

The Age of Discontinuity II: from a management consultant to a student

Peter Drucker's book titled "The Age of Discontinuity" elicits the changes in technology and its impact on the economy; and the mighty shift from industrial and manual labour to knowledge work. Drawing an analogy from his book, this essay highlights my big career shift to survive as the world discovers the future of work.

I have been a management consultant for past few years and am currently pursuing a technology and innovation oriented Masters Program in Finance because I am the living and feeling the scare too; the scare of loss of jobs, obsolescence of the "on-the-job" training, work experience and traditional education I have received till date. I have come to realize that the financial models designed by us, to evaluate potential targets for acquisition, using Microsoft Excel would soon be fully automated and AI-driven. And there's a fair reason why my former employer is using AI to up its game in professional services industry.¹ Humans have the sense to foresee, both threat and opportunity. While some may see AI as the end of jobs, some will continue to dig into it and transform this threat into an opportunity. Individually, AI, however smarter and faster intellectually, cannot take away from me my experiences, emotions and values.

Human intelligence comprises of three components: Wisdom or intellectual (IQ), Emotional (EQ) and Social (SQ). Machines, AI and robots could increase the efficacy of repetitive tasks with their IQ; tasks which were earlier restrained by the finite limits of physical human strength. However, there are some capacities of human beings (EQ) which clearly outstrip AI and its technocracy. Peter Drucker extolled technological innovation, as it gives newer wings to mankind, but he also affirmed that human mind and spirit are irreplaceable. He also envisioned that "Technology induces social change rather than vice versa".

Well, change is the only constant. And this change in many ways, would be leading to "The Age of Discontinuity II", an age where the emotional competency of humans will be more deterministic and dominant than the technical knowledge and behavioural programming of humanoids. This emotional competency² includes self-awareness and confidence, social awareness, empathy, initiative and team-work, optimism, self-management and relationship management.

1 <https://www.techemergence.com/ai-big-four-comparing-deloitte-pwc-kpmg-ey/>

2 Peter Drucker: Contributions to Business Enterprise, by Tony H. Bonaparte & John E. Flaherty

My reengineered and restructured future workplace

As I ponder about the impending emotionally intelligent professional services industry, I can very well imagine a recruitment process where candidates would be shortlisted by AI and social media analytics driven software, a humanoid would be conducting initial rounds of fit check, followed by final interviews with Human executives. A world where the smart would become 'smarter' and 'emotionally intelligent' would become 'smartest'.

Cost structures of such companies would indicate greater proportion of expenses for procuring and maintaining humanoids than human personnel, while the cost per human employee would see a significant ascent. Humanoids would be leased or bought as a capital asset based on their configuration and programming and maybe, scrap value. Jobs which are logical and algorithmic in nature would be performed by machines and humanoids and only those awaiting EI-driven decisions would fall on human employees. Clients would be served information on a platter with add-on services to woo them and there would be greater competition in the knowledge economy to stay on top of their industry.

At the same time, with the vast amount of availability of data and advanced means of communication, human capital would be unleashed without any geographic boundaries or legal and political restraints. Technology would indeed act as an enabler. What Drucker felt back then would be relevant to our present and future that *"Technology stands today at the very centre of human perception and human experience."*

I think that the organizations which are not responsive to this change will not be able to operate and those who are would develop a restructured organization v2.0 with a stable and decisive leadership.

Let's take a deep-dive into the leading organizations of tomorrow and how their futuristic operating model could be defined:

- i. **Organization:** Organizations would like to have well-defined and tangible objectives and clear strategic intent. They would be razor-focussed on their product/service offering and nurture their differentiating capabilities. Humanoids and machines would be put to use to support all "lights-on activities" (support services like IT support, HR administration, aggregating financial reports, etc.). The leadership would objectify utilizing every penny spent on resources and benchmark the output against key success metrics.

The organizational climate can be expected to be agile. It would have greater thrust on research and innovation. There would be more transparency and openness, decreased span of control and layers in the organization. It would be open to changes and altering courses and would converge towards becoming more inclusive in its nature. The governance model would witness increased delegation of power and authority and the organization would witness multi-level restructuring to accommodate for the changes in organizational environment.

- ii. **Leadership:** Leadership would hold a critical role in manifesting the vision and mission of the organization. It would be adaptive, sensitive and courageous in the “Age of Discontinuity”. The leaders of tomorrow must clearly define and articulate strategic intent, demarcate roles and responsibilities. They would be fast yet logical decision makers. Business intelligence, data and analytics would be their right hand to decision making.

They would constantly motivate their human employees and encourage them to think four steps ahead (two steps ahead of competition and two steps ahead of AI-humanoids). Leadership should be able to accept altering courses of its managers and individual contributors. They would be the real heroes to human employees and they would also ensure that AI-humanoids are not treated as villains. Selection and training of leadership would hold greater importance and in this process, their EI quotient would become more critical than just IQ.

- iii. **Talent:** In tomorrow’s competitive “survival of the fittest” world of hybrid resources (humans and humanoids), humans cannot afford to be complacent in learning new and unlearning irrelevant things. New Learning and Rapid Learning should be incentivized. This hybrid workforce would have to be more receptive to changes and be ready to drill their brain constantly. To succeed, humans must possess the core EI attributes like initiative, empathy, care, giving, initiative, social awareness, relationship management, team work and team spirit. They would be more creative, innovative, focussed and motivated. No humanoids can adapt and respond to crisis situations like humans. Learning and development initiatives for humans will receive higher priority and spending. Performance management system would reflect illumination of the multi-dimensional complex relationships in an organization.

- iv. **Products and Services:** The core product/service offerings of future would be a melting pot of cutting edge technology and innovation, based on agile framework. It would be able to quickly changing forms and features. With

regards to services, the cost of human-provided services would shoot up and trivial services would be rendered by humanoids, with greater automation of services. Product IP (intellectual property) and copyrights would gain importance more than ever. The regulatory landscape would evolve with regards to patents, anti-trust laws and other intellectual property regulations.

- v. **Processes:** The processes within the organization would undergo major shift from manual to being technology driven. All trivial, mechanical, support and repetitive tasks would be outsourced to machines and humanoids; humans will have greater amount of time in a work day to focus on important issues and for human interaction. Humans would be required to supervise critical processes and approve certain activities. The number of processes and activities would be reengineered and simplified.
- vi. **Ecosystem and Alliances:** The organizational ecosystem would become interoperable and interconnected across industries. A world where information sharing and collaboration would be a key decision factor. Industrial governance models and operating processes would change for good and leaders in innovation and R&D would indicate dominance, power and authority.

It is what we make out of it

With the advent of AI in our ecosystem, organizations would have greater amount of time to positively influence the ethics, morals and guiding principles of its human employees, than just aggressively achieving bottom line objectives. Leadership would have a critical role more than ever as they initiate the dialogue with their people. Human employees would be more stress free and could have a better work-life balance; however they should not be complacent about it. Information, analysis

and summary would be served to us in a fraction of seconds, but human leaders would be required to make key decisions; example: while technology could suggest the potential targets for acquisition, it is the leadership of the buyer company which would circle on the target company to be acquired.

AI could increase human reach. Geographically or politically restrained and inaccessible locations could be addressed by humanoids. We can well imagine outside sales in remote areas and outreach conducted by humanoids.

How my dishwasher and robotic floor cleaner gives me more time for family and less work to do, a self-driven car lets me enjoy the ride or take a power nap without much worry. AI is here and it will be purposeful as long as humans provide it with the right purpose. Children might have a humanoid nanny in their day-care, but they might learn to value their parents more. Similarly, I could fulfil my dream of raising a pet AI-robotic dog without worrying much about its vaccination and neutering.

Apart from being a student, I am also a youth advocacy associate and engage in humanitarian affairs and youth capacity building related activities. Here are my two cents on the future of development efforts: We could utilize the inputs and analysis from AI-driven machines to assess when a natural disaster or fragile situations occur, leverage blockchain technology and AI to assist migrants complete some of the administrative processes; example – using blockchain contracts to issue digital identity and AI-models to ascertain the need for water and food materials in conflicted areas.

AI would assist in formulating trends, analysis, develop models but would it be able to determine when to disburse the financial aid or how to gather it? It could forecast demand for products and services in the future; can it determine how to convince national governments to concede on international issues like refugee shelter, environment conservation and climate change? Can it run political and diplomatic coordination and negotiation? It would even then require human emotional intelligence and brains of developmental organizations like the United Nations to make the world a better place to live in. Technology is not constant and unless we provide it an apt purpose, it will fail us continuously.

“The only positive alternative to destruction by technology is to make technology work as our servant. This means mastery by man over himself, for it is not the tool which is to blame but the human maker and user.” Moreover, “Better tools demand a better, more highly skilled and more careful ‘carpenter’.”

- **Peter
Drucker**