



FUTURE OF WORK AGENDA

A Free Monthly Newsletter
June, 2005

www.thefutureofwork.net/

THIS MONTH'S HEADLINES

Click on any Headline to go to the full story.

1. **[FROM JIM AND CHARLIE](#)**

This is our personal note welcoming you to the June 2005 issue of *Future of Work Agenda* and setting our theme for the month. We seem to pulled together a lot of material and ideas about new technology. But our focus, as always, is on how those technologies change the way we live, work, think, and communicate.

2. **[ANNOUNCEMENTS](#)**

Future of Work continues to seek and welcome new members.

3. **[FEATURE ARTICLE: THIS OLD HOUSE, BY CHARLIE GRANTHAM,](#)**

This is a short story about the house that I grew up in. But it could just as well be a story about your childhood home, or someone else in your immediate family. We are presenting it here in the context of the future of work to illustrate a major point: the built environment exists to support and enhance our lives....

4. **[BOOK REVIEW: A WHOLE NEW MIND, BY DANIEL PINK](#)**

This is a great 234-page summer read. Dan's central thesis is that we are shifting once again into a new age – a new age of commerce, learning, and living. Developed nations are moving from an industrial world dominated by left-brain logical thinking to a right-brained intuitive world....

5. **[RESEARCH NOTES](#)**

This section appears from time to time, as we come across (or write ourselves) new perspectives on what is actually happening (or may happen) in the word of work. Keep in mind that most of these notes have already appeared on our [Future of Work weblog](#).

6. **[THE FUTURE IS ALREADY HERE; IT JUST ISN'T EVENLY DISTRIBUTED](#)**

In one form or another, the future of work is already here. This occasional collection of stories provides you with notes from all over the world – stories about what's happening somewhere today that provides clues to what will be happening everywhere tomorrow.

7. **[IN OUR HUMBLE OPINION: ARE YOU READY FOR SOME REVOLUTION?](#)**

We end each issue of *Future of Work Agenda* with a personal perspective – our chance to comment on issues and developments in the world of work that we find important and interesting. This is our "editorial" page, where we enjoy offering our opinions and predictions about what's happening (or should be happening) in the world of work.

THE FULL STORIES

1) FROM JIM AND CHARLIE

Well, here it is June already – and here’s our latest collection of ideas, observations, and rants.

To tell the truth, this issue sort of snuck up on us. We’re still catching our breath after our 2005 *World Congress on the Future of Work*, and catching up on all the other conversations that got put on hold while we were in Philadelphia. But we think you’ll find this a useful return to one of the bigger challenges that concerns us all – how technology is changing the world we live in, day by day and decade by decade. That may seem a strange way to put it, but as we struggle just to stay even on a daily basis, we often lose track of how much things have changed over the longer term.

Our [Feature Article](#) this month, [This Old House](#), is a very personal recollection from Charlie about how wave after wave of new technology changed the home he grew up in. But it isn’t just the physical changes that make the story interesting. Of much greater importance is how the introduction of basic technologies like the first telephone and the first television set changed the way the living spaces were used – and the way the family interacted and communicated, both internally and with the rest of the world. We think you’ll find yourself reflecting on your own childhood home, and hopefully combining Charlie’s experiences with yours to think creatively about the future of workplace design.

Then take a look at [Charlie’s review](#) of Dan Pink’s new book, *A Whole New Mind*, and join us in realizing that technology isn’t just changing the places where we live and work, it’s also changing the way we think and experience reality. Heady stuff – but well worth incorporating into your world view.

Finally, we’ve penned [yet another rant](#) on the need for new leadership to guide our transitions into the future. All these new technologies hit us in ways we rarely seem to anticipate, but their consequences are profound. [In Our Humble Opinion](#), we as a society desperately need new leaders with new visions to guide our assimilation of these incredibly powerful tools and use them to reshape our world in constructive rather than destructive ways. It comes down to this: we can’t just let things happen, we need leaders to *make* them happen.

Please indulge us by absorbing all these ideas, but do more than that: send us a note and let us know what you think. We’re really interested in a conversation, not a broadcast.

And of course we hope you’ll check out our [Announcements](#), [Research Notes](#), and [The Future is Already Here](#) too.

Our goal here, as always, is to foster meaningful conversations about what kind of future we’re all going to create together. As leaders and decision makers, we’ve got many important choices to make in the next few years about what kind of future we’re going to inherit. This newsletter is all about those choices, and what we – collectively – have to do to make those choices intelligently.

One more thing: we've really ramped up our [weblog](#) recently, and are posting comments and observations there almost every day now. So please stop by regularly, bookmark us, and make the [Future of Work blog](#) part of your daily routine.

So, on to the rest of the newsletter. Enjoy! And please let us know what you think.

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3) ANNOUNCEMENTS

Future of Work Program Actively Seeks Individual and Small Business Members

Future of Work now offers several levels of membership that depend on your status and needs: *Individual and Small Business, Corporate, and Implementation Partners*. We also offer special discounts to nonprofit, educational, and public sector organizations.

These membership programs are described in more detail on the [Future of Work website](#), or feel free to [contact us](#) directly for more information about fees and benefits.

All individual members of our community are now listed on the [Future of Work website](#), in the [About Us/Members](#) section. We encourage all our readers to consider joining the community. And look at our members as a powerful resource standing ready to assist you in transitioning to the future.

Please visit our website at www.thefutureofwork.net and apply for membership today.

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4) FEATURE ARTICLE: *THIS OLD HOUSE*

By Charlie Grantham

This is a short story about the house that I grew up in. But it could just as well be a story about your childhood home, or someone else in your immediate family. We are presenting it here in the context of the future of work to illustrate a major point: the built environment exists to support and enhance our lives. We believe there are many parallels to what we experience in our home lives that can be informative of how we design, build, and evolve our work environments.

The home I grew up in was first constructed in the early 20th century. It was in a small town some distance from any major city and was largely populated by first- and second-generation European immigrants. The town grew as people migrated from an agrarian lifestyle to a more modern industrial life. People moved off the family farms and into the "big city," took jobs in light industries and became shopkeepers instead of farmers. They needed new structures to live in that fit with their changing social roles.

When my house was built (for a cost of less than \$2000!) it didn't include indoor plumbing, electricity, central heating, or any modern communication. This is a story of

how that house evolved over the years with industrial technology. It was a simple structure of two stories, four bedrooms, a kitchen, two "living rooms" (extravagant by the standards of the time), two large screened porches, and an outbuilding, which functioned first as a "workshop" and later as a garage.

Each room had a specific social purpose, although at times some rooms served different uses, such as the porches that were converted to sleeping areas in the heat of the summer. After all, air conditioning hadn't even been invented yet. However, the extended multi-generational family that lived there implicitly understood the purpose of each space.

As I remember it, the bedrooms didn't even have closets at first; they were added later by interior modification when the residents couldn't get all their belongings into a stand-alone piece of furniture. Those of you who have visited Europe have probably seen these pieces, called "shrankes" or stand-alone wardrobes. Think of them as filing cabinets for clothes.

My grandmother was an accomplished "cook," which in today's terminology we would call a chef. Her social role was a primary "value-added competency" for the family; therefore the kitchen became a center of activity, and as the house grew other activities clustered around that functional area.

When plumbing was installed (with a real bathtub) it was added at the back of the kitchen. Then came electricity and a washroom was added next to the bath. My great uncle was a plumber, so he put it there to minimize piping runs and centralize the distribution of hot water.

With electrification came lights; all the wiring was run on the exterior surface of the walls. Later of course the wiring was moved into the walls as part of a major interior renovation. The house was evolving first by adding on technology and then later by incorporating the technology into the structure itself.

Then came the big event: central heating. An area was apportioned off for the boiler in what was then the basement, and a coal pit was dug out even deeper beneath the basement. Now the area that had once been used by my grandfather to concoct his home brew during Prohibition found a new use.

Then along came Uncle Hugo , with piping to carry hot water to the radiators, which were placed strategically in all the rooms. Again the piping ran along exterior surfaces until the next major renovation. As a kid I had to remember to not touch the hot pipes during winter.

Then sometime in the 1940's the telephone came along. One phone. It was placed in a hallway, which connected the two living rooms, or parlors, and put on a special table. Wow! We could talk to neighbors all over town anytime we wanted without waiting until church on Sundays, or strolling downtown.

The hallway changed into a private social area. When someone was using the phone you had to (or more to the point, it became a social norm) walk through the parlors to get to the stairs leading upwards to the bedrooms so as not to disturb the person on the phone. Communications etiquette: we could use more of that today.

The two rather curious parlor areas were broken into separate spaces by a large archway. The adults used the area closest to the kitchen and the little people (read, me) were banished to the back area, where they could quite literally be seen but not heard.

This was an important factor, because when radio and then television came into the home there was a big design issue about where those new technologies would be located. Ultimately, they ended up in the kids' area; and thus was born an "entertainment" room. The function of the space had changed again.

So there you have it, albeit in very condensed form: a home grew up and evolved over 50 years. The functions of individual spaces changed. New social norms of interaction grew up as new technology was integrated into everyday life. And new areas were grafted onto the structure as different functional needs developed.

Sad to say, the house is gone now. It reached the end of its useful life several years ago. The windows were drafty; the insulation was newspaper stuffed into the walls; and modern appliances simply wouldn't fit into the old areas.

What does this little story have to do with the future of work? Think about how "working space" is traditionally designed and used. Can you envision seeing different spaces used for different purposes, and consciously making decisions to do certain kinds of work in certain areas? What kinds of areas would you need, how would they be furnished, and how could you allow for the continuous evolution of those spaces?

Our message here is that we as humans seem to know how to design this kind of specialization in the areas we call residential, but we fail miserably in doing it in areas that we call "work." When was the last time you were part of a team that said, "We now need to do X, where's best place to do that?" We don't prepare food in bedrooms, do we? Well, why then do we hold small team meetings in open cubes?

And think about technology too. Right now we are in the midst of moving from wire line telephony to wireless. We are moving from computing technology that has to be in a fixed location (mainframes) to totally portable technology (laptops, PDA's, etc.).

What are the workspace design implications of these changes? What is going to happen when we have full 3D total immersion virtual workspaces? Will we need to construct add-on rooms to our office buildings like my grandparents did to their home when plumbing came along?

To us, however, the biggest challenge is social in nature. In my house we all knew what the core value-add function was: Granny's cooking. And our relationships and use of our space grew up around that. I was a sous chef at the age of five; washing vegetables and gathering items from the downstairs pantry was a respected role not to be messed with – especially around dinnertime.

We now have new social roles emerging in the work environment; how do those they impact space design and use?

Let us give you one cogent example. Managers are being forced out of the old industrial model where they were directors of tasks into a new role of being coaches and mentors. Old-style managerial offices were arranged to produce a specific social structure – with a big desk and a specified area (and behaviors) for subordinates to occupy (on request only, thank you). That's reminiscent for me of the parlor for the children. Is this the kind of space a coach needs? We don't think so.

So, take this story with you, add your own personal experience, and reflect a bit on how our living spaces grow, change in function, and are impacted by technology. More importantly think about how our social relationships also change. And please remember all this the next time you need to make a workplace design decision.

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5) BOOK REVIEW: A WHOLE NEW MIND

by Daniel Pink (Riverhead Books: New York, 2005)

Reviewed by Charlie Grantham

This is a great 234-page summer read. Dan's central thesis is that we are shifting once again into a new age – a new age of commerce, learning, and living. Developed nations are moving from an industrial world dominated by left-brain logical thinking to a right-brained intuitive world. This is what he calls the conceptual age, which will be dominated by a different way of knowing, being, and doing. There are a lot of parallels here to the work of Richard Florida, whose latest book we will review next month.

Pink sees three forces driving the Western World in this direction: Abundance: Asia; and Automation.

There is an Abundance of material goods even though we complain of high gasoline prices. Most of us are free from having to spend most of our waking life eking out a living wage. His point is that the predominance of left-brain thinking has been so successful that the make it quicker, cheaper, faster mentality has lessened its own significance. The ultimate in planned obsolescence? So now we have time to devote to other more "meaning creating" activities.

Asia has become a vast pool of inexpensive labor, especially in the goods-creating sphere, or manufacturing. This is somewhat of a no-brainer, but what happens is that routine (and sometimes not so routine) work moves to where it can be done most cheaply. While we bemoan the fact the all this employment is leaving North America and Old Europe, it is an inescapable fact of modern life.

Automation is changing the landscape of work. Automation of everything from factory assembly to medical diagnosis. Just about everything that can be broken down into a series of logical steps, or actions, is being automated. Why? Because machines can do it better and faster than humans.

So what do humans have to do now? Well, here is the heart of the book. Humans need to, and will be propelled to, decrease their logical, systematic ways of being and develop more of the "conceptual" side of themselves.

Pink then launches into a very nice description of the six critical competencies or senses (notice I didn't say skills—which is such a left-brained way of describing things) required for the conceptual age. They are:

1. Design—not just a function but also DESIGN
2. Story—not just an argument but also a STORY
3. Symphony—not just focus but also SYMPHONY
4. Empathy—not just logic but also EMPATHY
5. Play—not just seriousness but also PLAY
6. Meaning—not just accumulation but also MEANING

I don't want to spoil your pleasure of discovering these things we all need to learn how to do to be successful in the future. After all, this is a review, not the book itself. Suffice to say that we see these six competencies as being right on. Here's a little teaser: two quotes from this section of the book.

“Play will be to the 21st century what work was to the last 300 years of industrial society—our dominant way of knowing, doing and creating value” (Pat Kane, author of *The Play Ethic*, p. 185)

“You're not going to find the meaning of life hidden under a rock written by someone else. You'll only find it by giving meaning to life from inside yourself.” (Dr. Robert Firestone, author and psychotherapist, p. 216).

One final thing we really like about Dan's approach: for each of these six competencies he gives the reader a very complete guide (he calls it a “portfolio”) of resources where you can go to learn more about design, or find out how empathetic you are, or even learn how to play and tell stories. These guides are worth the price of the book by themselves.

Pink offers some sage wisdom at the conclusion of the book. Given all that has gone before, he believes each business person needs to ask three basic questions to move into the conceptual age. Answers to these are the essential conditions of business success for the future:

1. Can someone overseas do it cheaper?
2. Can a computer do it faster?
3. Am I offering something that satisfies the non-material, transcendent desires of an abundant age?

Here's to all our success in the conceptual age.

A Whole New Mind is available online from Amazon.com [at this link](#).

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6) RESEARCH NOTES

A Fresh Look at IT Leadership

Our good friend and colleague Bruce Rogow recently published a [new article](#) in [Optimize Magazine](#) about the current state of IT management. We commend it to all our friends and followers as an insightful look at the perspectives and priorities of Chief Information Officers today.

Bruce conducts several dozen in-depth interviews every year with Fortune 100 CIO's to develop his perspectives on IT management. We have deep faith in his insights and understanding of the ever-changing challenges of managing information technology effectively.

This time, he reports that the last "season" of IT focus was on consolidation. Looking ahead, he sees a renewed emphasis on innovation and growth, using IT for more competitive initiatives.

Check out "[Getting in Shape for Growth](#)" today.

China is Ripe for Distributed Work

We're all highly conscious these days about the rising price of gasoline. Clearly a permanent "bump" in the cost of energy will have major implications for our economy in general, and for commuting patterns too. More and more workers are going to be making different kinds of tradeoffs between home prices, commuting costs, and jobs (see, for example, the article that we wrote in the April *Future of Work Agenda* newsletter, "[What Will a World of \\$5 Gas Be Like?](#)").

One of the obvious reasons that gas is getting so much more expensive is the incredible growth in demand for oil that is resulting from China's economic boom.

In *The World is Flat*, Tom Friedman cites some fascinating data about the almost incomprehensible explosion of automobiles in China's major cities.

Consider these nuggets, right out of *The World is Flat*, Chapter 11:

There were 165,000 cars sold in Beijing from January to March, 2004. That's over *1,375 cars per day*. New car sales in 2004 averaged over 804 per day in Beijing alone, perhaps a better indicator of growth.

However, according to the World Bank (again, cited by Friedman), sixteen of the world's twenty most polluted cities are in China. And *The Economist* reported last year that pollution and environmental degradation together cost China about \$170 billion a year.

There are 2.1 million cars in Beijing. Traffic congestion is almost unimaginable.

We put all that together, and see a huge opportunity for distributed work. While certainly many Chinese are engaged in manual labor and millions more are doing factory work, it's also clear that - like everywhere else - a growing number of them are doing information work that can be carried out almost anywhere.

Why doesn't China leapfrog other parts of the world and make a national commitment to supporting distributed work in all its forms? Build Business Community Centers[™] in all the suburbs and exurbs so all those new knowledge workers don't have to get in their cars every morning and drive to work. Let them work locally.

We know full well that most Chinese homes aren't big enough for home offices, but small local Business Community Centers could go a long way towards reducing the horrible traffic congestion and lengthy commutes that now plague so many Chinese cities and workers.

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7) THE FUTURE IS ALREADY HERE; IT JUST ISN'T EVENLY DISTRIBUTED

Note: Each of these brief notes has already appeared been posted on the [Future of Work weblog](#). We encourage you to visit our blog regularly for more current updates on the future of work. And the material in this part of the newsletter is only fraction of what we publish on the blog.

No Room for a Home Office? How About One in the Garden?

Our friend and colleague John Campbell of [Francis Cauffman Foley Hoffmann Architects](#) alerted us to an intriguing story ("[Shed Heaven](#)") that appeared recently on the [BBC News website](#).

It seems many Brits, whose homes are often too small for useful home offices, are looking to their gardens for space. There is a minor fad building in the UK to either convert existing garden sheds into home offices, or build sheds designed specifically as offices.

The [story](#) contains a number of charming pictures that make the whole idea seem pretty attractive. In fact, we're thinking that Garden Offices may be a whole lot more conducive to creativity and innovation than your guest bedroom with a desk and phone in the corner.

On the blog at: <http://www.thefutureofwork.net/blog/archives/000203.html>

IBM Embraces Blogging in a Big Way

Tom Foremski reported recently in the [Silicon Valley Watcher blog](#) that IBM has blessed blogging by encouraging all of its 130,000+ staff to become "online evangelists" for the company.

As Foremski reported,

Employees will be taught what blogging is, and they will be guided on what is appropriate blogging content. IBM has also set up a wiki, a simple technology that allows groups to collaborate on projects and share knowledge....

We can't help wondering what it means to be "guided on what is appropriate blogging content."

Well, Foremski goes on to say that one of IBM's most senior executives is in the forefront of the blogging movement:

Leading the IBM troops into the blogosphere will be IBM's chief strategist, Irving Wladawsky-Berger, who will begin writing a blog. He is credited with persuading IBM to become an early advocate for Linux, and to cultivate relationships with the open-source developer community. This resulted in a significant competitive advantage for IBM because it reduced software development costs, and it hurt Microsoft, its largest competitor.

Stay tuned, this could get very interesting. It reminds us of Carly Fiorina's comment to Tom Friedman, quoted in *The World is Flat*, that the last twenty years of IT innovation was just the "warm-up act" to the real revolution. We've just reached the end of the

beginning of transformation (see [In Our Humble Opinion](#), just below, for more on that very subject).

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8) IN OUR HUMBLE OPINION: ARE YOU READY FOR SOME REVOLUTION?

Commentary by Charlie Grantham and Jim Ware

“We shape our tools, and our tools shape us.” (Marshall McLuhan)

This rant should really be titled “Where’s the Leadership?” or maybe “Is Anybody Paying Attention?” Because, In Our Humble Opinion, the world of work is in the early stages of an incredible Revolution, but we don’t see very many CEOs leading the charge – or even grokking what’s going on. You know the old saying, “Lead, follow, or get out of the way.” Well, it seems to us that your typical corporate leadership person isn’t even in the stadium yet.

Now we don’t want to sound like Chicken Little, and we know we already sound like a broken record (don’t get too confused by our metaphors, we’re just feeling a little funky today), because we’ve said this before (more than once).

So we’ll say it again. The simple fact (simple and obvious to *us*, anyway) is that the convergence of new technologies, new workforce values and expectations, and the growing predominance of knowledge work has laid the foundation (yet another metaphor) for a broad, fundamental Revolution in the way work is done and value is created (go back and read that sentence again, just to be sure you get it.)

See, we’re convinced that over the next decade or so there will be **a profound shift in the structure of the economy and our society**. And yet hardly any CEOs get it. We’re beginning to think that Revolution is something that CEOs just don’t do. Didn’t they get the memo?

Let’s be clear. The *last* decade has not exactly been placid. We have all been witnesses to a bumpy economic road, incredible technology innovation, a dramatic shift in the popular culture, and some pretty fundamental changes in the geopolitical sphere as well. But, as Tom Friedman, author of *The World is Flat*, put it recently, “All we’ve been doing is forging the tools” (see [our review of The World is Flat](#) in the [May issue](#) of this newsletter).

What our corporate leaders don’t seem to understand is that it takes time for new technologies to work their way into our lives – but when they do, they transform the world. It’s one thing to invent an electric motor. But it’s another to redesign an entire manufacturing plant and work flows that were based on water or steam power. That’s where leadership is required. As Charlie put it so eloquently in [“This Old House,”](#) above, first we bring in the technology and then we discover how it changes our experience – and our capabilities.

But leaders have a choice: do they let it happen to them, or do they make it happen? Our bias should be pretty obvious by now: to us, leadership is making things happen, getting in front of the crowd, guiding the way these new tools are used, putting the tools to constructive use, and a bunch of other ways of saying: *leaders create the future*. And

if you don't create it, it will sneak up on your behind and take a very big chomp out of it. Which, by the way, the investment community just hates.

Maybe this little spot quiz will help (gotcha, didn't we?): what can we learn about the information age from the spinning wheel, the stirrup, the electric motor, the telephone, the elevator, and the automobile?

Quick answer: in each of those cases, the "technology" was invented, shaken down, and clearly useful way, way before we fully incorporated the technology into our everyday lives, or changed the way we (broadly speaking here – meaning all of us together) live and work. And in each case the broad social impact was far greater than anyone imagined at the outset.

Bear with us, dear hearts, for a quick history lesson. The spinning wheel, was introduced into Europe somewhere around 1200 AD (we weren't there so we're sort of guessing at the date). The spinning wheel revolutionized how wool was turned into thread, cloth, and clothing, and created several entire new industries (okay, okay, they weren't called "industries" then, but you get our drift). The economic impact of this relatively simple technology (okay, they didn't call it a "technology" back then either) was dramatic.

But here's the real grabber: the spinning wheel marked the first time that women could produce economic value independently of their husbands or parents. That was particularly important for widows and single, unmarried women; they no longer had to depend on the good will of their families and communities to survive (ever wonder where the term "spinster" comes from?).

So what? Over the next several hundred years the role of women in society changed forever. Renaissance artists began painting the Virgin Mary; women began to play a role in government (a few of them actually became Queens), and some even became business owners. But it didn't happen overnight.

What about the stirrup? That's another invention that turned society upside down. Before the stirrup, knights in heavy armor couldn't ride horses (they couldn't get on wearing all that armor, and when they did they kept falling off), so most battles were fought on the ground. With a stirrup, a knight could get on a horse in full armor, and stay there in battle. That made him a far more powerful weapon.

But an army of knights need two or three armies of horses. And horses need grain. And it takes a whole village to produce enough grain to feed all those horses. Thus was born the feudal society of the middle ages. Lords and knights lived in the castle on the hill and controlled hundreds of acres of farmland, along with the peasants, serfs, blacksmiths, and fair ladies in waiting needed to support all those knights in shining armor.

On to the electric motor. When small, fractional horsepower electric motors became available every existing factory had to be completely retrofitted, redesigned, and reconfigured. That took time. And the first ones to do it benefited the most. Did you know that Ford Motor Company had a Vice President of Electrification in the 1920's? The investments in the new technology and the business process redesign it demanded were expensive, but the productivity gains were enormous.

OK, OK, we could go on forever; but hopefully you are getting the idea by now. The telephone and elevator are more obvious. Can you imagine a skyscraper without an elevator and telephones? Yet it was many decades after the telephone and the elevator were invented and in widespread use before some visionary designers realized how they

could redesign corporate offices. Thus were born downtown Manhattan, Chicago, Detroit, London, Paris, etc., etc.

And we all know just how much the automobile changed the landscape. After the automobile came suburbs, superhighways, gas stations, shopping centers, drive-in movies, mini-marts, and a very different way of life. A lot of smart people (you might call them leaders) made a lot of money on those transformations.

Let's be clear about something here: this history lesson is **not** about technology adoption curves, crossing the chasm, or anything as simple as that. It's about the broad social impacts – the second- and third-order social consequences – that new disruptive technologies inevitably generate. And our whole point is that **leadership is about foreseeing those impacts and “exploiting” them to create value.**

So today we've got a whole bunch of new technologies (microprocessors, hard drives, LCDs, fiber optics, broadband, wireless, the Internet Protocol, voice over IP – you know what we're talking about) that let us move work (most of it, anyway) to the worker instead of the other way around. That's pretty disruptive in our book.

And there are a few companies – but very few – that have awakened to what that really means. To state the obvious, you don't have to “go to work” (the central office) to do your work. It means people can do what they need to do almost anywhere. And that means that an awful of corporate real estate is totally unnecessary. And *that* means there is a huge cost reduction opportunity (to say nothing of productivity improvement) sitting on every CEO's doorstep. But you can't steer the ship by watching the wake (metaphors abound today).

IBM, for example, has reduced its real estate space requirements and costs by close to **50%** over the last several years. Sun Microsystems claims **savings in excess of \$100 million a year.** And there are a several other equally impressive stories out there. But nowhere near as many as there should be.

We know from our own research and clients' experiences that it's not all that difficult to cut per-employee infrastructure costs by as much as \$6,000 - \$10,000 a year when you move into a distributed work environment. And by the way, bunky, that's as much as \$1 million a year for every 100 people who make the transition (that's real money, folks).

So what are all those CEOs doing about that all low hanging fruit? As far as we can see, diddly squat.

Here's another way to think about it: if you were starting up a company today (as some of you certainly are), how would you do it? With a big central office, with a huge private IT network and data center? With long-term commitments to your workers? We don't think so.

So this is the part we really, *really*, don't get. Where's the leadership in the organizations that have the most to gain from embracing the future? We know darn well the revolution is going to happen. The only question left is whether you'll be out in front carrying the flag, or dragging along behind picking up the wounded (or, as too many so-called “leaders” do, *shooting* the wounded).

We'll go out on a limb (good god, another metaphor) and predict that in twenty years the Revolution we're embarking on today will dwarf the impacts of the spinning wheel, the stirrup, the electric motor, the telephone, the elevator, and even the automobile. No one

knows exactly what the world is going to look like, but it sure won't look like the one we live in today.

What's the deeper lesson? It's not going to happen overnight. But that simply means that the early adopters have an unbelievable opportunity staring them in the face (one more metaphor – our last, we promise). What are *you* doing to lead the Revolution in your part of the world?

Ok, so here's the Apprentice challenge: post this note on your company blog and see what reaction you get. If nothing comes back, pack your bags and run – do not walk – to the nearest exit – and think hard about the future as you drive home on the crowded freeway.

Please direct your comments to comments@thefutureofwork.net. We'd love to publish your reactions and suggestions. And thanks for listening.

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This issue of *Future of Work Agenda* was produced by Jim Ware and Charlie Grantham of the Work Design Collaborative, LLC.

We encourage your comments, suggestions, and submission of materials for possible future publication. Please contact us at:

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