

Recruitment and women

Ian Pearson, Futurologist, Jan 08

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In spite of major changes over the last few decades, teaching, care work, and most human skills jobs are all dominated by women. The rapid development of artificial intelligence and robotics over the next two decades will automate a great deal of the intellectual, administrative, strategic, and manufacturing work that exists today. What is left will include a much higher proportion of work that involves interpersonal contact and requires human skills. Perhaps the future of work therefore belongs to women. Machines will automate traditionally 'male' work, whereas 'female' work is harder to automate.

Of course, it is not so simple. Many women also do intellectual, administrative and skilled manual jobs, and will be vulnerable to the same processes of automation. Similarly, men involved in interpersonal jobs such as policing, teaching, and personal coaching will be largely protected. Both men and women will have to adapt and retrain as appropriate to fit the jobs in this new 'care economy'. But women will certainly have the overall advantage since evolution has given them an inbuilt orientation towards people skills. The era where men's evolutionary advantages dominated will soon be over.

Gender is not the only factor here. Age is another. While today, companies prefer to recruit young energetic people with new ideas, in a human skills world, older people are better suited. Social skills gradually improve throughout adult life. Conveniently, as the pensions problem forces people to work longer, work will change to suit older people better.

If the future of work is oriented towards human interaction, the winners will be carers, those who are beautiful, with nice personalities, leadership and motivation skills, political and social skills, communication skills, the entertainers and sports heroes, and the celebrities. That these are not surprising reflects that the process is already under way. The losers include skilled manual workers, doctors, lawyers, strategists, middle managers, programmers, engineers, and scientists. Damn!