

# The Future of Work in our Age of Exponential Technology

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You and I, we are not good at everything. We can't process big information as quickly as computers. We can't detect skin cancer as accurately as the latest healthcare technology. For lack of a better description, we were not built for today's exponential technology era. Yet here we are, needing to adapt more quickly than at any time in known history.

Also, we generally have not been good at predicting the trajectory of innovation and technology. For example, ATMs have yet to extinguish banking jobs like so many predicted, and human bank tellers are more numerous in the US today than in 1985. It seems, only in hindsight, we understand how technology has brought us here. So, how can so many prophecies talk of the elimination of untold numbers of jobs, but not speak to the potential for jobs of the future to emerge unexpectedly, as we enter an era of unprecedented abundance?

Peter Diamandis of Singularity University explains why: "As humans, we are generally biased to think linearly." In today's age of progress, growth happens on an exponential curve. This is Ray Kurzweil's landmark "Law of Accelerating Returns," which is based on the principle that computing power is doubling every two years (Moore's Law). We are living in the age of exponential growth. This is producing life-changing science, technology, and radical innovation. But more than that, this change is forcing us to ask fundamental questions we've never had to ask before about what it means to be human. *What is are the uniquely-human dimensions that give us purpose in life? Which of these qualities will not be replaced by AI or autonomous systems? And, building on this: What is the future of work?*

With such rapid technological advancements that are surpassing even the dreams of their inventors, where does that leave we humans, who are perceived as imperfect, and oftentimes flawed?

Interestingly, this leaves us where we've been since the dawn of modern times – at the center of it all. The age of exponential growth is not validating human obsolescence, it's paving the way for the very things that make us human in the first place—our love, empathy, and creativity—to thrive in a level of abundance as never before experienced in known history. As we thrive more as a species, we can live in our fuller potential. Humans are nature-built, and need positive purpose

beyond self, to truly lead a fulfilling life. This defines part of the future, whereby humans will design more systems to give back and serve the whole system, as opposed to self-interest.

## The Future of Work is Human

Ten years from now, in less than one second, you will be able to test every one of a billion combinations for solving a Sudoku puzzle purely based on processing power, no software involved. So, what happens to that valuable software job in this one simple example?

Of course, this is part of the dystopian future we so often hear about. When looking toward the future management of our world, Artificial Intelligence often takes mainstage in the conversation. The wisdom goes that we will eventually lose control over technology and be forced to submit to its omnipotence. Tech leaders like Elon Musk even compare the adoption of AI to “summoning the devil.”

In reality, AI and pure processing power are only a kernel of the complex system enabling exponential growth today. Pointing the camera at AI alone leaves out other important factors like data science, AR/VR, biotech, materials genome, human genome, nanotechnology, a global Internet with large bandwidth, potable water technologies, renewable energy and a long list of other innovations driven by exponentiating processing power.

More importantly, however, is that AI software will never be able to truly replicate the humanity that brought it into existence. It has no self-awareness and cannot fathom the amazing whole system of our existence. It has no real perspective. It is an enabling technology in many respects, but not a replacement. AI falls short of the creative magic that ignites through human-to-human connection; and, it is not biologically and memetically coded to require positive purposes beyond self-interest.

It's not just that AI or any other component of the exponential movement is shifting. Instead, the entire system is emerging to a new relationship of human-tech symbiosis. *The broader nature of work and how we find meaning in life is evolving, yet this innovation, while reducing many of the menial lower paid jobs in parts of commerce, will create radically more valuable workers that have extraordinary power to accelerate their individual gifts and skills.*

Personally, I'm a radical optimist, someone who looks at the nature of humanity. And the reality is, the second megatrend which has been going on much longer than technology, is **humanity**. We have valuable qualities that simply cannot be readily replaced by technology.

## The Future of Work is About Creating Radical Abundance

Ilya Prigogine's Nobel-worthy discovery of 1977 explains our current reality well. In short, Prigogine discovered that in higher order systems of complexity, the second law of thermodynamics (entropy) begins to disappear until it eventually produces a positive sum game, as opposed to a dissipated / homogenized world.

Through our own work and innovation, we have reached this higher order of complexity in today's age of exponential growth, where outcomes are greater than the sum of their parts. Human's ability to recognize tipping points, identify opportunities for radical breakthroughs to higher order, desire for greater freedom, and ability to solve increasingly complex problems have all made this higher order of complexity attainable.

As technology continues to automate and optimize non-creative tasks, we are gifted more time and space for true human co-creation. This is a catalyst of genius, whereby the collision of disparate ideas produces radical newness, and 1 plus 1 becomes 7, not 2. Given that humans are nature-built to care and want to have positive life purposes, this increasing creativity, combined with the power of technology, bodes well for a healthier and more sustainable society and ecosystem in distant years.

Still, innovation is only a byproduct of exponential growth. It's not necessarily about making our lives easier to live. More than anything, the exponential movement is about clearing a path toward purpose and unlocking the whole of human potential.

To be human is to struggle with the challenges life throws in your direction. To be human is also to reach for your higher aspirations. To be a *fulfilled* human, we need to have purpose beyond self-interest and want to uplift others. Combined, finding meaning in the future of work means finding love for each other. Without it, our individual and collective "Romes will fall."

The radical abundance created through exponential growth means that we have a pathway for a universal basic standard of living. There will be enough bounty to share for all. And, we get there by connecting with and helping our fellow humans while preparing for the inevitable future. Yet, UBI needs to be connected to a broader structure of education and incentives to contribute beauty, peace, love, sustainability and empathy for all.

## The future of work requires a reframing

Fulfilling our purpose as humans is an active achievement. In other words, unlocking human potential can't be accomplished alone or without enacting change. There are three core things we should think about today to forge a more fulfilling tomorrow.

## **1. Retool the way we look at education**

Naturally, as the nature of employment changes, so must the way we prepare our population for the jobs of the future. This reframing of education is two-pronged.

First, we need to change *what* we teach. In general, this means honing the skills that are fundamentally irreplaceable to humans. Skills like adaptability, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking will help us lead. Most importantly, we need to find ways to teach discernment, or wisdom, which can be accelerated by sharing our life experiences with each other. Peer to peer education, guidance or mentoring is fundamental to our future success and always will be.

Second, we need to change *how* we teach. The most cliché “teach a man to fish” adage is still the most relevant to our evolving reality. We need to equip future generations with the tools they need to understand, not just memorize, key concepts. For example, teaching entrepreneurship earlier and on more local, accessible levels will be key for creating radical abundance in the future. Platforms like Kahn Academy, Codecademy, and MOOC have already made great strides in making this type of education more accessible for all.

## **2. Create spaces for human-to-human connection**

Radical newness will be the norm in the future. That’s accomplished by co-creating, or combining disparate elements to create something entirely novel and exponentially valuable. Peer-to-peer services like Upwork, Fiverr, and others have already begun to facilitate this process, yet nextgen sharing services, guiding/mentoring services and educational platforms will emerge.

However, creating space for humans to share their experiences through technology can also help us address more aspirational goals, like reducing human struggle. [LifeGuides](#), PBC, is just one example of how we can create sustainable, living-wage jobs through the power of human connection. It is a matching platform, offering a conversation network that connects those who are experiencing a specific Life Challenge to Guides who have succeeded in their identical challenge, and who are trained to truly help in a human to human design. LifeGuides allows Guides to find purpose in helping others through sharing their experience, empathy and wisdom, while also paying them to earn a living wage. The clients that they work with also emerge with new knowledge, hope, and understanding of how to manage their Life Challenge, thereby reducing their struggle.

### **3. Choose optimism**

Many conversations around the future of technology and employment are grim. They talk about how AI will surpass human ability and overtake our position as alpha. Still, no matter how smart, how complex, or how “real” technology will become, we still can’t imagine coming to a robot with a personal problem and feeling the same empathy, the same magical humanness.. Two of the most impactful words in our language are, “I understand.”. Technology will never be able to replace love, friendship, creativity, conscious sacrifice, wisdom, sincerity, and a litany of other humanness. It’s our choice whether or not we live in fear or in faith of the future of our world.

We may not be good at predicting the technologies of tomorrow. And we may not be able to process big information as quickly as supercomputers. But, humans will continue to shine.

The future of work will be finding our life purpose and thriving in it, which will attract resources and connections to manifest the life of our dreams.

What are the stories that will lead us forward, that are not sectarian, that are inclusive, that empower purpose, that empower empathy, that empower the unique qualities that are our humanity? *These* are the stories that are foundational to the human experience and which will never disappear.

When you reflect on who you are as a being—*you*—what part of you can technology truly replace? The answer defines the future of work for us all.

#### **ABOUT MARK DONOHUE**

A leading pioneer, Mark has specialized in "impact" enterprises, "conscious capitalism" and "triple bottom line" economics for 30 years, and is passionate about bringing regenerative, healing and sustainable models to much-greater scale.

In January of 2019, LifeGuides, PBC, where Mark is Founder/CEO, received the Grand Prize in the prestigious "Abundance Impact Challenge" from Dr. Peter Diamandis, Singularity University and the Abundance 360 leadership network.

In April 2019, Mark was appointed to Fast Company's Impact Council, which is "300 leaders that will redefine the future of enterprise."

In January of 2011, Mr. Donohue was honored as one of the "Top 100 American Thought Leaders in Trustworthy Business Behavior," by the organization Trust Across America.

He was Entrepreneur-in-Residence for over five years, and subsequently Senior Fellow in Social Innovation for three years, at Babson College, which is consistently #1-rated in the world



for Entrepreneurship education.

In the non-profit realm, he has served on Boards including: Babson College, the Social Venture Circle, The Temple of Understanding (USA's oldest interfaith education organization), and as Treasurer of the Foundation for Conscious Evolution.

#### ABOUT LIFEGUIDES

[LifeGuides](#) helps companies with its network of trained and experienced Guides, to support employee families through an array of Life Challenges.

Life Challenges are Inevitable. LifeGuides pairs people, who are going through a specific Life Challenge, with a Guide who has successfully navigated the same Life Challenge. As Match.com pairs people for love, and Doctor On Demand finds doctors for patients, we match a Guide to each employee's specific Life Challenge. Furthermore, our Well-Being Concierges™ and Intelligence Assistance™ software custom match resources for each participant. Services require no crisis, no diagnosis and no stigma. The LifeGuides Network™ is long term human support, combining active listening, empathy and shared Life Experiences in a most relatable and effective manner.

Outcomes for an enterprise can include:

- \* **Reduced Presenteeism Loss**
- \* **Reduced Absenteeism**
- \* **Improved Focus, Well-Being & Creativity**
- \* **Achieving Better Retention & Recruitment**
- \* **Reduced Health Insurance Claims**
- \* **Enhancing your Culture of Caring**

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