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How Will Automation Affect Your Business?

[Julie Bawden Davis](#)

Unprecedented changes in automation are making many jobs unnecessary. Is your business in jeopardy of becoming irrelevant?

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If your small business is in the service industry, you might feel uneasy when you read headlines announcing how technology is rapidly replacing humans. Exponential technological advances are making many jobs once thought indispensable obsolete.

The list of industries affected by automation seems to increase daily. Computers continue to take over tasks like answering the phone and making calls, and now even [waiters could be replaced by apps](#). Then, of course, there are the [cars that drive themselves](#).

The trick is to automate the heck out of your business and allow yourself to focus on what you love, such as shaking customers' hands, planning your long-term vision, designing that next revolutionary product or service and spending more time with your staff.

As a small-business owner observing these changes in automation, you may be wondering how these sweeping alterations to the business landscape will affect you.

Automation is Inevitable

“Automation is not only a key factor in determining the outlook for businesses, but it's actually going to be one of the driving forces that will define the human experience over the next 200 years,” says Kirill Storch, CEO of [Electric Web](#), which does mobile app and website development and programming.

“Technology and automation are inseparable concepts, and the very idea of improving quality of life and living the life we want to lead has historically been fueled by automation—from the domestication of animals, to the invention of the wheel, to the printing press and industrialization

itself,” he says. “The question facing a small-business owner is not will my business one day become automated, but when and how will my business become automated?”

Storch predicts that with the exception of a tiny minority, every job in the country will undergo some degree of automation.

“Clearly some jobs are going to be automated faster and to a greater degree than others,” he says. “In the 1980s, people went to college to get degrees in typing and became typists, and businesses were formed to provide typing services. These have clearly gone the way of the dinosaur. And when is the last time you visited a travel agent? Those businesses have been wiped out in recent years by the automated processes of online travel planning companies. Even more recently, app-based car services are quickly replacing the venerable cab industry.”

Who Should Be Concerned About Automation

If you’re in a business where automation is a no-brainer and a contemporary computer can theoretically do your job better than you, beware, advises Storch.

“A quick rule of thumb is this: Computers excel at patterns, in linear, non-dynamic systems. Any job that is predicated on a finite, linear canon of knowledge is on the chopping block, and this means individuals in such jobs better start sowing seeds in a more creative skillset,” says Storch.

He advises taking a close look at your business and determining where automation is inevitable and how you can retrain your employees and refocus their efforts in a way that doesn’t make them susceptible to becoming obsolete through automation.

Embracing Automation

The idea of protecting your small business against automation can actually put you on the wrong side of history. It may be uncomfortable to readjust, but it’s necessary.

“As with most widespread social changes, the uptick in automation will induce a period of painful readjustment,” Storch says. “John Henry lost his job to a steam powered hammer, an entire subversive social movement [the Luddites] formed with a primary purpose to sabotage automated looms due to their threat to the garment industry, and automated telephone systems put secretaries out of work.”

Sweeping change may hurt in the short run, but in the long run, automation can be a positive force, taking over functions many people find inherently dull and creating a new reality in which people can truly enjoy what they do.

Automated systems in small business can make success predictable and allow you to focus on what’s important, adds business optimization strategist Darnyelle A. Jervey, CEO of [Incredible One Enterprises](#).

“By automating as many processes as possible, you can begin to track the results and assess how to better spend your time and grow your business,” Jerve says. “Automation takes administrative tasks off your plate so you can focus on what's important—working with clients and business development marketing to get new clients.”

If you see automation as a negative or a threatening force, your competitors could pass you up, Storch suggests.

“No computer is going to replace human creativity, or social interaction, or the process of making big chunks of money. The trick is to automate the heck out of your business and allow yourself to focus on what you love, such as shaking customers' hands, planning your long-term vision, designing that next revolutionary product or service and spending more time with your staff. Ultimately, no matter how much automation you integrate into your firm, it's the people behind those systems that matter most.”

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