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Notes: The Future of . . .

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*This is a compilation of short notes on several management topics we track on a regular basis: **Technology, Place and Space, People and Organizations, and Work Design.** We welcome your comments and suggestions for other topics and stories you'd like to hear about.*

The Future of Technology

A Cautionary Note: Technology May be Bad for You

On July 8 David Brooks of the *New York Times* published a column he [called "The Medium is the Medium"](#) (calling up the old Marshall McLuhan comment, "The medium is the message") Brooks reported on some recently published research out of the University of Tennessee (described in more detail [in USA Today](#)), which found that sending students home for the summer with a dozen old-fashioned hard copy books had a very significant impact on their academic performance the following fall.

Brooks went on to cite another study from Duke University ([published by The Bureau of Economic Research](#)) showing that increased time online is associated with reduced math and reading scores.

It's all very sobering and well worth paying attention to.

On the Other Hand, Robots can be Effective Teachers

Maybe there is some universal balance scale governing our use of technology. The *New York Times* also recently carried a story about how robots are helping autistic children learn basic skills, including relating to a "companion."

From the article:

In a handful of laboratories around the world, computer scientists are developing robots like this one: highly programmed machines that can engage people and teach them simple skills, including household tasks, vocabulary or, as in the case of the [autistic 6-year-old] playing, elementary imitation and taking turns.

The full story is here: "[Students, Meet Your New Teacher, Mr. Robot](#)"

The Future of Place and Space

Telework Improvements Act Passes in the House of Representatives

On July 14 the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Telework Improvements Act, a bill that will enable most federal employees to spend up to 20 percent of their work time working from home (or anywhere else) over a two-week period. A similar bill has already passed the Senate; the legislation will become law once it gets through a House/Senate reconciliation.

From a [July 15 post on ExecutiveGov.com](#):

Under the bill, the Office of Personnel Management would develop a telework policy for all employees in federal agencies and would create a Telework Managing Officer within every agency.

The bill also mandates training for employees and managers, and ensures that teleworking will not affect any individual's performance evaluations.

This is a very big deal; *Future of Work* Associate Kate Lister of the [Telework Research Network](#) estimates that [full implementation of this policy could save the federal government over \\$13 billion a year](#).

Stay tuned; we'll be watching this development very closely.

The Future of People and Organizations

The Central Role of Trust in Organizations

This link will take you to an important and insightful essay on trust-based organizations (and how to create them). It appears on a relatively new website called the Management Innovation exchange, or MIX. MIX was established, and is led, by Gary Hamel, a world-call management guru.

MIX describes itself this way:

The Management Innovation eXchange (MIX) is an open innovation project aimed at reinventing management for the 21st century. The premise: while "modern" management is one of humankind's most important inventions, it is now a mature technology that must be reinvented for a new age.

For more information, go to the MIX home page at:

<http://www.managementexchange.com/>

Back to trust. The essay was written by Bentley College Professor Raj Sosidia, and it's well worth taking a few minutes to read.

Note: you may have to register, or join MIX, to access the essay. But it's free, and it's a wonderful source of ideas, articles, online videos, and webinars from a star-studded lineup of thought leaders.

The Future of Work Design

[How America Can Create Jobs](#)

The July 5-11 issue of *Business Week* includes an incredibly important cover story written by Andy Grove, retired CEO and Chairman of Intel. It's a call for major new public policies to encourage the rebirth of manufacturing jobs in the United States. It's actually about more than the manufacturing sector; and it's a very insightful perspective from private sector executive who knows all too well the perils of excessive government intervention—yet calls for a significant role for the feds in assisting American businesses.

Here's the link:

http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/10_28/b4186048358596.htm

About the Work Design Collaborative and *Future of Work Agenda*

Future of Work is a global network of resources – practitioners, thought leaders, researchers, and senior consultants – who are committed to building and implementing physical, social, and technology-based work environments that are cost-effective, socially and environmentally responsible, and personally satisfying.

We are focused on defining the future of work and helping our members and clients achieve new levels of workforce and workplace productivity. *Future of Work* produces and distributes management tools, surveys, benchmark databases, white papers and technical reports, conferences and workshops, newsletters, books and articles, and public presentations on the changing nature of work. The Work Design Collaborative, LLC, provides leadership and infrastructure services for the *Future of Work* community.

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