

LESSONS FROM THE FUTURE TO CREATE A BETTER WORLD



Without a doubt, my all-time favorite movie series is Back to the Future. The trilogy directed by Robert Zemeckis is extremely fun and exciting and teaches us how our actions in the present shape our future.

Life would be much easier if, like in the movies, we could go back to the past to redo something we wish we had done differently, travel to the future to see the results of our actions or know how to adjust our present actions to better prepare for what lies ahead.

In real life, since it's not possible to travel through time with a DeLorean at 88 miles per hour and 1.21 gigawatts of energy, we must use our knowledge of the present and the past to imagine the future, much like Peter Drucker did many times, and so accurately.

Many say that it is necessary to learn from the mistakes of the past to correct the errors of the present, but this time, how about learning from the mistakes of the future?

A JOURNEY TO THE YEAR 2050

PART I : NEW PARADIGMS

During the 2040s, the world experienced climatic chaos: many countries faced waves of heat and cold, devastating rains and floods, as well as long periods of drought and water shortages. This caused many economies to suffer and the quality of life of the populations to be seriously affected.

In the process of investigating the causes and solutions, we realized that many countries with satisfactory GDP growth and that we thought were experiencing human development were heavily affected and had failed to adapt to the circumstances.

We saw a discrepancy between the increase in countries' GDP and the development quality. Most countries with the top 20 GDPs have created or absorbed a few of the new technologies, which are emerging at an exponential rate, especially in information technology. Additionally, some were still relying on a development model based on the exploitation of non-renewable resources and the utilization of population surplus

To solve that issue, in the year 2048, the IMF established a new model to measure a country's development, adopted by all UN members, called the Sustainable Development Index. This index not only considers the amount of value generated but also factors in sustainability, the number of innovations created and applied, and the ability to adapt to drastic changes in the global landscape.

This new model has changed the mindset not only of governments but of companies around the world. Now, the new benchmark for success is no longer who has the best financial results but who is the most innovative, efficient, sustainable, and resilient.

PART II: NO JOBS FOR WHOM?

One of the major concerns in the year 2050 is the high unemployment rate. However, unlike what we thought a few decades ago, the culprits are not artificial intelligence or the automation of manual labor. Indeed, professions such as taxi and bus drivers, attendants, receptionists, accountants, salespeople, administrative assistants, and construction workers are nearly extinct. However, that's not the real problem at all.

If you open LinkedIn, you'll see plenty of job openings for roles such as Data Analyst, Sustainability Specialist, AI and Machine Learning Specialist, Robotics Engineer and Mechanics, Business Intelligence Analyst, and many others. However, they remain vacant for months, and companies are searching for strategies to fill them.

The fact is that technological changes have been so rapid that people are unable to keep up with them. It's not just former drivers or receptionists struggling to re-enter the job market; even engineers and programmers are finding it difficult to master the new tools. The challenge now is not only to transform manual workers into knowledge workers but also to turn knowledge workers into new knowledge workers.

Companies are now investing heavily in their talent management and professional training departments, and the Talent Manager role has become one of the most sought-after and highest-paying positions.

Moreover, continuous education has become the norm, with everyone pursuing specializations and MBAs after completing their college degrees. This trend has significantly boosted the education market, making it one of the most profitable sectors, with substantial participation from governments and nonprofit organizations worldwide.

PART III: A DIVIDED SOCIETY

The world in 2050 is divided. Not only between countries, with states and nations increasing their isolation and protectionism as a natural reaction to imminent changes but also internally, with societies becoming increasingly fragmented.

Conflicts between radical groups are spreading across the world, and some have already ended in tragedies. Democracy is no longer a consensus, and international cooperation is declining.

Specialists have been alerting for years that social media is the primary cause of this phenomenon. Since they emerged at the beginning of the century, it has become popular and penetrated all layers of society faster than any other means of communication.

But this started to become a problem when we began spending a large part of our free time on social media, exposed to algorithms that show us only things we like and that confirm our worldview.

This disruption created a society divided into increasingly radicalized groups. Men and women, adults and young people, Black and white, immigrants and natives, liberals and conservatives—divisions in various forms made dialogue among families, friends, and colleagues almost impossible.

Then came virtual realities and the metaverse, with people spending most of their days living in an alternate reality and ceasing to engage in real social interactions.

The most affected were the young people and children, who became more susceptible to mental disorders like depression and anxiety. When this generation entered the workforce, it became a significant problem for companies, as overall productivity decreased and interpersonal relationships within organizations deteriorated widely.

Governments increased regulations on social media and other technologies, sometimes with bans and prohibitions for specific audiences, but some effects are irreversible.

In the political realm, conflicts between political groups began to become dangerous, increasing radicalization and undermining the quality of democracies. The result was a greater concentration of power in heads of state and changes in the representativeness of parliaments and electoral processes. In organizations, hierarchies became more horizontal, with managers making many decisions without much employee participation.

BACK TO 2024: WHAT CAN WE LEARN WITH THE FUTURE?

Upon returning to 2024, we noticed the changes and challenges of the future. However, we did not find the solutions; just like in the movie "Back to the Future", it's up to us, the protagonists of this story, to discover them.

But one thing is sure: the solutions to future problems, will come from people: the right people, in the right places. "The history of the world is but the biography of great men," the English historian Thomas Carlyle once said.

Unlike in the past, however, those responsible for guiding humanity's future will not come only from select groups of nobility or high society; they could be anyone, anywhere in the world. As Peter Drucker said, "We live in an age of unprecedented opportunity: If you've got ambition and smarts, you can rise to the top of your chosen profession, regardless of where you started out."

Now, instead of projecting the future, let's create our future, for that, we need to know: Who will be the people to help humanity overcome the challenges of the future? What will their qualities be, and how do we form them above all?

CREATING THE FUTURE

PART I : PROMOTING INNOVATION

As we saw on our journey to 2050, technology and innovation, combined with sustainability, will be humanity's primary goal in trying to reverse and mitigate increasingly frequent and intense extreme climatic events.

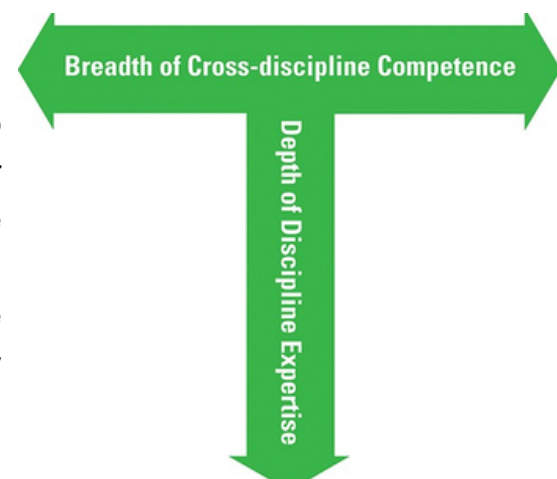
The future leader will need innovation as a core value in their role in society and to align this with increasingly urgent applicability. The gap between research in universities and application in companies and governments must be continuously bridged.

Furthermore, these innovations need to be aimed at making a real impact on society as a whole. Peter Drucker once said: "Innovation is the specific instrument of entrepreneurship, and it's the act that endows resources with a new capacity to create wealth." Based on this, we should add "and well-being" to the end of the phrase to bring innovation closer to solving everyday problems.

For that, research and innovation should be a part of the education of not only academic researchers but also managers, entrepreneurs, and government leaders from an early age.

Education should also focus on creating T-shaped individuals, who not only possess specialized knowledge and skills in a particular field but also have a comprehensive understanding of multiple subjects.

In this way, it enables various fields of knowledge to generate innovation and understanding that interact with each other, thereby creating real impact.



PART II : LEARNING WHAT TO LEARN

"The illiterate of the twenty-first century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." This phrase, declared by Alvin Toffler in his 1970 book *Future Shock*, is helpful in the present day and will be even more so in the future.

Our journey to 2050 showed that the future job market will require continuous adaptation to new technologies. This process has been ongoing since the last century but is expected to intensify.

Therefore, learning how to learn becomes increasingly necessary. However, in addition to learning how to learn, it is also required to learn what to learn. In other words, it is essential to be aware that it is impossible to be completely up-to-date due to the speed at which technologies emerge and develop. Therefore, each individual must know their role in society and focus their efforts on improving within that scope.

But to be a leader of the future, one must go beyond that. In addition to knowing one's strengths, it is also essential to identify the strengths of the people around you. Once, Peter Drucker wrote, "Education can no longer be confined to the schools. Every employing institution has to become a teacher." This role of companies to which Drucker refers should not be impersonal and massified; it should be strictly personal and personalized.

Although technologies are crucial for facilitating personalized learning, only a human perspective can truly understand each individual's peculiarities and aspirations, and no artificial intelligence will ever be able to replicate this.

PART III : LEADING THE FUTURE

When Emperor Augustus ascended to power in the Roman Republic, Roman society was fragmented, plagued by conflicts and civil wars that had lasted for years. Augustus's leadership and virtues brought stability throughout the domains of Rome, thus founding the Roman Empire, which dominated Europe for over four centuries and changed the course of human history with influences that endure to this day.

Augustus's leadership was based on dialogue among different groups, which earned him respect throughout Roman society, from the elite of the Senate to the peoples of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. This brought solid legitimacy to his leadership leading the Roman Senate to grant him the title of First Emperor and Princeps of Rome. Even so, Augustus did not evade difficult decisions; he exercised his power firmly, and sometimes even authoritatively, in times of crisis or significant disagreement.

In today's society, with increasing radicalism and social conflicts, and with the liberal democracy model being questioned and threatened, Augustus's example can be used by leaders of the present and future.

To return to a cohesive society, it is necessary to break the vicious cycle of social fragmentation we are experiencing. In the absence of dialogue and shared values and opinions, different groups increasingly isolate themselves, creating ever-greater differences that make unity impossible.

The role of education in this context is not to resolve all existing social conflicts, but to form the people who will do so. For this, leadership must be developed from an early age, with education that encourages teamwork and recognizes individual skills and differences. Students should always be in inclusive and diverse groups, with various worldviews exposed and understood.



The idea is that leadership is not only a natural gift but a quality that can be taught and developed. As Peter Drucker once wrote in the preface to the book *The Leader of the Future*, "Leadership must be learned and can be learned."

This process should start in school but continue into professional life, with each person developing their leadership style. However, now more than ever, effective leadership must focus on legitimacy, dialogue, and, most importantly, hierarchy. Although decisions must be discussed with all the points of view considered, there cannot be two captains on a ship; there must always be someone with the final word.

POSTFACE: THE SCHOOL WILL CONTINUE

There's no need to travel to the future to refute the idea that schools will be replaced by remote classrooms or that artificial intelligence robots will replace teachers. This time, it's enough to look back at the past.

The image below is an article from the 1935 magazine *Short Wave Craft*, which shows that the future of education would be classes by telephone. We know that this idea did not materialize.

The Covid-19 pandemic is also an excellent example to prove this point. In Brazil, for instance, 33.8% of children returned to in-person classes with difficulties in reading and writing. The effect was similar worldwide.

The fact is that human interaction in the learning process cannot and will not be replaced, both in the relationship between students and in the relationship between students and teachers.

As this essay argues, the learning process involves interacting, questioning, and participating actively. Therefore, schools can evolve with new technologies, but they will never be replaced.

