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Only Humans Need Apply: Winners And Losers In The Age Of Smart Machines

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Synopsis

An invigorating, thought-provoking, and positive look at the rise of automation that explores how professionals across industries can find sustainable careers in the near future. Nearly half of all working Americans could risk losing their jobs because of technology. It's not only blue-collar jobs at stake. Millions of educated knowledge workers—writers, paralegals, assistants, medical technicians—are threatened by accelerating advances in artificial intelligence. The industrial revolution shifted workers from farms to factories. In the first era of automation, machines relieved humans of manually exhausting work. Today, Era Two of automation continues to wash across the entire services-based economy that has replaced jobs in agriculture and manufacturing. Era Three, and the rise of AI, is dawning. Smart computers are demonstrating they are capable of making better decisions than humans. Brilliant technologies can now decide, learn, predict, and even comprehend much faster and more accurately than the human brain, and their progress is accelerating. Where will this leave lawyers, nurses, teachers, and editors? In *Only Humans Need Apply*, Thomas Hayes Davenport and Julia Kirby reframe the conversation about automation, arguing that the future of increased productivity and business success isn't either human or machine. It's both. The key is augmentation, utilizing technology to help humans work better, smarter, and faster. Instead of viewing these machines as competitive interlopers, we can see them as partners and collaborators in creative problem solving as we move into the next era. The choice is ours.

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Customer Reviews

A fine call to action in the face of uncertainty. (Financial Times)The world the authors describe may be unsettling, but it is a world that we would all recognize and will likely live to see. (Wall Street Journal)This badly needed and well-researched book makes a convincing and inspiring case that the challenges ahead could be a catalyst to help us achieve far more of our potential and, in the process, become much more human. It is a powerful call to action and provides a roadmap that we ignore at our peril. It's not enough to read this book; we need to act on it, now! (John Hagel, Chairman of the Deloitte Center for the Edge)The winners in the analytics revolution won't simply replace human decision-making, they will augment it. The essential guide to this management revolution is Davenport and Kirby's remarkable new book. (Erik Brynjolfsson, Professor at MIT and co-author of *The Second Machine Age*)Individual knowledge workers, corporate executives, and government leaders all need to read this book. Smart machines are going to change our work and our lives, and the sooner we begin to augment their capabilities, the more successful our economy will be. Davenport and Kirby are correct: people will augment these tools, rather than be automated by them. The sooner you learn about augmentation, the more successful you'll be in the labor markets of the future. (Manoj Saxena, Former General Manager, IBM Watson)

An invigorating, thought-provoking, and positive look at the rise of automation that explores how professionals across industries can find sustainable careers in the near futureNearly half of all working Americans risk losing their jobs because of technology. It's not only blue-collar jobs at stake. Millions of educated "knowledge" workers—journalists, lawyers, doctors, marketers—are threatened by accelerating advances in artificial intelligence.The industrial revolution shifted workers from farms to factories. In the first era of automation, machines relieved humans of manually exhausting work. Today Era Two of automation continues to wash across the entire services-based economy, replacing jobs in agriculture and manufacturing. Now Era Three, the rise of "cognitive computing," is dawning. Smart computers are demonstrating they are capable of making better decisions than humans. Brilliant technologies can now learn, predict, decide, and even comprehend much faster and more accurately than the human brain, and their progress is accelerating. Where will this leave financial advisors, scientists, teachers, and other professionals?In *Only Humans Need Apply*, Thomas H. Davenport and Julia Kirby reframe the conversation about automation, arguing that the future of increased productivity and business success isn't either human or machine. It's both. The key is

augmentation, utilizing technology to help humans work better, smarter, and faster. Instead of viewing these machines as competitive interlopers, we must see them as partners and collaborators in creative problem solving as we move into the next era. The choice is ours.

If you're a techie, you probably already know this. Otherwise, this is a valuable and interesting review of areas of the economy/job market most likely to be affected (most are already affected) by constantly improving technology, the elephant in the room in the usual discussions of detrimental globalization. For me, the first few chapters conveyed the message that there are specific things individuals can do to enhance their own ability to cope with technological change. The rest of the book looks deeper into details of various tech areas and the impact on affected fields, from legal to assembly line to scientific and medical. All at a personal level, responsibility for your own future, not addressing the societal impact or approaches to dealing with it. That last is not a criticism, it's simply not the point of this book.

I read this book cover to cover when it first appeared in mid-2016. I have made use the the ideas and summaries in this book on a number of occasions since that time. The Davenport / Kirby model for the 5 ways of Stepping (Step Up, Step Aside, Step In, Step Narrowly, Step Forward) is a very clever and practical way to give people a road map for the different ways of positioning themselves for working in environments where smart machines (cognitive systems) place an increasingly important role. Their respective chapters on each of these types of ways of "Stepping" with respect to Smart Machines are based on very solid evidence of what is happening from Tom's extensive field work and consulting with companies actively using this new type of smart, cognitive IT. Their emphasis on augmentation (human with Smart Machine) versus Automation (Human replaced by Smart Machine) is an important message and an important mindset in order to build both user acceptance and to get wide-spread support from a wide range of stakeholders within the company. Overall, I thought the book was a great contribution, and is an essential read and an essential reference for anyone seriously interested in how the new generation of Smart IT Systems (aka Cognitive Systems) are being used in the workplaces of the early adopters, and what this means for everyone else as this type of technology will continue to be more widely used.

Let me start by saying that this book is well worth reading. This is the third of three books that I decided to read to gain perspective on the Information, some say Digital, Age. The first book was "Information: a Very Short Introduction" which I used to gain an overview of information itself. The

second was "The Hacked World Order" which provided a useful overview of how nations, corporations, organized and aggressive political groups (think ISIS), and affiliations operating on the Internet (think Anonymous) compete, struggle, spy, undertake war, and the like on a national and global scale. With "Only Humans Need Apply" I hoped to gain insight into the effect of artificial intelligence in the Information Age on daily lives of humans. This book provides that insight. The authors' argue that artificial intelligence should not and will not replace humans, but artificial intelligence will augment natural human capacities (empathy, integrity, creativity) which will not easily be reduced to logical rules and computer codes. They recognize that, in some areas, and the list of areas grows, the artificial intelligence of machines exceeds the natural intelligence of humans. The authors quote Elon Musk, Stephen Hawking and Bill Gates in expressing deep concern over this development (pp. 225-6 in the hardback). The book focuses on how humans may respond to the expanding power and scope of artificial intelligence using human qualities that augment smart machines as smart machines augment the power of humans. The book identifies five ways in which people may adapt to smart machines. These adaptive approaches are labeled stepping up, stepping aside, stepping in, stepping narrowly and stepping forward. The authors identify what each approach means, the type of people that may be drawn to or enabled to perform that particular adaptive approach, and the business organizations which may benefit from each approach. If you, as a reader, sometimes flinch at the business book style, I think you'll find these authors to be sufficiently thoughtful and non-dogmatic enough to warrant a careful review of their analysis. I personally expect that many individuals who are knowledge workers will use more than one adaptive approach as artificial intelligence encroaches into their world. According to the book, if you are in the insurance underwriting business smart machines already have a large beach head in your business. Radiologists and certain types of medical doctors are also experiencing the intrusion of smart machines into their professional lives. Towards the end of the book, the authors touch on the possibility of war being waged by autonomous smart machines. They realize that there have been popular movies based on this premise. I would have been interested in a more expansive examination of this possible phenomenon. Perhaps they will explore this in their next book. My one criticism, and it is the reason I gave the book four, and not five, stars, lies in what I sense is their underlying assumption that the world largely consists of persons with the intellectual gifts of the average denizen of MIT. The world doesn't. Artificial intelligence will negate the employment potential for an increasing number of people. This is not good. But artificial intelligence is a genii that will not go back into the bottle. The authors do not suggest that it will. They are correct to look for ways to accommodate this genii. For this reason I strongly recommend it.

The book offers a great analysis of the rapidly emerging AI-augmented world and provides a well-grounded discussion of the issues. Most welcome is a comprehensive analysis of and suggestions for the ways forward--the essential part that some hopelessly alarmist and therefore significantly less useful books on the subject fail to provide.

Very well explained. AI is difficult for most senior management to understand. This makes it much easier.

What I like best about Only Humans Need Apply is its balance between getting the reader concerned about the rise of smart machines, and the advice it provides to knowledge workers about what they can do about it. Several other books on the subject suggest that there is little or nothing that can stop machines from taking over our jobs and perhaps even becoming our robot overlords. This book is both empowering and less alarming but still argues that there is a valid concern on the jobs issue (it doesn't spend much time on the robot overlord question, which is a relief). What I liked best about it though is that it goes on to suggest five different types of roles that humans can play in coexisting. I don't know if these are the only options or how many jobs they will save, but at the very least the suggestions and ideas are both constructive and relatively optimistic options. A must read for those who plan to move into or want to succeed in the many professions where smart machines are playing larger and larger roles.

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