

The Digital Mindset and the New Social Order

Five year ago, in a lowly town located in a suburb region in Sub-saharan Africa, I watched parents hankering for a newer hope. A new school had just opened in the area - one that can be regarded as a futuristic gift. I was actively involved in shaping this inventive move. The plan was to educate children of the World's poor with lean technology. It was cheap, wide-ranging and encyclopedic.

I was approached by a mid-aged forlorn woman with two lads. At her arrival, she was puzzled by everything except the state of her scruffiness. She dragged her boys hurriedly down the school lane, hoping she could find someone to talk with. Her tattered wrappers were mirays of wools tied together to meet the call of the day. The younger child stirred at her mother as she quivered while speaking with the school manager. She was requesting any sort of information - those such words that can serve her pipe dream.

The cloud seemed not to have closed against them yet. Nonetheless, it required a very hard and disruptive pathway. We needed to break the old order and design new social rules. This is perhaps the most intricate task required to change the world in the 21st century. In the end, the new school did not succeed as expected. It became clear to me tha tools do not improve a generation, their minds do.

Do crises change the world?

In 2020, the world was hit by a pandemic that ravaged and tested the fabric of the world's innovation compendium. In the past decades, few anthologies about the birth of innovative companies had emerged. While it was easy to believe the pandemic tested the world's innovation, it was not a test of a new social order. Individuals and organizations did not fail fully to adapt to the new technology, they faltered in adapting to accepting the new social order. Accepting the digital mindset is perhaps the most difficult part of the nature of work during the pandemic.

It is important to differentiate between the differences between changes in social order and how people react to it. Can we say that the pandemic changed the way things are done - not fully so. Most of the innovations that survived and propelled success during the pandemic have long been with us -- the best example is video conferencing -- most of its features did not change significantly. The pandemic was not the only event that tested the digital mindset, it only made it more obvious that the world we live in has a new beacon.

Technology, The Pandemic and The Social Mind

What is the new social order? When did it start and when is it likely to end? At the beginning of the pandemic, many organizations struggled to use available technology, or specifically adjusting them to the needs of their organization. For example, it became unfathomable how it was difficult for organizations to use simple tech-tool such as Twitter to engage customers. Twitter, which became highly influential during the pandemic, was established 14 years earlier. Zoom, a popular video conferencing tool during the pandemic, was first used almost a decade before the world was hit. These technologies were clearly not created for the pandemic and were not solving new problems. Despite the perennial gap between innovation and general usage of these tools, only an elite few had fully adapted to using new technologies before the pandemic.

The new school, which I was part of, had a very interesting technological design. They used a digital curriculum administered through tablets wired from a central office. This can be regarded as an emergence of an economic power which Peter Drucker once highlighted will belong to those who can shift economic resources out of an area of lower into an area of higher productivity and great yield.



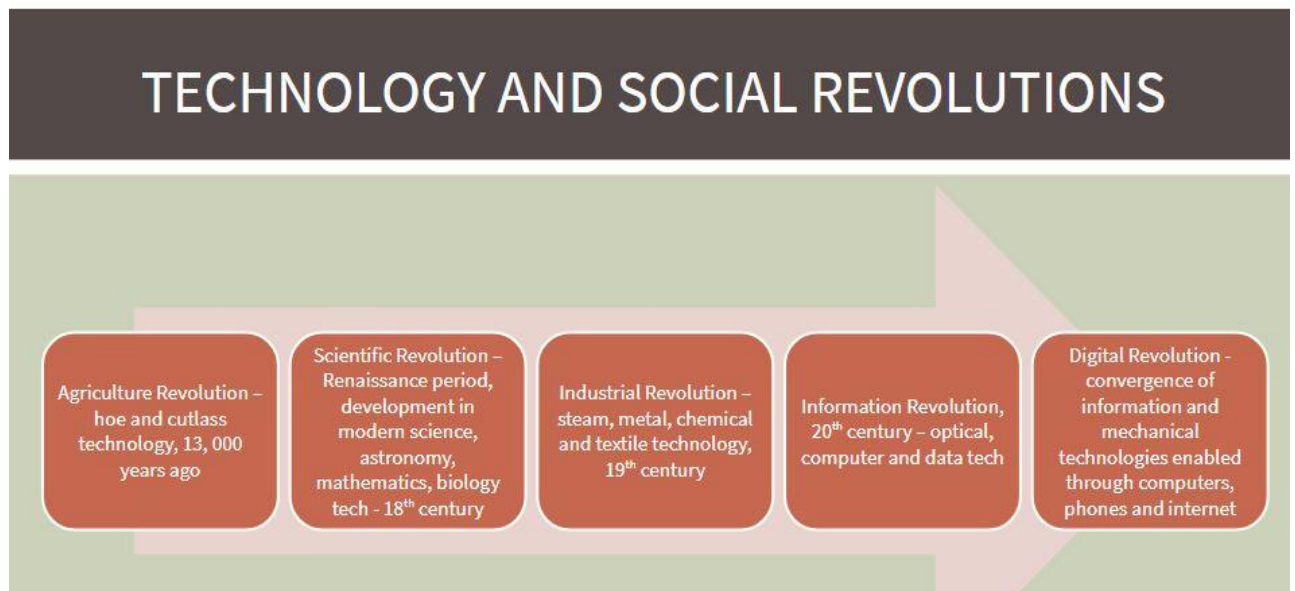
However, the locals perceived that the new school's intervention was alien in its forms and context. Though they couldn't deny that the status quo of our world was falling apart, they were not simply not ready for change. A marked opposition to the new school's technology uproar were those who lived just outside its technological space. Every good technology always suffers from its dissidents. I will advise that proponents must always find ways to solve the problem as a social one, and not as a technology-driven one. J.S Mills¹ refers to dissidents as those who know the *shaping of history is outpacing their ability to orient themselves in accordance with cherished values – and even when they do not panic, they often sense that older ways of feeling and thinking have collapsed.*

¹ The Sociological Imagination, Chapter One: The Promise, C. Wright Mills (1959)

Drucker² alluded that major technological change creates the need for social and political innovation. It does make obsolete existing institutional arrangements. It does require new and very different institutions of community, society, and government. To this extent there can be no doubt: technological change of a revolutionary character coerces; it demands innovation.

Recalling the few successes most organizations and individuals, including myself, have achieved in recent years, we have technology to thank. Nevertheless, I came to the realization that technology doesn't make people successful, it only defines how they can become one. From human history, moving through the mesopotamian, neolithic to modern eras, people's access and chances to prosperity is defined by how they can use emerging methods to solve emerging problems. Technology defines social relations but doesn't define who gets what. What people do with technology is what makes transformation possible. The ability of people and organizations to tinker with a way of doing things is what makes the difference.

The purchase of a technology is the easiest part of its existence, technology has to be made to work and it depends on whether there is a bosom community for creative users to innovate with it. Drucker once suggested that science and technology are actually the least promising of all the sources of innovation, generally taking the most time to realize any benefits, and costing the most. In reality, it is not taking advantage of an unexpected change in society that is likely to result in success. Though the pandemic taught organizations to acquire and use premium technology, Drucker regards it as nonsensical³ when the digital mindset is ignored. The result is what we do with information, and not whether science has made it easier or faster to disseminate.

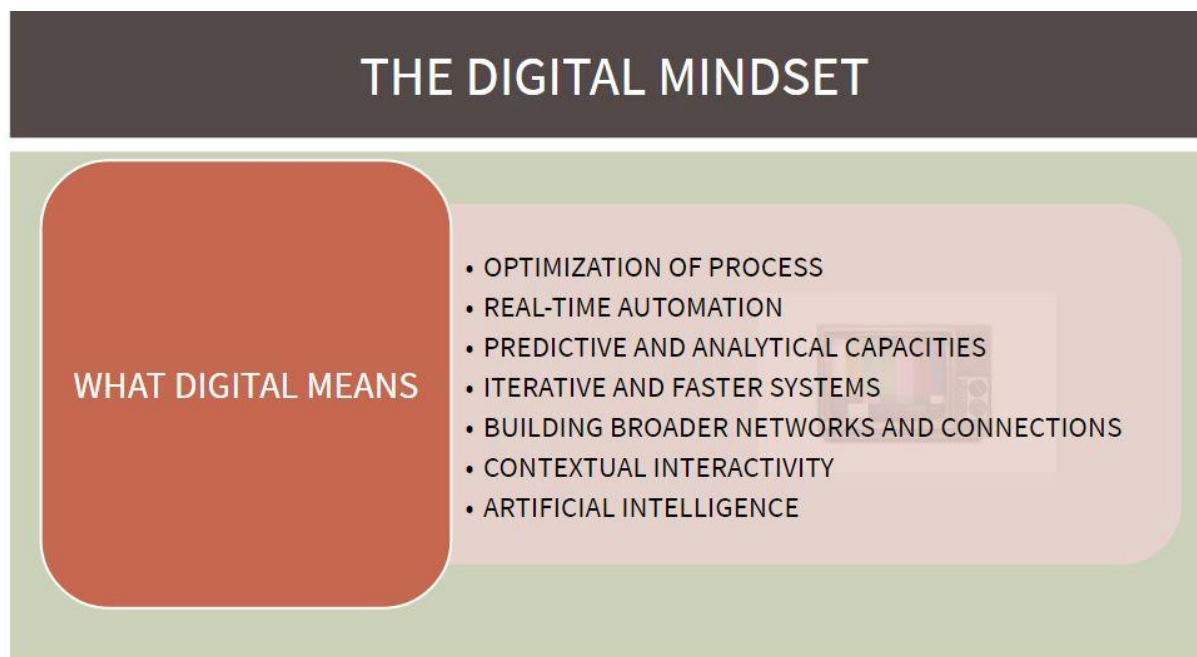


² Drucker, Peter - Essay on The First Technological Revolution and Its Lessons

³ Drucker, P. F. (1998). The Next Information Revolution Forbes ASAP.

The Digital Mindset

Many organizations today are still wired with a juggernaut of analogue thinking. Like a new wine in an old bottle, they delightfully consume the outcome of digitization but wag in the perjury of changing the wheels. I fortified my thoughts with the words of Peter Drucker who warned of the end of organization defined by structures and bricks; and the beginning of corporations without walls. Drucker foresees that many employees, perhaps a majority, will still have full-time jobs with a salary that provides their only or main income. But a growing number of people who work for an organization will not be full-time employees but part-timers, temporaries, consultants or contractors.



Organizations may be seated on diamond fields even as they pitifully cast their nets on bunches of stones. Mckinsey reports that a digital mindset institutionalizes cross-functional collaboration, flattens hierarchies and builds environments to encourage the generation of new ideas⁴.

The digital mindset is not an organizational decision to adopt tools and people that use digital skills to improve work processes; it's a generic approach into organization's overall activities to trigger innovative thinking around improving managerial decisions with the aim to promote customer service. It is more an art than a science requiring continuous and multivariate applications, iteration and attribution. To survive in the digital world, it is not enough to keep grabbing skills, gaining certification and mopping up tech profiles. Organizations that focus on creating a digital mindset will do better than those seeking employees with digital skills.

⁴ <http://www.mckinsey.com/industries/high-tech/our-insights/what-digital-really-means>

In a few years from now, the world will evolve into a place where most activities and decisions trigger themselves through artificial intelligence. As we are still living in a world dominated by access to information, organizations ready to fire would invest in knowledge workers who believe wealth is created through the digital mindset which include these seven main points:

1. deepening of thoughts on how information can be effectively processed within the shortest possible time . Thoughtful leadership is still a required resource in the new social order. Lazy leaders believe that technology will solve all their problems.
2. creating systems or using digital tools that provide solutions in real time.
3. ensuring that works processes and outcome doesn't just describe events but predicts them
4. providing platforms that can be adopted by others aside those from who designed it
5. Adoption and designs of solutions that connects everyone within the node
6. Systems that ensure that parties involve interact with each other based on context
7. Adopting systems and process learn the attributes of products and customers and helps them to think as they interact



Business Innovation in the New Social Order

I will submit three core concepts which today's organizations can adopt if they intend to respond to a new social order, either before or after an existential crisis. The first borrows from the Druckerian idea of parallel career⁵, which I will refer to as parallel innovation. It is evident that leadership that depends mainly on the success of a thing, will cling to every bit of it - even when it is apparent it will evolve into nothing. Leaders should strive at developing alternative business innovations that are capable of propelling them to remain zealous. The dependency on singular vision, plans, strategy, idea, team, and resources

⁵ Harvard Business School, Managing Oneself, Peter Drucker

shows why many organizations could not adapt quickly at the start of the pandemic. Today's leaders should tinker new visions and develop multiple capabilities.

I know that it is possible to create many pathways to reach the same goal. The idea of WCS (worst case scenarios) should not only be created to prepare for ideas that seek the same goals. There need to be multiple goals that have parallel motivations. For instance, a leader in a construction firm who aims to build the tallest building in East Europe can also think of building multiple smaller blocks in Eastern Africa.

Drucker had advised business leaders to adequately define the business they are in. He worried that lack of business purpose and mission are so rarely given adequate thought is perhaps the most important single cause of business frustration and failure⁶. In a matter of time, the leader of the construction firm might realize that his real business is to serve the housing needs of those who need them, rather than building skyscrapers. She will often end up realizing that public attention and recognition can also be achieved by building chalets, and not wind herself in the taste and pressure of contemporary moments. A frustrated leader cannot lead in tough times.

Second, leaders forget to take cover. Drucker pointed out that leaders must identify their strengths and focus on it. He emphasizes that it takes more to turn one's weakness into mediocrity, than getting excellent results from playing at one's strengths. What then do we do with our weaknesses? It needs to be exchanged for strength. Many leaders are afraid of working with those who cover their weaknesses. When I watch and visualize field battles, I often linger on thoughts that warriors do play to their strengths, hoping for others to cover them as well.

What we have today are leaders who know and do it all, and are only ready to lead others as they wail in the frontline. This has not always served a good purpose. We can regenerate a new wave of backline leaders who often have equal or greater strength when we do not take the lead. When we have people who can equally replace us, because we trust their strengths and have raised their capacity, then we take the break, and not break at tough times.

When things become even more difficult, and current efforts seem hopeless to savage the situation, leaders must learn to stop execution. What appears to be highly disastrous for today's leaders is the urge to find solutions at all cost. Leaders are praised for their abilities to create solutions during tough moments and great dilemmas but what is often not expressed is that these leaders have prepared their lives for these moments. Leaders should learn to excuse themselves from meetings, decisions, ideas, strategies that they are not well prepared to handle.

Peter Drucker advised that *clear thinking about whether actions fit within the boundary conditions – the reach and essence of the objectives are required to know when a decision has to be abandoned*. He believes that the most common cause of failure is not in actions that are wrongly initiated but actions that are outside the core of what and who it was designed to support. Leaders who do not call for help or cancel an ill-planned action cannot lead themselves, and in normal or tough times.

⁶ MANAGEMENT Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices , Peter Drucker, 1986

Leading with a Digital Mindset

Businesses can be referred to as leaders of a service. Leadership, sadly, is an uncommon attribute in the new society where personal gain is perceived to be more gratifying. Drucker⁷ believed that most managers today spend most of their time on the problems of yesterday. Management and entrepreneurs should provide leadership that aligns all decisions to what the customers and affiliated parties count as value. I have realized that the value is created only when users assign one.

The best way businesses can lead is to get to design what users have agreed to be the needful. Leadership is speaking with each parent, listening to their unique stories, understanding each community, the existing for children and the social histories of each. We only provide leadership not by scaling, expanding the system, reducing cost or recruiting more, we provide leadership when we improve on satisfying the users. Digitization should be aimed at mainly achieving this. Drucker⁸ warned management that to assume, as it has come fashionable, that the customers are irrational is as dangerous a mistake as it is to assume that the customer's rationality is the same as that of the manufacturer or supplier. Their rationalities are different and to think for them is to shrink the value that produces human prosperity. A leader according to Dwight Eisenhower is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it. To paraphrase the American President, leadership is accepting the task to do to others what they want to be done to them. The digital mindset requires that organizations respond even to the basic needs of the customer which includes a prompt response to emails within a specified time - in some cases, there may be no better innovation than this. Incessant adjustment to customer needs will always imply that organizations are better prepared for a crisis. According to Drucker⁹ innovation is "*...whatever changes the wealth-producing potential of already existing resources*".

The Individual Worker in the New Social Order

1. Innovation is Freedom:

The wealth of the knowledge worker in the digital age is created by his freedom to innovate and it is enhanced by the digital mind. Those seeking prosperity in the digital world must invest in the opportunity to innovate with a mindset to create, prescribe and predict intelligence. The process of creating wealth must not be worn by the need for technology rather than the simple need to transform societies with its application. Hobbes¹⁰ who could have inadvertently referred to technology as a gift when he said that when He says a *gift is free, we do not mean any liberty of the gift, but of the giver, that was not bound by any law or covenant to give it.*

⁷ Drucker, Peter - Managing for Results, HarperCollins Publisher, 1964

⁸ Drucker, Peter - Managing for Results, HarperCollins Publisher, 1964

⁹ Drucker, Peter - Innovation and Entrepreneurship (1985)

¹⁰ Thomas Hobbes, The Leviathan, 1651

2. Innovation is Social Value:

Innovation is 80% social value and 20% technological. This is my final and the most important point. One of Peter Drucker¹¹ frequently quoted words are that entrepreneurship is not 'natural'; it is not 'creative' - it is work. Work has moved away from the exquisite structures, glamourised attires, and cream collared jobs to where sleeves are rolled to create values. The worker interested in creating wealth must not be interested in the regular perks of honour sitting within a round table pulling stuffs from coffees to cellular calls. It's now the days where actions are decided through sticky notes and online boards. Organizations should care less about the certification of their workers and focus on the continuous transformation in their work processes.

The knowledge worker focuses much more on social rewards rather than economic benefit. He should be able to quantify the effect of what he does on the lives of the ordinary man. He should be able to suffice the link up between his efforts and use of technology to the wellbeing of people. The wealth of the new age cannot be attained through numbers alone, it should be measured through the felt, seen and perceived impact on members. We see from the pandemic that making people from work does not define their attitude to work.

The perception of staff, customers, suppliers and even debtors on the service matters measures more than how much their value was exchanged for. The reward for the knowledge worker will be attributed to the social value he creates rather than the size of his office space. Drucker¹² had narrated that a star salesman should be expected to make more money than the regional sales manager. It should apply in the research laboratory, and in all other areas where performance depends on individual skill, effort, and knowledge." The post-pandemic world must respect the social

¹¹ Drucker, Peter - Innovation and Entrepreneurship (1985)

¹² Drucker, Peter - Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices