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Artificial intelligence will destroy 'laptop class' workers

BY KRISTIN TATE, OPINION CONTRIBUTOR - 03/08/23 10:30 AM ET



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The coming artificial intelligence economic revolution will be a major shock to the world. There is a serious possibility that the next decade will bring about a series of social and economic changes akin to the Industrial Revolution and the advent of the internet

services cannot be replaced by technology. Unfortunately for waves of young people, the media's advice to "learn to code" may have been like investing in typewriters.

Artificial intelligence is advancing at a breakneck speed. Recent announcements of programs that can mimic human conversation, copy our voice, write research papers, and paint beautiful pictures are just a small sliver of the coming AI revolution. The coming changes in everyday life soon will become noticeable, including the popularity of AI-generated video games, music, art, and even movies. A short description and a click of the mouse can spit out a new novel by John Steinbeck or an economic treatise by Thomas Sowell.

Scores of jobs that require a college education will be changed nearly overnight. Rapid advances in this new technology will wreak havoc on the very people who prospered during COVID, especially those who work in the "knowledge economy" and can often carry out their duties from their laptops at home. Artificial intelligence advances within the next one to five years will outpace most work a human can input into a keyboard. Most content on the web will be written by chatbots. There will be AI influencers. Code will be written in a tiny fraction of the time it takes for humans to produce it. Graphic artists will lose most of their business to art generators. Even accountants and financial analysts may be outpaced by computers. ChatGPT already helps coders through basic code, which often needs refining. The chat service also can help replace many of the smarts needed to build a website. It already has passed an MBA exam and law exams.

Some white-collar jobs will fare better than others with the advancement of AI. Those who pioneer new techniques or are at the top of their fields will still be able to earn a respectable wage. At the same time, workers whose jobs rely on an element of personality and face-to-face relationships likely will weather the storm. Would you rather have an actual human advising you on legal matters, your finances, and your health care decisions — or a machine? Still, the shift toward a nearly labor-free creative world may make white-collar jobs across the board fewer and farther between.

The coming economic earthquake will be something of a reverse Industrial Revolution. Professions requiring practical knowledge will provide far more security than "knowledge economy jobs" that can be supplanted by algorithms. Replacing sheetrock can be done only by doing. AI cannot build a house, fix a plumbing issue, give you a haircut, or install lights in a public space. AI could make the lives of blue-collar workers easier with new tools and techniques, but the basics of construction, utility work and intricate machining will remain the same.

invested their time and careers into a certain profession will undergo a collective identity crisis. The increasing rate of social change and technological progress may mean serious shifts from year to year.

Ironically, the massive advances in the STEM field also may prove to be its undoing. There will be a need for engineers and academics for the foreseeable future. However, many of the job paths related to the science, technology, engineering and math programs may be seriously reduced due to AI. The majors would have been worth more than social science degrees, but that's damning with faint praise.

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The elite sneering at an honest day's labor may be the economic and educational error of the last century. Unfortunately, the last generation in education elevated white-collar ideals over blue-collar experience. It may have been a very bad choice to convince would-be electricians to be English or even math majors.

Many Americans will be shocked by the speed with which artificial intelligence changes their daily life. And just as the "new normal" sets in, there will be even larger changes. But as pink slips go out for online journalists, there will still be a need for a person able to fix a furnace.

Kristin Tate is a libertarian writer and an analyst for Young Americans for Liberty. She is an author whose latest book is ["How Do I Tax Thee? A Field Guide to the Great American Rip-Off."](#) Follow her on Twitter [@KristinBTate](#).

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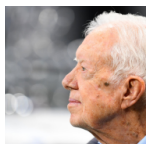
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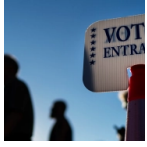
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