

Student Opinion: Tech-related jobs are the future

By Drew Martin on 03.25.20

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A technician observes the fully automatic production in the Anklam sugar factory on surveillance monitors. Photo: Stefan Sauer/dpa-Zentralbild/dpa via Getty Images

With the invention of the Internet, humanity embarked on a big adventure. Humans have taken great, bounding strides into a future where technology is no longer a luxury, but now a necessity. Technology is embedded in our everyday lives, and this can make it too easy to overlook one very important question: When that power grows too great to command, where do we go?

With every advancement humans make, every new app and feature, less and less of the work of daily life is required of us. We allow technology to assist us with driving, grocery shopping, and even dating, among many other actions and tasks. So, again, I ask you: When technology gets too big for us to control — when, really, technology starts to control the world around us — what comes next? Scary to think about, huh?

I don't think so. As a junior in high school, I'm being asked to look into the future and decide what I want to do with my life, and I'm liking my options now more than ever. Of course, no one can

predict with total accuracy what the economy or job market will look like far in the future. I'm simply basing my own predictions and optimism off of the trends I've observed in the world so far.

Let me explain my standpoint, beginning with the idea of automation in the workplace. Many experts and workers have expressed concern around robotic integration. Organizations and unions have been created to push the message that robots don't need jobs, people do — and to a point, I understand their concern. However, the integration of robotics in the workplace is primarily an issue of adaptation to the new world. This is an issue that many members of older generations struggle with since everything is changing very quickly.

The job market has shifted drastically, and it would be ignorant to pretend that technology's rise to power hasn't played a big role in that shift. Unfortunately for the generations that came before mine, the skills needed decades ago aren't needed as much now. Robotics is advancing in a variety of fields; its impacts on jobs and workers can already be seen in the lumber and steel industries, service industries, and even in the field of education. I'm not anti-baby boomer; seeing what the boomer generation did for its successors, I can only have gratitude and respect for them. They laid a solid foundation for us, and I promise to take advantage of it to the utmost. How will I do that? The answer is simple: I'll follow my dreams.

Sounds cliché, right? But if robots can outperform us at jobs that require technical and intellectual capacities, what do humans have left to offer? Our emotions, our imagination — both of which are arguably at the core of our humanity. Sure, an automated machine may work an assembly line faster than a person, or may have the capacity to answer any question in the world, but that's because humans built those machines that way. That, itself, is an amazing accomplishment of the human imagination and drive. We are talented, passionate creatures, who do not deserve to be trapped in miserable jobs anymore!

By now, I'd hope you're at least a little curious to hear what kind of jobs we can focus on, instead. Which fields and professions will make the cut?

There's one obvious answer: Jobs that directly involve technology and robotics. From behind-the-scenes IT work to the front lines of invention, any and all jobs that involve creating and managing future tech are and will continue to be in big demand. These roles require not only passion and drive, but also intelligence, creative and rational thinking, and social awareness. People who work in these fields are already critical to our economy and their importance and impact will only continue to grow. We should be grateful to those who are doing this work to take us higher and higher as a society.

There's also a less-obvious answer, one that many parents will dread to hear: jobs in the arts and entertainment. It may sound crazy but think about it. What could better reflect the creativity of the human mind than the arts? I believe technology has opened up our world, freeing us to explore the capacity of our imaginations and share the results for everyone to see!

This brings us to a discussion of social media, another relatively recent, tech-enabled invention that has drastically changed our world. Almost everyone is on some form of social media now. According to the Pew Research Center, an unbiased think tank that focuses on the trends and public opinions shaping our nation, "Today around 7 in 10 Americans use social media to connect with one another, engage with news content, share information and entertain themselves." Using these platforms, people have created a new space to market and advertise their own works.

Content created by users, also known as user-generated content (UGC), is also highly sought after in traditional marketing and advertising fields. TINT, a San Francisco-based social media aggregator whose business strategy relies heavily on user-created content, released various statistics about UGC. "When users create and share content on social media channels," reported TINT, "they get 28 percent higher engagement compared to standard company posts." Hence the rise of YouTube animators, SoundCloud rappers, TikTok stars and musicians, Instagram artists and influencers — the list is never-ending!

Social media is, if nothing else, the ultimate tool for getting your work to an audience. We live in a unique time, in which our work is wholly ours, and we can decide how to express ourselves without the interference of a third party. Building a personal brand is easier than it ever was before. This reality excites me. Making art and producing content still pose challenges — but the challenge no longer centers on finding someone who believes in you before you can get your product or person in front of an audience. In this day and age, believing in yourself is enough. Seeing the successes of people who have done it on their own, including the artist Banksy, video blogger Liza Koshy, and author Rainbow Rowell gives me hope! And in a time where people are starving for quality content, who says that my craft can't be a real job? I'm a writer, an artist, a singer, an actor, and I have stories to tell. Telling those stories is real work — and, as TINT's research bears out, it has real economic implications.

So, here's the point of it all. I'm beyond grateful for the generations prior to mine, whose work built the pillars our nation stands on. But the time for building foundations is behind us. Now, it's time to use that foundation as a launching pad to explore, create and evolve. We must ensure that future generations know that when we say, "follow your dreams," we mean it. Welcome to the renaissance of the 21st century — what a time to be alive! There's never been a better time to be yourself, and I can only see it getting even better from here.

Drew Martin is a high school junior in Middletown, California.

The opinions expressed in this essay are those of the writer and do not necessarily represent the views of Newsela or its editors.

Quiz

- 1 According to the article, why should people be happy that automated machines are better at some jobs than humans?
- (A) The machines' intelligence provides people with new ways to create art and offers lessons on technique.
 - (B) The machines' accomplishments are the result of human imagination and free people from jobs they hate.
 - (C) The machines indicate with total accuracy what the economy or job market will look like in the future.
 - (D) The machines are able to keep people safer by organizing and performing many dangerous tasks.
- 2 How did the advance of robotics affect older generations?
- (A) It increased the number of workers who were able to dedicate their time to artistic and creative pursuits rather than working all day as part of a manual assembly line.
 - (B) It increased the number of jobs available for people of the baby boomer generation by creating new positions in the field of IT and education that had not previously existed.
 - (C) It reduced the number of workers who were injured doing dangerous work in the logging and steel industries by giving those workers positions as designers of automation.
 - (D) It reduced the number of jobs that existed in previous decades by automating work in service industries as well as lumber and steel that was previously performed by humans.
- 3 The author claims that social media is an excellent tool for sharing artistic work with an audience. Which selection from the article provides the MOST sufficient evidence to support the claim?
- (A) According to the Pew Research Center, an unbiased think tank that focuses on the trends and public opinions shaping our nation, "Today around 7 in 10 Americans use social media to connect with one another, engage with news content, share information and entertain themselves."
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4 The author supports the claim that tech-related jobs are the future by using the following selection.

From behind-the-scenes IT work to the front lines of invention, any and all jobs that involve creating and managing future tech are and will continue to be in big demand. These roles require not only passion and drive, but also intelligence, creative and rational thinking, and social awareness. People who work in these fields are already critical to our economy and their importance and impact will only continue to grow.

How effectively does the selection support the claim?

- (A) The selection is very effective because it provides firsthand experiences from people behind the scenes of the tech industry who have used their jobs as inventors to improve the economy.
- (B) The selection is mostly effective because it lists the ways that intelligence and rational thinking have been used to design and develop the robots necessary for a fully automated society.
- (C) The selection is somewhat effective because it outlines the range of skills and their importance to tech that the author has observed, but does not include data or expert opinions to back up these observations.
- (D) The selection is not effective because it highlights the need for creative and passionate individuals in future jobs, but fails to explain how these traits are related to the developing field of technology and automation.

Answer Key

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