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'Fear Not The Job-Stealing Robots' Forbes, Online

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Let's face it. You're probably like most people. You've heard about workplace automation probably taking your job. But it won't happen to you or maybe anyone you know, right? Much hot air is spent on the topic of workplace automation and its consequences for workers. Opinions are divided. Some people forecast we'll take automation in our stride, as we have in the past. That displaced workers will be absorbed into new and emerging industries. Others foretell a gloomier future.

Optimists

The pro-automation bloc often point to American agriculture as an example. In the early 1900s, mechanization made U.S. farmers so productive that millions of rural dwellers moved off to cities, where labor was needed by a fast-growing industrial economy. In turn, as factories became more automated, millions of workers were laid off but found work in the emerging service economy. Machine-driven industrialization created wealth.

Over the past centuries, automation has improved conditions for most people. Today we enjoy abundant and less expensive food from fewer farmers, more cars, and refrigerators from highly efficient factories. We've also got a service economy that caters to almost every human want, from pet grooming to periodontal care. We have all of this, and nearly full employment to boot! Today's wave of rapid automation may continue in the same way.

Pessimists

Those on the anti-automation bloc, however, point to a "jobless future." They say the highly educated

and tech-savvy will do exceptionally well, while robots and software will take over the work of the rest of us. An early 2018 report by Bain and Company's Macro Trends Group estimates 20% to 25% of current jobs may be eliminated by the end of the 2020s, with middle- to low-income workers being the hardest hit. Income inequality under this scenario will worsen as more and more of today's middle-class workers slide to the bottom.

Don't Discount The Power Of Human Creativity

Indeed, they are two very different scenarios. Where do I stand? Put me with the pro-automation bloc any day. It recognizes the transformative power of human creativity in business, science and other walks of life.

Yes, automation will eliminate millions of today's jobs, but what about the others? Many roles we can't even imagine today. And innovation will create most of them.

Look At Apple, Amazon, FedEx, UPS

Life is full of surprises. Who in the late 1970s would have guessed that a handful of techno geeks in Cupertino, California would create the world's most powerful brand and a robust job-producing engine? Today, Apple employs 124,000 people and has committed to hiring another 20,000 within five years. When its 9,000 U.S. suppliers and partners are added to the mix, Apple accounts for 2 million jobs.

Amazon is another example. Starting in 1993 with a small office and warehouse crew, founder Jeff Bezos now employs 566,000 people. The company's second headquarters is on the drawing boards and expects to hire another 50,000 with an average salary of \$100,000. And in support of Amazon and other online retailers, delivery companies such as FedEx and UPS are currently writing paychecks for almost one million people!

Growing Industries – Like Solar

Among industries, solar energy was barely a blip on the charts 15 years ago. It now accounts for 260,000 U.S. positions, mostly hands-on installation jobs, and that number is growing fast. One of every 50 new jobs in the U.S. today is in the solar industry.

The job-creating potential of these and hundreds of other enterprises was not anticipated in the



1970s and 1980s when industrial robots first appeared in significant numbers. And other job-creating companies will undoubtedly emerge in the years ahead if the U.S. and its peer economies maintain their current dynamism.

Being Proactive

Sure, there will be growing pains, but when aren't there? Employers, governments and individuals can take steps to ease transitions and leverage the advantages of automation to benefit workers and their communities.

Innovative, proactive programs are already putting people into rewarding, good-paying jobs. The programs focus on skilling and reskilling workers with apprenticeships, and key to them are partnerships between community colleges and local industry. The result? We're successfully closing a gap for once-despairing employers who've been crying out for skilled candidates.

Automation will pave the way for more people to gain real satisfaction from their work. It's about giving their human potential a platform to flourish. In so doing, we're genuinely changing the world in astounding ways with robots and automation by our side.

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About the Author

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He is the Author of "Job U - How to Find Wealth and Success by Developing the Skills Companies Actually Need"

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