

# Creating a Human-Friendly World

## Building a future in which humans are still important

Kenneth Reilly • Jun 8



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Growing up in the 80’s, I was always fascinated with computers and electronics, learning how to put together simple programs and gadgets the same time I was learning about multiplication and long division. Home computers were just taking off, and the internet at the time was largely reserved for corporations, universities, and government offices.

The promise of the automated future was just over the horizon, as advanced robots were starting to replace humans in automotive, aerospace, and other sectors. The dream of a life of luxury in which machines did the work was very much alive and well.



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Fast-forward a few decades to 2019, and we are now living in the future as we once defined it, with robot pets, voice assistants, smart watches, self-driving cars, and the ability to learn almost anything or communicate with anyone in an instant. All of the qualifications are there, yet something isn’t right. Instead of having easier lives made better by technology, many of us have found ourselves enslaved by it, peering aimlessly into our phones while missing out on the world around us, obsessing about something or other, never finding the time to step back and realize the absurdity of this de-evolutionary behavior.

### Finding the root of the problem

Working in the software industry, I often find myself and others chained to technology at a deeper level still, where understanding and implementing it becomes the key to one’s own personal survival and well-being. However, actually working in this industry can be very challenging, as the global economy at large does not possess a strong understanding of computer science and information technology, leading to some interesting dynamics.



Magic solutions never worked and never will

The buzzword effect is a result of this, as corporations race to get a piece of the hot technology of the day, which changes every few years and sometimes has re-emerging patterns such as the recent revival of AI and Machine Learning. I was once part of a multi-corporation effort assigned to debug a tricky issue with an ML-based solution for a task. We struggled with this challenge for what felt like an eternity, only to later receive a critical piece of information that made the entire issue solvable with a single line of plain old JavaScript, which could have saved months of effort had the actual problem been analyzed thoroughly before the decision was made to jump on the ML bandwagon. Clearly, throwing a piece of advanced magic tech at something—and hoping it all works out—is never a good idea.

Deferring to technology for everything leaves no opportunity to exercise critical thinking skills, solid judgment, and other cognitive functions, and they become weaker over time as a result. On the positive side, advances in science and technology have made our lives better in many ways, such as increased lifespans and realtime communication with family and friends around the world, among other things. However, our reliance upon it has left many people lost in the digital world, at the mercy of whatever services and applications they use regularly, as they search in vain for real human connection and meaning in their lives.

### Authenticity cannot be automated

One of the more alarming examples of reliance on technology is within the modern workforce, where many tasks that are related directly to the subject of humanity itself are being automated, for example within Human Resources. The error here lies in the fact that in order to automate a process, it must be very well understood and clearly defined. There are things which are very easy to understand and implement programmatically, such as rejecting bad products on a conveyor belt, and then there are things which are difficult but still fairly straightforward, such as building a car that drives itself around while following traffic laws and avoiding collision with other physical real-world objects.

Then, there are purely subjective tasks which are not logical in nature whatsoever and therefore defy the process of automation, such as understanding the infinite variables surrounding human psychology, the current job economy, what is a job / human / company, and other very challenging feats of abstract thought that require understanding the actual experience of being human, which most people will admit is something fairly exclusive to the human domain and not easily defined or agreed on, even among humans themselves.



Does your bot get this excited about work?—Photo by [Austin Distel](#) on [Unsplash](#)

I am often saddened when I see information teaching young job-seekers and entrepreneurs how to write bot-friendly resumes and other critical self-defining documentation, because really at the end of the day, we don’t go to work to create a better world for bots, we do it to create a world for our families and friends and other people we share experiences with. Even robotic pets are designed to work with the actual world we live in, because it would be absurd to even think about doing it the other way around. So why then would we mold and shape the reality of our lives to fit some computer algorithm? That wouldn’t make any sense.

### Conclusion

If you’re just starting out in your career, you face a challenging landscape. Do you write bot-friendly resumes and find a nice spot to settle into, or do you blaze a trail and try to stand out above the crowd? It’s not an easy choice for the up-and-coming professional at any age.

Whether you’re a business owner, manager, employee, student, or otherwise, remember to take some time to reflect on what it means to be human in the mixed world of people and machines. Do something creative without having any expectations of the result, or take a trip somewhere you’ve always wanted to go. Learn new things and experiment. At the end of the day, we’re all still human, so find what makes you interesting and go run with it, because the alternative is being just another copy in an endless sea of data.

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