

Nine Shift the Book: An Overview

In just twenty years, between 2000 and 2020, some 75% of our lives will change dramatically. We know this because it happened once before. Between 1900 and 1920, life changed. We moved from an agrarian farming way of life to an industrialized way of life. Now it is all happening again.

The way we work is changing. The way we live is changing. The way we learn is changing.

These changes are causing tremendous uncertainty, doubt, anxiety, and stress. Those of us who are adults grew up in the Industrial Age of the last century. We are now moving from a time in which we were fairly certain of the basic facts about life and of the rules that applied to it, to a time when we are not quite sure what is real and what is not real.

This ambiguity will be with us for another ten to twenty years. Living with the ambiguity, and feeling comfortable with discomfort, is not easy.

Our purpose in writing the book is to discover how our lives are changing, and to understand what lies ahead, by looking back at our great grandparents' generation, the generation that was alive during the last time society experienced such a dramatic change. We call this dramatic change in how we work, live and learn a "nine shift."

The last time we experienced this nine shift in society was between 1900 and 1920. The driving force of the last century, the 20th century, was the automobile. The automobile and the way the automobile was made – the mass production factory – shaped how people worked, how people lived, and how they learned, for the last 100 years. The auto is not a symbol for the 20th century. Instead, the car and the car factory literally changed most of life.

The Internet is behaving exactly the same way as the automobile did 100 years ago in its impact on society. The auto is not used here as an "analogy," which is defined as something "somewhat similar." Instead the influence of the Internet on our lives is exactly a replay, a mirror, of the influence of the auto on society 100 years ago. The outcomes will be different of course, but the forces and how those forces interact and change our lives, are the same.

To understand what has happened already in the 21st century, to understand what is happening today, and to understand what will be happening between now and 2020, all we need to do is to revisit the years 1900 to 1920.

Abstract

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Most all of the fundamental changes in our society in this century will take place before 2020. We know this because most all of the fundamental changes in 20th century society took place between 1900 and 1920.

By 1920, almost all of the major aspects of 20th century life had emerged. They include suburbs, commuting, offices, factories, the National Football League, women's right to vote, and possibly most importantly, the ubiquitous organization chart or pyramid. So the time period to analyze is 1900-1920. Life in the 19th century before 1900 looked a lot like life in 1900. And life in the 20th century after 1920 looked fundamentally the same as life in 1920.

What we know, and what many other technology and economic experts have widely documented, is that the Internet, and the World Wide Web in particular, is a profound new technology that has already fundamentally affected our economy. We know that we are moving from an industrial economy to an information economy. We know that the number of knowledge workers is dramatically increasing and will become a significant part of the workforce.

From this, we are alone, at present, in predicting that all of these nine shifts are occurring and will become commonplace by 2020.

Shift One. People work at home.

Commuting to an office will become a rarity, a thing of the past. A significant part of the workforce will work from home or telecommute.

Shift Two. Intranets replace offices.

Offices will diminish as primary work places. Intranets will replace physical offices for most businesses, companies and nonprofit organizations.

Shift Three. Networks replace pyramids.

The basic organizational structure of life in the last century, the organization chart or pyramid, goes into steep decline. It is replaced by a superior organizational structure, the network.

Shift Four. Trains replace cars.

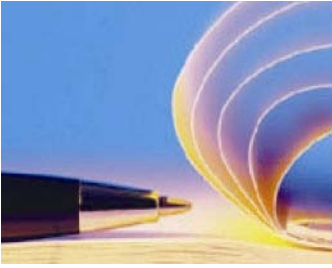
The automobile, the dominant mode of transportation in the last century, loses its dominance and becomes a peripheral and supplemental mode of transportation. Trains and light rail become the dominant mode of transportation.

Shift Five. Dense neighborhoods replace suburbs.

Suburbs, and suburban sprawl, come to a halt and then recede. Towns and cities are reformulated around dense communities composed of shops, stores and homes within walking distance of a light rail station.

Shift Six. New social infrastructures evolve.

The increasing inequality in wealth between the rich and the rest of society comes to a halt. The issue of inequality of wealth in society is addressed and a variety of social reforms are implemented to restore more of a balance in income distribution.



Shift Seven. Cheating becomes collaboration.

New values, work ethics and behavior of the 21st century take over. Boys are leading the change in values and behavior, just as they did 100 years ago.

Shift Eight. Half of all learning is online.

The traditional classroom rapidly becomes obsolete. Half of all learning is done online, changing the nature of how we learn and how we teach.

Shift Nine. Education becomes web-based.

Brick and mortar schools and colleges of the past century become outdated. All education becomes web-based, providing a better education for both young people and adults.

We explore each shift in detail. Each one is a logical outcome of a whole series and system of forces that are set in motion by the dominance of a new technology. That new technology for us right now is the Internet and World Wide Web.

For our great grandparents' generation, give or take a generation depending on your age, the same system of forces were set in motion by the dominance of a new technology, the automobile, exactly one hundred years ago.

While the outcomes, of course, are different, the forces and the way the forces impact our work, life and education, are exactly the same.

Welcome to our story. Welcome to Nine Shift.