

A Very Human Future – Steve Wells

The nature of change we are seeing is exponential. Its pace, scale, reach, and potential impacts are extraordinary, and yet we also have the option to create a very human future; to avoid the more dystopian potential of a machine-led future for humanity.

Our analogue, physical world mind-set is constantly being challenged by a digital world mind-set. The focus of life, society and business is switching from an understanding and appreciation of the value of physical products and traditional services to the value of data and information.

Our focus is often on the development and potential of artificial intelligence (AI) and automation. We increasingly look for signals, predictions, and scenarios about how the emerging future will change the nature of jobs and or work. At the same time, we look forward and try to imagine the impact of new business sectors driven by the explosion in science and technology developments from AI, robotics, to 3D and 4D printing, nanotechnology, to human augmentation and synthetic biology.

At this point the questions stop being about the technology. They switch to the social implications and the social solutions in a world where two thirds of the jobs that children currently entering primary school will do as adults, don't exist in today's world.

So what are some of the critical components of a manifesto for a very human future?

- Challenging and changing established approaches to education and training.
- Re-thinking our responsibilities as employers to our employees; reframing how we support their needs both while they are with our organisations, but also as they transition to other roles outside.
- Creating future-ready leadership skills to include sense-making, embracing uncertainty and exponential change, systems thinking, creativity, contextual sensitivity, and foresight, for example.
- Focusing on digital literacy so that collectively we can start to make sense of the emerging digital landscape and be prepared for a digitally enabled very human future.

A partnership across society will be required to ensure we transition to a sustainable human future; a very human future.