

## Insert Your Future Prediction Here



IN GATHERING INPUT for this month's Future of the Profession article it became clear that any look into the crystal ball typically splits into the world into two parts—people and technology. The responses we received reinforced that concept. The best part of predicting the future is that you can be as wild and bombastic as you wish—no one can dispute you.

Those predictions come back to haunt you. The so-called Nostradamus of marketing, Faith Popcorn, gave us the heads-up on cocooning and home shopping, but she also suggested in the late 1980s that we would be cooking our meals on the run with the dashboard microwaves in our cars. I have mocked this prediction a number of times over the years. Considering the DVD players, satellite radios, GM's OnStar service, glovebox coolers, and every sort of GPS-driven map and locator devices that now are found in many automobiles, perhaps I should just shut up and wait.

A couple of the people we spoke with for the article had some extreme ideas—well, they seem extreme to me. Our friend Jay Cross, the e-learning guru, suggests that time deflation—cramming more into fewer hours, days, and years—will have a huge impact. Jay references experts who say the 21st century “won't have 100 of our current years; it will have the equivalent of 20,000 of our years!” He adds: “In five years, we probably won't have workplaces or a learning function or ASTD or even (gasp) T+D.”

I think he was being a bit allegorical, but maybe I should brush up my résumé. A response from another cutting-edge professional, Jonathon Levy, who calls himself a senior learning strategist, was both interesting and chilling. I asked him about the technologies that will transform the profession. He wrote: “The integration of captured and targeted inherent human knowledge (tacit knowledge) with learning objects broadly defined within a single core taxonomy that drives a fully integrated, single-point-of-contact interface. In short, the seamless blending of ‘carbon’ and ‘silicon.’ ”

I know he didn't mean it that way, but having seen too many science fiction movies, that sounds a bit like putting the chip in our heads. No one can question the miniaturization of technology (my current notebook computer is a fifth the size and weight of my college geology textbook), but will man and machine become one? Will the need to quickly cram as much information into our heads—due to time deflation—require some sort of man-machine interface beyond a pair of eyes and a screen of some sort? I would think not. But I have been wrong before.

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