

BEYOND NINE TO FIVE



Your **career guide** for
the digital age

ADE McCORMACK

Beyond Nine to Five

Your Career Guide for the Digital Age

This document contains a sample of the content associated with this book. It includes:

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The book will be available on Amazon on International Workers Day – 1st May.

Ade McCormack

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Preface

The world is changing.

In turn the world of work is changing.

Consequently what it means to be a worker is changing too.

Despite the rapid pace of change we are experiencing, today is the slowest pace of change you will ever experience again.

This book is your guide to both enhancing your employability and to gaining more value from this activity, typically referred to as work.

This industrial era framework, within which many of us have operated, is giving way to digital-era practices. As you will read, our post-industrial approach to work is not as new as you might expect.

New technology, whilst a critical driver to the changing nature of work, is not the primary driver. Those that fully understand this will have, by their own standards, a very successful work life (or should that be life work?).

The increased clock-speed of society makes it sometimes difficult to separate the present and the future. The near future in particular is unfolding as we speak. And unfolding rapidly. This makes career-related decision making increasingly treacherous.

But who can the next generation turn to for advice? As you will read, parents, for one, are ill-equipped to provide sage advice. Their hard-earned lessons apply to a game that is becoming defunct. Today the rules of the game, as we shall see, are quite different.

Young people, in any case, might well be suspicious of career advice dispensed from people who talk about 'mobile' phones and 'digital' business, as if people might actually buy tethered phones, and where some businesses might even be devoid of new technology.

I have been living a variant of the new approach to work, that I am advocating, for the last two decades. It doesn't require you to live a hermitic life, eschewing materialism. Though it could, if that's your thing. It doesn't require working ridiculous hours by today's standards, but it would be unwise to try to stop this next-generation worker whilst they are in mid flow. It's not a case of having to work, but more a visceral need to work. It could make you very rich, though money is not the only measure of this.

Many of us are learning that discretionary time and control over your destiny trump 'golden handcuffs'.

These changes will impact individuals, organisations, countries and trading blocs. Those individuals that fail to act will become increasingly unemployable. Similarly organisations will crumble, and societies will become economic backwaters.

It is important to point out that this book is not so much a manifesto for the way we should work, but an ordering, and framing, of what is actually happening. The nature of what I do for a living enables me to observe, test and reflect on the changing world.

My aim is to enable you to move forward in your career with the minimum of anxiety and a career roadmap that capitalises on the uncertainty that lies ahead.

The intended readership is those about to enter the world of work. But it will also serve those who are already working and who want to ensure they remain economically active in the face of fundamental economic and technology shifts in the world of work.

As I will explain in the 'How to use this book' section, this book will also be of value to talent managers and government policy makers.

Caveat: My work enables me to see the world of work from many angles, including many geographies. So I feel confident that the content of this book is highly relevant to current and future workers. But nobody can predict the impact of global finance and energy wars, pandemics or natural disasters, in what is an increasingly joined-up world.

So I have developed an approach, based on reality, to empower you to take charge of your professional journey, rather than just believing me and leaping into the chasm.

I think many of you will like the principles underlying the path I am proposing to you. So it may actually transpire that together we can bend the future to ensure it plays out as I am suggesting.

A kind of career cosmic ordering service perhaps?

Ade McCormack, spring, 2015

How to use this book

Whilst I set out to write this book for the next generation of workers, I found myself including important content that on reflection might not be considered essential reading from a young person's perspective.

In creating this non-essential content, I now realise that I was addressing the needs of people like me (already in the workplace) and people whom I work with, such as talent managers and government policy makers.

It is thus important to realise that this is a reference manual and not a story (though it contains stories). Both the sections and the chapters are fairly standalone.

In broad brush terms, I would regard the whole book as essential reading for corporations and governments. Pre-workers and workers will benefit from reading the whole book, but I have made some suggestions to reduce their time investment.

There are six sections to the book, detailed as follows:

Anthroeconomics

This section makes the case that the industrial era was a blip in mankind's evolution. Thus those working under such constraints today are in effect behaving unnaturally. When I speak on this theme at conferences, the audience finds this fascinating. However, pre-workers can consider this non-essential background reading. Existing workers are encouraged to read this to understand what they are currently experiencing.

Towards a future-proofed career

This is essential reading for all. Here we explore how work is moving from competence to mastery and from process to artistry. We look at career options and the magic formula for a rewarding career.

Career vectors

Again essential reading for all. We cover the macroeconomic drivers that are shaping the world of work. We see what happens when industry takes on nature. The major emerging career themes are also identified.

Mayday Mayday

In this section we take a look at how the education system is misaligned for a post-industrial world. I also issue some words of warning to parents, businesses and governments. This is more background reading for pre-workers and existing workers. Though pre-workers might like to share the parental guidance chapter with their co-creators.

A sign of the times

Here we see how the world of work and leadership is changing. The shifting power axis from employer to employee is covered along with major technology and business trends. This is essential reading for existing workers. Pre-workers only know 'this time' so are less likely to be aghast, awed or shocked by how times have changed.

At the very least, I would recommend that pre-workers read the Great Expectations chapter to get a heads up on how lucky they will be should they manage their career skilfully.

A new approach

This final section is essential reading because it addresses the thorny issue of work-life balance.

It provides clear advice on how to treat your career as a Silicon Valley lean start up.

Guidance is provided on how to return to our true nature and become a digital nomad. Those of us who are of pre-millennial vintage will benefit greatly from reading the Digital immigrants chapter.

ooOoo

There is a lot of content. Possibly too much. But again it is a reference book and not a novel. Hopefully my guidance above will help you optimise your use of the book. Each chapter has an overview and a summary. Most importantly each chapter has an action list so that you can turn this book into career value. There are also other actionable snippets embedded in the body of each chapter.

Some points/themes have been repeated. This is not because I cobbled the book together on various plane journeys, but because their contextual relevance justifies their repetition.

All of this content has in some way or other been pressure-tested in the market. As an advisor, speaker and writer, if I am too far off the money I get shot down.

I am a voracious reader of those that are expert in this space. Their thinking has refined mine. I have included a reference section for those interested in taking their reading further.

Again this book was written with pre-workers in mind. But through following my pen, it has ended up being relevant to policy makers, enterprises and established workers too. To those 'late additions' to the target readership community, I apologise for what might seem like a casual, perhaps even frivolous, approach to such an important topic. Given my initially-intended readership, I decided that if the book was too dry, regardless of any sound advice it may contain, it would not be read. Hence my approach.

I hope you find **Beyond 9 to 5** to be of value. My aim is to help individuals, organisations and societies make the necessary adjustments to thrive in the digital economy.

Before you take the following short career-calibration exercise, I encourage you to glance over Appendix A, where I clarify some important points on which this book hinges.

Calibration

Before we move on, answer these questions as best you can. They will provide a foundation on which you can build your career plan.

1. What does a successful career look like to you?
 - a. Perhaps word this as if you are looking back on your life having enjoyed a successful career. What did you do? Why did you enjoy it? What value did you serve?
2. Beyond economic stability, to what extent will money be your primary motivation?
3. To what extent do you expect your work and personal life to overlap?
4. To what extent would your ideal job be predictable or even repetitive?
5. Does the notion of providing a service appeal to you?
6. Could you imagine feeling passionate about your chosen path?
7. Given your understanding of global trends and technology advances, what risks do you anticipate that could derail your intended career path?
8. Given your life and work experiences to date, what would be a natural path for you?
9. What further skills and experience do you need to acquire to increase your chances of converging onto your ideal path?

I would encourage you to keep an open mind in respect of how you chart the course of your career. The following chapters may well give you reason to refine, or even reject, your current perspective, though the latter is not the primary intention of this book.

In any case, an open mind is essential if you are to anticipate seismic shifts in the marketplace and adapt your path to the changing market demand.

Take action

- Recognise that career planning in the traditional sense no longer applies. What might be a highly in-demand skill/profession today may become redundant/automated tomorrow.
- Recognise that a career is not something society, commerce, your school or a medieval guild is obliged to design and provide for you. You need to take ownership of your career, and be vigilant in the manner in which you steer it through these increasingly volatile times.
- Review your answers to this calibration exercise as you read the book, and when you have finished it.
 - Perhaps even take stock, from time to time, throughout your career.
- Read Appendix A!

4 The Artist

Overview

We have established that the role of workers in the industrial era was to perform tasks in a robotic fashion until a robot, or some piece of technology, could do the job.

Today, the power is shifting to those who have acquired the right skills. Up until now, this power only sat with diva-complex rock stars and finely tuned, but easily startled, Olympic athletes.

In this chapter you will understand why this is happening and how you can go about joining this elite but growing band of talent.

Race to the bottom

Let's take a look at how the world of work is currently playing out. Taking the banking sector as an example: Each bank is generally trying to automate humans out of their organisation. Humans are expensive, require management, have these things call aspirations and occasionally are inefficient/economically dangerous because of their recreational (and sometimes professional) interest in mind altering substances.

So the banks are in a race to turn their businesses into high tech factories with a minimised number of humans involved. This is in effect a race to the bottom, because such ruthless efficiency will ultimately create the perfect transaction machine. And when each bank is a perfect transaction machine, the competition will be such that all players will gravitate towards almost zero profit.

At some point each bank will have to reconsider how it moves back up the value chain and out of this perilous zero margin zone. What they will soon conclude is that people are the 'secret sauce' for business success. But not the suit-wearing compliant business cogs, who are merely extensions of the machine, but 'outside the box' disruptive geniuses that can apply their unique creativity to developing innovative customer services, for which the market will pay a premium.

Such a worker is for me the true digital economy worker, and the one we must strive towards. Like Picasso, who famously on request scribbled a picture on a napkin and signed it for a fellow diner. Prior to handover, he stated the price would be 25,000 dollars. Despite the eager recipient's protest that the sketch only took two minutes to produce, Picasso pointed out that it took him 25 years to develop his craft and reputation, and that value is reflected in the price.

He may not have expressed it quite like a management consultant, but you can see the point that artists invest heavily in developing their own mastery, and that has to be factored into their fee. It has nothing to do with the industrial model of being paid on a per hourly basis.

**So the digital economy favours creativity over simply
being a process bolt-on.**

The trend over the last half century has been to expunge blue collar workers from the factory floor. And as mentioned, modern day offices are really just furnished factories, where the factory workers are called professionals.

For the majority of these professionals, the increased capability of technology has had the effect of turning them into blue collar workers and so destined them to a similar fate.

Those of us currently in work need to assess whether we are standing in the way of the ‘progress steamroller’, or whether we need to attend a steam roller driving skills course, so to speak (Don’t worry. I am not sure I know what I mean by this either).

Worker as artist

A large part of the pre-industrial economy was driven by artisans (also known as craftsmen) who had developed very specific skills that could be applied to making consumer goods, such as furniture or cheese (primarily functional) or creating items, such as sculptures and jewellery (less functional).

Their career paths fell into three broad categories:

- **Apprentice**, where the focus is on learning the skills associated with a given craft. As an apprentice you would be tied to a master whose payment would be in the form of lodgings and food.
- **Journeyman**, where the person has developed competency in the skills, but has not been conferred mastery status by the associated governing body, typically known as a guild. They become free of their obligation to their master and so typically set out to travel the country to gain experience from different workshops.
- **Master**, is someone who has been admitted to the relevant guild and has achieved this by presenting an example of their work, literally a masterpiece, along with a sum of money. Once admitted they could run their own workshops.

In medieval times, those that sought academic mastery and achieved the requisite standard were conferred a ‘Master of Arts’.

Guilds exist today in Europe, Australia and North America.

I believe that as we migrate away from the industrial division of labour model, where essentially workers were cogs in a big machine, and towards an era where functional skill is valued, the apprentice – journeyman - mastery model will rise again. In fairness to the industrial era, the division of labour model has been in use since ancient times, but is largely associated with slave management. Building pyramids comes to mind.

By ‘functional’, I mean produce something that is of itself useful, for example:

- Design a car.
- Create a new customer service desk.
- Develop a series of world class PowerPoint presentations.

The industrial era turned workers into cogs that were of no use unless embedded in a factory. Such skills might include:

- Attach steering wheel.
- Wash dishes.
- Test condom.

German economist Karl Marx considered this isolated ‘cog work’ a cause of worker alienation. This model essentially required workers to do what appeared to be highly repetitive meaningless work even though what emerged from the production line was meaningful to the market.

Later on in the book we will explore this path to mastery. A movement from alienating and meaningless work to a model where the worker is on a fulfilling journey in pursuit of their ‘art’ has to be a good thing. A workforce that is competent, engaged and passionate about their work is good for the individual and the society they live in.

Developing a reputation around mastery in something that the market needs is a sure fire way to avoid the unemployment abyss. This abyss has consumed, and is consuming, a large part of the working population, who have been both educated and trained to be industrial cogs.

Again we see such mastery in sports and entertainment. We also see it in science and business leadership. Mastery doesn’t necessarily mean having global recognition. But it does mean being recognised within your field.

In the digital economy, your work or art is your greatest sales instrument. So doing great work will increase your chances of being offered more great work to do. Great work builds a great reputation. Increasingly, smart workers are waking up to that.

Power shift

There is no shortage of people on the planet, at around 7 billion and rising. The unemployment figures of most countries across the globe would seem to reinforce that there is a surplus of workers. But even taking into account inefficiencies in talent acquisition, vacant jobs and people with the appropriate skills (detailed elsewhere in this book) not finding each other, the skills surplus relates to skills that whilst relevant in the industrial era are of increasingly little value in the digital economy.

This is not to say that industrial business models no longer exist or that all economies today are truly digital. But the trend is away from industrial and towards digital. The problem we have is that there is a shortage of digital talent, ie people who have the skills needed to work in a highly agile customer-centric data-driven organisation.

PLEASE NOTE: As we will see, digital skills is not a synonym for software developer or technologist. Again, it is more about the ability to deliver value in an uncertain and fast moving environment.

Think of an industrial era worker as a waiter on a giant cruise ship sailing serenely across the Mediterranean. The job is very predictable, and the worst that can happen is that a passenger’s steak is sent back because it is undercooked.

Now think of the digital worker as a sailor on deck in a tempest around Cape Horn. The mainsail is torn, and the sailor needs to improvise to stop the ship being flung onto the rocks.

There is a lack of digital workers. This supply-demand inefficiency is shifting the power from the employer to the digitally-skilled worker. This shift is well underway. Flexible working and BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) are examples of worker empowerment. “I will not work for you unless I can work when I want, and I can use my own technology, because quite frankly the technology I use in my personal life is superior to the tech you provide at work.”

And as we will see in a later chapter, this is just the tip of the iceberg in respect of employee empowerment. If you have hankered after living the life of a rock star – “rose petals to be sprinkled in my hotel room”, “I don’t do stairs”, “my entourage will need somewhere to work”, then you are advised to develop digital economy skills and to ensure that you deliver, no exceptions, on each gig. Be aware that whilst the trend I am describing will (perhaps reluctantly) accommodate talented prima donnas, it is unlikely to extend to those whose skillset extends no further than being an incompetent poseur.

Beyond best in class

Globalisation as mentioned is not by any means a new phenomenon. It is just that with the acceleration of technology, in respect of communications in particular, the world has become much smaller.

It is no longer the case of striving to be best in your class.

If you really are serious about securing your future in the digital economy, you need to be the best in the world.

This is not as difficult as it appears. Increasingly the value people bring to work is their unique combination of skills and experiences.

There was a time when I wanted to be the best sprinter on the planet. I was (sadly) constrained by ability and physiology. However there might well have been a short period where I was the fastest human in the world with an astrophysics degree. Though possibly not. But I was almost definitely the fastest human with an astrophysics degree and with my surname.

Fortunately I have not had to sell these three uniquely combined personal attributes to gain employment, but the point is that by smartly combining your in-demand capabilities you can significantly thin out the competition.

But do keep in mind that the starting point in terms of market demand is that you are by default the world’s number one at being you. Though on further inspection that in itself may not have obvious economic value. So next you have to consider your existing positives eg.:

- Speak Portuguese.
- Have great hand-eye coordination.
- Intimate knowledge of woodland animals.

In this whacky example it may be that you are ideally equipped to work with a Brazilian woodland trust, which has discovered that a new pesticide used by local farmers is neurologically damaging fat-tailed mice such that they are falling from the trees with fatal consequences.

Such opportunities might be somewhat limited. However, as long as there is a demand, and you are the best in the world, it is likely that you will do well economically. Demand being a very important word.

Being less surreal, even the best biologists in the world have to specialise, not just as a mechanism to reduce the competition, but because that is what the market needs.

Increasingly the creation of unique skill combinations will extend beyond those you have acquired through working.

Increasingly hobbies, where you have lived, and even your online social activity will play a role, as we will see later.

So becoming the best in the world can be made easier by cultivating a cocktail of capabilities for which organisations are willing to pay. And perhaps most importantly, this unique mix reflects a skillset that you are happy to invest significant time in developing, mastering and applying to real-world situations.

Anthroeconomics

As you will discover through this book, the digital economy is in effect mankind's return to its true nature. So smart organisation will respect those characteristics of human nature in designing their operating model and strategy.

Digital economy workers will similarly be inclined to move away from the comfort of being a low profile cog in a big machine to the riskier yet fulfilling role of mobile and socially capable creative destructor.

Philosophically speaking such people reject the adage 'if it ain't broke don't fix it', and embrace 'whether it's broke or not let's improve it'. In practice, when applied to the world of work, this must not be considered as some sort of annual review of your organisation's operating model. It is a continuous quest by everyone to ensure that what you and your organisation are doing today is optimised to reflect the barrage of incoming data. Such data is collectively known as 'market reality'.

Many education systems have taught us to be compliant.

In the past this has extended to 'fixing' left handed people.

In the present 'being taught to the test' often takes priority over teaching people a love of learning. The qualifications acquired by this approach are, in effect, quality assurance certificates future employers can use in making employment decisions. This has a coldly industrial feel to it.

So we need to rise up against this compliancy/quality stamp worker production model. We need to 'pipe up' when we feel there is a better way of doing something. And schools need to focus more on education and less on sheep dipping.

Digital workers take ownership of their learning. They see this as a necessary discipline to ensure they do not skid off the path as they progress their journey to mastery.

Super brain

From an evolutionary perspective, cells have mutually agreed that collaborating is more beneficial than fighting. Hence the world is largely made up of multicellular organisms, of which we are but one example.

The first signs of single cell life date back to around 4 billion years ago. Around 3.5 billion years ago we saw the arrival of multi-cellular organisms. Primates arrived circa 85 million years ago, and Homo sapiens evolved about half a million years ago. Ants, who happen to be highly collaborative, have been around 130 million years.

Taking these random ‘facts’, I conclude:

- We as humans are an evolutionary experiment which has yet to be deemed a success.
- Just as cells are a building block of life, we are perhaps designed to be a building block of something bigger than us.
- Ants have something to teach us.

Colonies made up of argumentative and selfish ants do not exist today because that approach did not promote the mutual survival of the colony.

We as humans are highly social by nature, but some societies have become highly individualistic. This is more apparent when the population is well off. Consequently individuals:

- Develop a sense of invincibility that they will never want for food or shelter.
- Take for granted that their police force and military will maintain the protective cocoon that enables them to live out this fantasy.

In the extreme, this lack of social reliance, and perhaps even a lack of social contribution, are markers of societies that will not make it in the long run, given the likelihood of both natural and manmade disasters occurring. The Japanese cultural tendency to care more for the community than the individual no doubt accelerated its recovery from the catastrophic 2011 tsunami.

But being social has a cost. There is what is called a cognitive load incurred in getting on with others, particularly those whom we wouldn’t choose to spend time with. This load requires social animals to have bigger brains. Thus a simple test for an organisation wanting to ensure their prospective addition to the team will fit in would be to measure brain size. I will leave this to the recruitment industry to work out how this is measured in a non-invasive manner during the interview process.

Bottom line: Those workers who are most adept at collaborating are most likely to do well in the digital economy.

Thus those organisations that can create the conditions for the ‘colony’ to behave as one super brain will prevail.

It may not sit neatly with our egos, but consider the possibility that the arrival of our neocortex signified a point in time when complete self-interest became an indicator of an upcoming genetic cul-de-sac.

Possibly this is why we have tolerated the industrial era for so long. Even though the work was largely tedious and against our natural tendency to roam and tinker, at least it satisfied our need to be part of something bigger and to some extent be protected (economically) by being part of this industrial colony.

So whilst I am advocating that we become less cog and more diva, we need to get the balance right between quirky and uncompromising brilliance and, say, sharing a dressing room and performing in harmony with other equally quirky and uncompromisingly brilliant individuals.

This may well be an argument for embracing diversity. You may be different from others both physically and in worldview. But if we all bring capabilities to the table that can be harmonised into a common goal this will surely lead to superior outcomes. In a volatile market, it is likely that the super brain, comprised of brilliant cooperating individuals, will morph on a daily basis as different challenges requires different diva configurations.

So organisations need to develop a less rigid perception of themselves and be designed such that they can adapt their ‘super brain’ in line with the changes in the market.

The key point for you is that being collaborative is critical, as is being flexible.

A dogged determination to keep to your mastery path, despite the evidence that you are diverging from what the market actually needs, will get you full marks for focus and no marks for smartness.

Summary

The digital economy requires creative artists and not process workers. Artistry requires hard work. It requires us to take up a path that leads to mastery. Some of us:

- Will need to shake off the industrial conditioning brought about by our schooling.
- May have to learn to play nicely with others.

Occasionally I receive pushback along the lines that not everybody can be a rock star/artist. I think what they really mean is that not everybody can imagine themselves being creative; or they are uncomfortable with the notion that they will not have a boss/set of procedures to tell them what to do.

Perhaps look at it another way. If a computer can do your job, it will do your job.

If the term artist grates with you, then just substitute it for a term that embraces a capability that cannot be delivered by a piece of technology.

This shouldn't be an issue. We were designed for the digital economy. In many respects this is simply a return to our true pre-industrial nature. But again some of us have some industrial unlearning to do.

An important skill, which we will explore in due course, is in ensuring that our mastery path does not veer away from what the market needs.

Take action

- Create a number of future scenarios where you have attained true mastery. Perhaps you are the Head of Astrophysics at MIT? Or an economic adviser to the United Nations? Or even the next Bill Gates or Lady Gaga?
 - Do any of your future-you scenarios fill you with passion?
 - Can you now start to eliminate certain career paths, eg. academic or political?
 - Might a blended version of a few of your most exciting scenarios be most appealing?
- Actively look to improve things.
- Actively look to work with others.

10 What is Driving the Future?

Overview

We can better steer our careers if we have an understanding of the major trends impacting the world of work. Exploring the impact of the industrial era on human behaviour will also provide us with further clues as to what will be the driving forces of the post-industrial economy.

Let's take a look at some of the key drivers:

Globalisation

Globalisation is not by any means a new phenomenon. Trading between nations/geographically dispersed communities can be traced back to the third millennium BCE. The Greek, Roman and Mongol empires had an accelerating impact on international trade.

European expansionism saw the emergence of various companies set up to trade with the Middle East, India and South East Asia. Traded goods included cotton, spices and opium. The most significant player was the English East India Company, which at one point controlled half of all global trade. Other European nations had similar trading models that were entwined with their colonisation objectives.

So again, there is nothing new in respect of globalisation. However, the interdependencies are now greater than ever. The tragic earthquake in Japan in 2011 had global repercussions on the price and availability of electronic goods in the homes of Western consumers.

Everything being connected to everything by virtue of global supply chains has the effect of everything affecting everything. This makes for a very volatile global market. This is a recent phenomenon.

Career impact: Be flexible in respect of where you will work. Alternatively if you are a 'home bird' be very clear on:

- Where your country sits along the global value chain.
- What skills are needed to support your country's value proposition.

But given the volatile nature of the global market and the disruptive nature of emerging technologies, it is risky to assume that the skills your country values today will remain relevant tomorrow. So like our hunter gatherer ancestors, you will need to follow the food, and/or adapt your food capturing skills based on what is required.

Economic power shift

There is a trend towards the economic power axis moving to the East and South. Brazil, Russia, India and China come to mind. Alongside these so called 'BRIC' economies, we also have the similarly emerging MINT economies - namely, Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey. The bottom line is that the Western economies are losing their global influence.

Keep in mind that this shift will not be smooth. Even emerging economies are subject to economic and political forces. Their leadership will play a significant role in the extent to which these countries blossom economically. As you will read later, the evolving middle classes in these countries will ultimately determine which countries will be the economic beneficiaries.

But if you live in the West, don't worry. Even if your slice of the economic cake is shrinking, the cake itself is getting larger.

So assuming that Western economies wake up to the economic tectonic shift I am identifying in this book, you should continue to, in the main, enjoy a good quality of life.

Whilst I am seeing some good responses eg. Silicon Valley and the various other Silicon <insert locational term> (eg. Silicon Alley, Silicon Glen etc), I am not seeing the infrastructural overhaul needed in terms of education to ensure that every citizen is equipped to be part of this 'Silicon economy'.

This book is an attempt to help individuals recognise what is happening and to manage their development accordingly. So again Western governments need to set policy that reflects this new reality.

And congratulations to those societies that have taken the lead on this. Whilst the concept of Chinese 'Tiger Moms' may not be totally driven by an economic vision, it does reflect a recognition that being best in class is a poor second to being best in the world.

Career impact: Keep in mind that it is almost fashionable to talk of the demise of the West and the rise of the East. Even if this is a long term reality, the paths for both hemispheres will be bumpy. There will be periods when this trend will have seemingly flipped.

So placing your big career bets on an emerging economy might well be a wise long term strategy, but at any given time in the foreseeable it could be a mistake.

Also keep in mind that learning Cantonese, Portuguese or Hindi might well be a wise career move. At the very least it will help you understand the 'wishes' of your likely future boss.

To be continued.....

17 Work Shift

Overview

Now that we have a clear understanding of the drivers that are shaping the new world of work, it is time to study their impact from an organisational perspective. You can use this chapter as a check list for assessing prospective employers.

Please note that employers, whether they be public or private sector, who do not appear to be taking heed of the points raised in this chapter, face a very uncertain future. It would suggest that they are endeavouring to maintain an industrial model in a post-industrial world. 'Retro' is not a good look when it comes to business models.

Embracing technology

These days the use of new technology is not in itself an indicator of a truly digital organisation. Many organisations are using new technologies to simply make their industrial era models more operationally efficient, and so eek a few more years out of them.

You might consider the following questions when exploring whether an organisation is truly a digital business:

- Are there tools in place to enable their staff to collaborate across lines of business, geography and hierarchy?
 - Ie. the extent to which the organisation has embraced enterprise social media technologies.
- Can the staff choose the use of technologies, particularly their user device?
 - The concept of BYOD (Bring Your Own device) is indicative of an organisation that recognises that the users, ie the talent, are in the driving seat and therefore must be accommodated.
- To what extent is the organisation looking at next generation technologies to improve the user/customer experience?
 - Such technologies include wearable devices, augmented reality and 3D printing.

Lean management

A notable characteristic of a digital organisation is the high ratio of experts to management. These highly motivated experts self-organise around the broad objectives of the organisation. There is no need to have layers of management, whose primary role is to ensure that the workers work.

The decline of management will be accompanied by the ascent of highly engaged staff. There will be a sense of energy and of breaking new ground. Those organisations that have turned the 'industrial corner' recognise that the new digital economy is truly a land of opportunity.

BONUS: Those that work for digital economy organisations realise that they have a head start on those organisations still clutching their industrial models. This heightens the excitement and urgency of having the digital ‘sweet shop’ to themselves.

Cost management

Cost management is not something that is confined to economic downturns for digital organisations.

A frugal mind set is necessary. Financial constraints:

- Enable the organisation to offer clients more for less, because less waste means that more resources can be directed towards the customers’ happiness.
- Provide the conditions for innovation – necessity being the mother of invention. More innovative responses to challenges emerge when ‘throwing money at the problem’ is not an option.
- As you will see below, digital organisations can be thought of as a series of experiments, not all of which will be successful. It thus makes sense to use one’s capital frugally in order to have more attempts at becoming successful.

To be continued.....

22 Beyond Work-Life Balance

Overview

How many of us compartmentalise our lives into work and non-work? How many of us, not only leave our car in the car park/coat in the cloakroom (for non-car owners)/surfboard in reception (for non-car owning, non-coat owning surf dudes employed across the bay), but leave our personalities there as well?

The model of having a professional life and a social life as two distinct existences is an industrial era concept. We will explore why this is not sustainable in the digital economy.

Work life

In the industrial era, people generally did work they did not enjoy. Many still do. They looked forward to free time at the end of the working day, working week and working life.

Many of us now find that we are working later into the evening/night, and even at weekends.

Some of this can be attributed to increased global competition. Some of it might be down to a lack of effective self-management tools/disciplines applicable to the digital era. And increasingly, it may be that your employer's business model is no longer 'fit for purpose'. The leaders are under an illusion that working harder/longer will keep the 'boat afloat'.

This concept of retiring at the end of your working life will become increasingly quaint/far off. Shifting demographics mean that there are increasingly not enough young people working to top up the pension reserves needed for those who are retired. From a government perspective, people are 'inconveniently' living longer lives, so the pension model is no longer sustainable.

Knowing that your working life might likely extend to the end of your time on the planet, you had better choose a career path that, as well as funding your chosen lifestyle, is something that you will enjoy until you 'fall off the perch', as it were.

That is not to say that you will do the same thing from leaving school to attending your funeral. But it is likely that whatever you do, it will be rewarding beyond 'bill paying'.

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, your path to mastery, whether it is made up of 'one career one employer' or 'many careers many clients', will need to be stimulating and meaningful. Your drive may come from your desire to:

- Save the planet.
 - Create a chain of virtual coffee houses.
 - Be the fastest person in the world to run three and three quarters times around a four hundred metre track (for your age group).
-

So, as long as it ignites your passion, then it is not for anyone to cast judgement on the mastery path you have taken. However, we can't ignore the financial element, unless of course you are rock star or aristocratic offspring. So, whilst passion is important from a motivational perspective, competence and a market demand are critical, if you have a lifestyle to fund, but not a trust fund to fund it.

In short, the trend in the proportion of our lives spent working is increasing. We need to ensure we engineer our work such that this time is well spent.

Work-life integration

I have made reference to this throughout the book. I have argued that it is our true state. So when working from home, why is it that I cringe when, during a business-related Skype call, 'unplanned events' occur?

These include:

- My dog's sensitivity to customer-facing representatives of the parcel delivery industry, which manifests itself in an instinctual desire to accelerate from zero to full tilt barking in microseconds.
- My mother-in-law leaving a gushing voice mail for my wife in respect of how her begonias are progressing.

I've tried masking this by:

- Pretending to bark in manner that is contextually relevant to the discussion (difficult).
- Suggesting we have a cross line (this can work with those who don't quite get the difference between analogue and digital).

But the reality is that for both my dog and my mother-in-law, these are priorities. It's a tremendous relief when the shoe is on the other foot and a non-professional bark/gush emerges from their end of the line.

Perhaps it's a sign of the transition we are making, when the senior executive I am dealing with on Skype latches onto the pet/begonia theme, and the business meeting briefly diverts to a casual chat. Despite our professional façades, people are social, and what were once irritations are now the spice that flavours our interactions.

To be continued.....

About the Author



Ade McCormack is an advisor, writer and speaker on the digital economy, particularly in respect of its impact on business, society and humanity. Clients engage Ade when they need a ‘zoom out’ view of how the world is changing, followed by ‘zoom in’ guidance on how they can capitalise on these changes.

He is a former technologist with a degree in Physics/Astrophysics.

Ade’s perspectives extend from ‘bits’ to the boardroom. And from the start of time into the near future. Or so he believes.

Ade has written for a number of publications, including the Financial Times. In fairness to journalists, his contributions are purely opinion based. He has written several business books and has also lectured at MIT Sloan on digital leadership.

Ade is married with one son. He enjoys martial arts, dancing and running. Running being his most effective form of self defence, closely followed by dancing.

Website

www.ademccormack.com

Twitter / Blog

[@ademccormack](https://twitter.com/ademccormack)

[#beyond925](https://twitter.com/hashtag/beyond925)

The Digital Strategist – www.the-digital-strategist.com