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The Hyper-Human Economy Is Coming

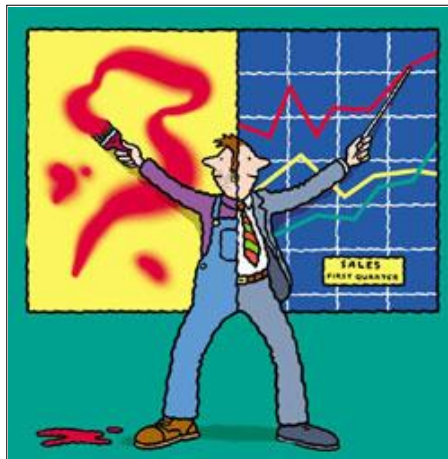
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As machines and software take over more and more of the work that people once performed, we will see profound changes in the labor market.

As futurist Richard W. Samson argues in his new book, *Mind Over Technology*, "Human mental processes are being systematically transferred into computers, microchips, networks, and mechanical devices of all types."

Where will this lead? As always, history provides us with valuable insights into the future.

For example, during the Industrial Revolution, workers adapted to the shrinking demand for manual labor by developing the skills they needed to succeed in jobs based on "know-how." Now, however, those same types of jobs are disappearing because of technologies that are taking the place of know-how.



For another illustration from the past, consider farming. At the beginning of the 20th century, two of every five American workers were involved in agriculture to provide the nation's food. Now, due to automation, only one in every 50 American workers is needed to produce the food consumed by a much larger population.

We can follow the decline of factory work along a similar path. The percentage of people in manufacturing jobs has plunged to 17 percent of the non-farm workforce, compared to 38 percent in 1940, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. And if the trend continues, manufacturing will soon join farming in accounting for less than 2 percent of the workforce. When that happens, in theory, the service sector could encompass 98 percent of the non-farm labor force.

As Samson points out, as information technology automates white- and blue-collar functions alike, most of the remaining jobs are being transferred into all-electronic systems. In other words, know-how is being taken over by ever more-sophisticated tools.

If that's the case, then what's left for people to do? The answer: a new class of jobs involving hard-to-automate "hyper-human" skills that go *beyond* know-how.

We can divide today's service sector workforce into two types: first, those requiring know-how skills; and second, those requiring hyper-human skills.

Service workers with know-how skills are likely to plummet to less than 2 percent of the workforce by the end of the century, but hyper-human service workers may zoom to over 90 percent. ...

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