

# What Lies Ahead

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OPINION LEADERS PREDICT  
WHAT WILL HELP OR HINDER  
WORKERS' PERFORMANCE  
IN THE FUTURE

**W**hat will future workers face as they try to do their jobs and deal with new demands on their time and skills? How will they find the information they need? What will their frustrations and challenges be? How will they deal with the growing complexity of work? What will they need to learn and how will they learn it? What roles will technology play? What else is around the bend? Some top thinkers in a wide range of fields offer their predictions.

**WARREN BENNIS**



**T**HE MAJOR problem facing us now that will continue for the foreseeable future is the "disconnect" between the top leaders (experts, professionals, and leaders—about 1 percent) and the other 99 percent of the population. This is what drives people wild with frustration: a feeling of being exploited and played upon like a pack of fools.

This disconnect is what was behind the 1992 U.S. presidential election as well. This parlous state of affairs will continue, alas, throughout the rest of this century. And it is not confined only to the United States, but is happening or will happen to the rest of the industrialized democracies.

*Bennis, a faculty member at the University of South Carolina, is the author of *On Becoming a Leader* and the coauthor, with Joan Goldsmith, of *Learning To Lead*.*

## ANTHONY P. CARNEVALE



THE AMERICAN economic future is brightening. After a long competitive struggle, American businesses are back on the top. A 1995 World Economic

Forum report that compares economic data from 39 countries and surveys almost 4,000 CEOs ranks American business as the most competitive in the world for the second year in a row.

Yet American workers are becoming increasingly anxious, as downsizing continues even in the best of times, and in the most profitable companies a consistent 600,000 layoffs take place per year.

Employees know that the old implicit bargain in which workers exchanged loyalty for job security is on the wane. And successful careers are now defined by the ability to sustain a career by sustaining and enhancing skills in a particular occupation, rather than by staying with a particular employer. Those workers who stay in their occupation now earn 25 percent more than those who stay with their employer. Leaving an occupation reduces earnings 25 percent more than losing a job with a particular employer.

A growing share of American workers, currently 19.8 percent of the workforce, or more than 24 million workers, have arrangements other than the traditional ongoing relationship with a particular employer. Moreover, only 14 percent of these "contingent" employees would prefer an ongoing employment relationship with a particular employer.

The decline in corporate paternalism and the growing diversity of individualized careers create a disconnect between the emerging economy and the traditional institutions that prepare us for work, sustain us during our working lives, and provide for retirement. Our health care, pension, and training systems need to be more accessible to nontraditional workers

and more portable for us all.

The new economy also brings a new and bittersweet structure of job opportunities. We are losing high-school-educated, highly paid blue-collar jobs, but we are creating the more highly skilled occupations in both manufacturing and services. The irony is that even the more highly skilled and highly paid jobs in services—where most new jobs are coming from—don't pay as much as the blue-collar jobs we are losing.

Men, especially high-school-educated blue-collar men, are not doing as well as they once did. The proportion of men whose earnings are increasing has fallen from three-quarters to two-thirds. And the proportion of those with strong job security has fallen from two-thirds to half. Men are losing their traditional place in the economy, and with it, their place in the family and community—in some cases with disastrous consequences.

Women are doing better, with the growth of service occupations and the growth in managerial, technical, and professional openings in manufacturing. But women are doing better mostly by working harder. More than 80 percent of female increases in earnings and job security come from a doubling in the number of hours worked among women.

Those who do best in the new economy are those with education beyond high school, combined with occupational or professional education. These same people have greater access to training on the job and technology, which increases their earning power. Those who get employer training earn 30 percent more than those who don't. Those who combine post-secondary education with occupational majors or who go on to graduate specialization in managerial, professional, or technical occupations do best.

For instance, even the recent high-school graduate who ends up with a managerial, professional, or technical job will do better than a liberal-arts college graduate who doesn't. Those who have solid academic and occupa-

tional preparation have better access to training on the job and technology at work, which further increase their earnings advantage by 30 percent and 25 percent, respectively.

The way forward in the new economy requires greater investments in our human capital and social capital—an acknowledged set of mutual commitments to share the risks and rewards from change, and the promotion of equal opportunity in the change process.

*Carnevale is vice-president and director of human resources studies at the Committee for Economic Development and the author of several books, including The American Mosaic and America and the New Economy.*

## RIANE EISLER



NOW, AS automation is taking over more and more rote physical and mental tasks, the role of education—of training and retraining—will be greater than

ever before.

Computer literacy and the ability to utilize other new technologies will be indispensable for an increasing number of jobs. But not only will training be needed to equip workers to utilize new technologies; education for new ways of functioning in both the workplace and society at large will also be indispensable.

Because of the information overload brought by computerized information-delivery systems, learning pattern-recognition skills will be extremely important not only in worker training and retraining, but in education in general. Indeed, one of the challenges for education will be to help people develop new ways of evaluating information, rather than, as in the old-style education, merely memorizing discrete bits of "knowledge."

Developing ways of dealing with the depersonalization created by automation will also be an important challenge for education. In fact, this will be one of our major challenges in an age when television, automated receptionists, interactive computers,

■ *The old bargain of loyalty for job security is on the wane* ■

and other technologies increasingly take the place of face-to-face and even voice-to-voice human contacts.

How are we to build mutually beneficial and empathic (or partnership) human relations in our age of the widening gap between haves and have-nots? Similarly, how are we to help those who are disadvantaged, be it physically or economically, learn technological skills so that we do not further widen this gap? In short, how are we to reshape education for the future to balance the teaching of technological skills with the teaching of humanistic values, so that we can move to a society of democratic partnership rather than technocratic domination?

Whether we find answers to these questions will largely depend on whether education focuses on the development of a unique human capacity; our enormous capacity for both personal and social creativity—for finding solutions not only for our day-to-day personal and work challenges, but for the great systemic challenges that face our world.

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*Eisler is author of The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future, and Sacred Pleasure: Sex, Myth, and the Politics of the Body.*

### CHELLIS GLENDINNING



I LIVE IN A VILLAGE in northern New Mexico where maybe half the villagers have telephones and I reckon there is one computer in town. The people here work, if they work at all, as chili farmers, artisans, high-school teachers, janitors, McDonald's cooks, and burglars to support heroin addictions.

From the stark perspective of this desert community—and from my awareness of life and work in other “undeveloped” communities both in this country and elsewhere—I sense an ever-wrenching gap between the employed workforce within industrial and post-industrial society—and the folks who reside outside it.

How does this predicament affect American corporate workers? It provides the context for their lives, the

## ■ *I foresee increased alienation for American workers* ■

spiritual fluid, if you will, pouring over and through every soul in the contemporary world. And an explosively volatile context it is.

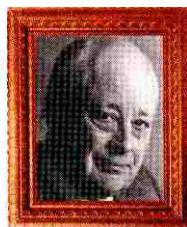
Today's world is fast dividing between those who are coming to reside exclusively within corporate-technological reality and to rely completely on technologies to work, eat, communicate, and think—and those who still hold memory of humanity living sustainably on the earth and yet, by the unrelenting encroachment of the technological world, are catapulted into poverty and disease.

For the American worker, I foresee—amid the usual earnest enthusiasm, inventiveness, and disorientation—increased alienation.

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*Glendinning, a psychologist, is the author of My Name Is Chellis and I'm in Recovery From Western Civilization and the Pulitzer Prize-nominated When Technology Wounds: The Human Consequences of Progress.*

### CHARLES HANDY



THERE IS AN inexorable formula driving the future of work. It is  $\frac{1}{2} \times 2 \times 3$ , or the pressure on organizations to use half as many people, paid twice as well, to produce three times as much.

Those who want to stay in the first half will soon realize that if they don't stay ahead of the game they will quickly join the other half, the ones outside the organization. These outsiders, in their turn, will realize that a sellable skill is the first essential in attracting clients or customers when nice, secure, and undemanding jobs are no longer available.

The result will be a huge expansion in individualized learning, as both sets of people begin to understand that their careers and their futures are now

totally in their own hands and can no longer be left to the personnel and training functions of organizations. By a happy coincidence, this pressure on individuals to manage their own learning comes at a time when the technology offers them every facility to do just that, with information, tutoring, and networks of kindred spirits on call wherever one happens to be.

The good news will be an explosion of personal learning. The bad news may be that this explosion will be concentrated in a minority, that it will lead to an increasingly self-centered society, and that we shall see a world where the gap between the learners and the unlearned grows even bigger. That must not be allowed to happen, for who wants to be rich in a desert?

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*Handy is the author of several books, including The Age of Unreason.*

### JOE HARLESS



THE AMOUNT AND complexity of information-needed-to-perform will continue to increase as we accelerate into the Information Age. This will precipitate the need for workers to access job-relevant information in a more timely manner.

Amount, complexity, and timeliness of the information will turn our attention to cost-effective ways to deliver information at the workplace in the form of sophisticated job aids, electronic performance-support systems, and other mechanisms that are NOT training, in the conventional sense of the word.

In order to achieve the above, our attention will be focused on analytical processes that can derive the needed information out of study of the desired job performance—“performance-based” information.

Training will not focus on learning, in the sense that information is stored in the memory of humans, but will emphasize how to access and use information when it is needed.

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*Harless heads the Harless Performance Guild.*

## KEVIN KELLY



**THE CURRENT** metaphor for working in the office is the filing cabinet and desktop. The desktop, however, is over.

In the future the metaphor for work organizations will not come from work, but from games. This is not to say that work will be fun and frivolous, but that the metaphor that will be imported into the workplace of the future will be invented and polished by "gamers." For instance, gamers are figuring out how to have a game in which 25 people have equal access and still are open to a 26th player who drops by. That's a formula for a workplace of the future that is not even in the vocabulary of the desktop.

The moral: Follow the fun.

*Kelly is executive editor of Wired magazine.*

## ANN M. MORRISON



**CERTAINLY WORKERS** at many levels will increasingly rely on the Internet and the Web for information. Downloading data bases into selected programs, for

example, will help many workers customize analyses for use in their own projects and ongoing work. Interactive learning will also be increasingly possible with electronic advancements.

Existing sources of information, however, will still be in demand for decades to come—books and magazines, video, classroom instruction, and so forth—because people are familiar with them and reluctant to give them up.

Simulations will become much more prevalent as a learning tool. These skill-oriented learning sources complement the knowledge-based sources and tools that dominate the electronic arena. Workers will continue to need skills to be good team members or coaches, to help resolve conflicts, to build trust and collaboration, and so forth, if they are to be ef-

fective workers. Simulations and other learning tools geared to small teams of workers will proliferate, and they will be flexible to accommodate workers who are at the same site or 10 time zones away from their colleagues.

Technology will expand the range of learning options for workers, but personal contact will continue to be a key part of workers' learning and information sharing. Many workers will still demand on-site instructors/tutors and classmates for at least some learning, because they need human contact. Organizations that try to rely too heavily on workers learning in isolation using computers are likely to confront justified resistance.

Technology doesn't replace personal contact. Technology can facilitate the contact workers need in order to feel like part of an organization and its mission and to perform most effectively.

*Morrison is president of the New Leaders Institute and the author of Breaking the Glass Ceiling and The New Leaders.*

## NICHOLAS NEGROPONTE



**THE INTERNET** will have 1 billion users by the year 2000. Digital illiteracy will be as common as smallpox by the year 2020.

*Negroponte is director of the Media Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.*

## ROBERT B. REICH

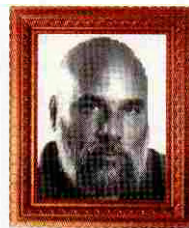


**TECHNOLOGY** has made new demands on both employers and employees. Workers, willing to upgrade their skills continually, can prosper in technologically advanced workplaces. Employers who realize that most elements of business can be replicated—machines, processes, raw materials—and, therefore, are investing in a skilled, flexible workforce able to take advantage of new technology, are enjoying an enduring competitive

advantage. Those businesses and workers who do not recognize these new demands will be left behind.

*Reich is the U.S. Secretary of Labor.*

## ROGER C. SCHANK



**MOST PEOPLE** resist change. And quite sensible people resist change when it comes in the form of computer software. The reason for this is simple enough.

Most computer software is obtuse, confusing, and highly fragile. When it comes to training software, the situation is worse. Most training software is also wrong-headed. Providing software that puts a book on a computer is not an advance in learning technology. Forcing trainees to take multiple-choice tests on a computer will not make the hearts of those trainees go pitter-patter.

Fortunately all this will change. Are airlight simulators a better way to learn to fly than practicing on the real thing? You bet they are. When you crash, no one dies. The workplace needs airlight simulator equivalents for every job so that people can learn their jobs by practicing them. Further, they need access to experts any time they want them. All this is coming in the next generation of training software. It will be fun. Employees will love it (after they get over their initial worries about it being another awful computer program).

*Schank is director of the Institute for the Learning Sciences, Northwestern University.*

## EDGAR SCHEIN



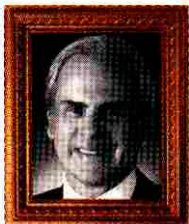
**I BELIEVE THAT THE** world is now increasingly coming to recognize complexity and the inability to get things done with simple, linear causal models. The age of taking sociotechnical systems seriously is coming, and those of us who can deal with both the human and the technical factor in an integrated way will be more relevant.

■ *Technological innovations will never replace the need for face-to-face communication* ■

But we do not yet have enough good models to help OD practitioners do a good job of analyzing and intervening in complex systems, especially since the analysis will typically be an intervention in its own right. We will need better theories of intervention that acknowledge the integration of diagnosis with intervention, and that help practitioners become perpetual diagnosticians and flexible interveners.

*Schein is an emeritus professor of management with MIT's Sloan School of Management.*

#### **FREDERICK W. SMITH**



**T**HE WORKERS OF tomorrow, like those of today, will continue to expect timely, credible information from their organizations. At FedEx we responded to that need several years ago with a live satellite television network, FXTV, that broadcasts daily to our employees. Today that network is busier than ever, as our managers respond to new communication challenges from our people.

We're also using the Internet and other electronic networks to provide our employees and our customers with timely information and business services like package tracking.

But such technological innovations will never replace the need for effective face-to-face, person-to-person communication. Employees still want to hear important information from their immediate manager, and I predict that this essential need for human touch will still be with us in the year 2046 and beyond.

*Smith is the president and CEO of Federal Express.*

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