvy leaders and problem solvers to direct resources and facilitate solutions.
3. Achieve Greater Competitiveness. How do you distinguish yourself from your peers? In the world of project management, for example, there are now over 730,000 active PMPs. So for those professional project managers with PMPs, how are you different and better than the other 729,999 PMPs?

4. Set Your Sights Higher. I often suggest to my students to set three goals: minimally viable, realistic, and stretched goals. The minimally viable establishes the lowest threshold for your goals; achieving that means achieving some acceptable level of success. Realistic goals are exactly that, and they are often based on your historical accomplishments and your resources. But what excites you should be the stretched goals; these are the goals that set you apart from the competition. Be willing to fail in those stretched goals! After all, how will you know your limit if you never cross it?

So, what is your New Year resolution?

For a longer version of the same article, visit my blog at www.pmoadvisory.com/blog/race-against-technology.

Sources:

1. The Guardian, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/sep/13/artificial-intelligence-robots-threat-jobs-forrester-report>
2. Statista, 2016. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/192361/unadjusted-monthly-number-of-full-time-employees-in-the-us/>
3. CNN, 2016. <http://money.cnn.com/2016/01/18/news/economy/job-losses-technology-five-million/>