

Artificial Intelligence (Part I of III)

We will explore the subject of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) in three parts. Part One will accentuate the need to focus on A.I. Part two will detail the evolution of A.I. and its impact on Human Resources. Part three will offer some solutions to the needs of humans as A.I. unfolds upon us.

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Managers and leaders have a duty and obligation to think beyond the curve. Otherwise, what are they good for? And beyond the curve is a tsunami roaring toward us that is unstoppable and bearing unimaginable consequences. Actually, that wave is already here and most of us either don't know it or we are too fearful to fully consider what is happening and the impact that its potential could have on our everyday life. When asked if he had any concerns about artificial intelligence, entrepreneur Elon Musk replied that he was terrified.

This article will hopefully serve to awaken the managers and leaders, who are and will be dealing with human resources in the years and decades of reacting to the impact of AI. There is no claim here to predict what the overall impact will be because we are sage enough to understand that we do not know. No one knows what that impact will be and if experts claim to know, quite simply, they are lying. Homo sapiens have never been at such a crossroads. The "Industrial Revolution" changed manual and physical labour and the consequences continue to this day. This A.I. revolution, actually, *our* revolution doesn't just change physical labour, but goes on to affect how we humans are and will be thinking and feeling, and consequently how our minds and bodies will eventually evolve.

There is a convergence of progress that will collide upon us with developments around AI, robotics and medical science. Furthermore, as these latter elements merge and magnify each other, the human elements of reasoning, deciding and acting will start fading away. Strangely enough, the more we discover and develop new applications, the less we know as their tasks and responsibilities are absorbed by our new technologies. We are already under the illusion that we know much about our world; but in reality, the average person knows very little about how our world works. Yes, we know how a zipper works because all we have to do is pull up or down on the key that binds opposing teeth together. However, as lay persons, we don't know how the teeth are engineered to lock together and how they are produced. And we don't know these things because we have no need to know.

To hope that A.I. is not here is futile. The Sudbury basin experienced a robotic revolution, supported by A.I. in mining during the last 20 years, displacing thousands of employees with obvious impacts on the local economy. It was all so gradual that only the laid off workers could see it happening since they were directly affected. Local stores encourage us to cash ourselves out at their exits. If we stop to think about it, many other examples exist where people have been replaced with the exponential growth of technology and this will only be accelerated by the fast-paced innovations in the world of A.I. The improvements in A.I. will continue at a pace never experienced by modern man/woman.

California is offering restaurants and pizza outlets that prepare the goods to both serve and deliver them with little or no involvement of people. This excludes cooks, waiters, dishwashers and drivers in a food industry that is catering to the whims of customers, who are curious to sample the industry that will eventually have a dramatic negative effect on the workforce in the hospitality industry. A.I. is not restricted to commandeering manual work. Airlines have been landing their jetliners for years with sensors, algorithms and robotics. In fact, drones have been used for many years by the U.S. military to

launch unmanned mission in various part of the world. Legal searches are being perfected with A.I to replace people-lawyers where the applications can do the work of several lawyers in a fraction of time. And the medical field is developing A.I. algorithms to package lab work and electronic medical examinations like MRIs, CAT scans and radiology to formulate treatment programs and follow-ups for patients.

The interesting, and on the other hand frightening, aspect of A.I. is that human have created robots, computers and other gadgets that continuously learn as they perform tasks. If a mistake is made, the robot can learn from its mistake and never perform it again. It is programmed to learn new routines without making errors. With this learning ability, these machines will not repeat the same mistake. It is constantly learning to be infallible. This continuous learning loop will allow these robots, computers and gadgets to make even the most complex tasks seem easy. Currently, very routine tasks performed by humans can be carried out effortlessly by this new A.I. technology. With the advances made in the field of A.I., some of the more complex tasks currently being performed by human being will be accomplished more effectively and efficiently by robots and technology based on A.I.

The revolution is exciting with opportunities popping up with information technology, but the ramifications are insidious and unpredictable. As we navigate social media, our interactions are being tracked, recorded and mined for future applications. We are already woven into the databases that are shaping the new applications. We are already part of the global intelligence connected by the networks of applications, algorithms and servers. Every time we click on something on the internet, we connect to the growing databases that collect bits of our activities, interests, wishes, preferences and preoccupations. Not only are we consumers of the services provided by A.I. applications, but we have also become integral contributors to the growth and development of A.I. applications.

And the fun is just beginning ...

(Part two will detail the evolution of A.I. and its impact on Human Resources)