

AI will Take Your Job (and it's for the best)



Jeff Schatten & Teresa Aires

**AI Will Take Your Job, and It's
for the Best**

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AI Will Take Your Job, and It's for the Best: Embracing the New Social Contract for the Age of AI

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*In loving memory of my dad, Sam, who shaped the person I've become.
I miss you every day.*

To Nico, whose light, warmth, and love inspire me every day.

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About the Authors

Jeff Schatten is an Associate Professor of Business Administration at Washington and Lee University, specializing in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and organizational behavior. With a PhD in Managerial Sciences from Georgia State University, Jeff has conducted extensive research on the transformative impact of AI on business and society. His interdisciplinary approach, combining philosophy and business, offers unique insights into how AI is reshaping the future of work and organizational dynamics.

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Acknowledgment of Collaboration

This book is a collaborative effort, combining the voices and experiences of both authors into a single, unified narrative. We chose to write in the first person to maintain a consistent tone and style, ensuring a smooth and engaging reading experience. While the voice you read is singular, it reflects our combined insights and shared journey.

~Jeff and Teresa

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Introduction: The AI Revolution Unfolds

The flying machine which will really fly might be evolved by the combined and continuous efforts of mathematicians and mechanics in from one million to ten million years. – *New York Times*, October 9, 1903

December 17, 1903 – Date of the Wright brothers' first flight

The factory of the future will have only two employees: a man and a dog. The man will be there to feed the dog. The dog will be there to keep the man from touching the equipment. – Warren Bennis

In the sweltering summer of 2023, what began as a mundane task – renting a car for a four-day Italian vacation – unexpectedly evolved into a striking illustration of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) revolution's capacity to reshape our world. Tempted by an offer that appeared too good to be true – only five euros for the entire rental period – I cast caution to the wind, placing my faith in the reliability of European consumer protection laws.

Despite painstakingly documenting every pre-existing scratch and dent on the vehicle, I was blindsided two weeks after returning home by a 300-euro “damage” charge that appeared on my credit card statement. What followed was a Kafkaesque ordeal: countless phone calls and emails exchanged with the rental company, each met with empty assurances of a “comprehensive investigation” that never seemed to materialize.

As my frustration mounted and my options dwindled, I turned to an unconventional ally: ChatGPT, an advanced AI language model at the vanguard of modern technology. I tasked this digital assistant with three critical objectives:

- (1) Identify the network of Italian regulatory agencies responsible for corporate oversight and fraud prevention.
- (2) Locate the specific legal codes the rental company had likely violated in their attempt to levy an unjust charge.

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- (3) Craft a compelling email, in impeccable Italian, that not only threatened to report the company's questionable practices but also demanded an immediate refund and formal apology.

What might have taken a human expert hours – if not days – ChatGPT accomplished in mere seconds, delivering a masterful blend of linguistic precision and legal strategy. The result was nothing short of extraordinary: a sharply worded, authoritative email in impeccable Italian, seamlessly integrating the relevant legal statutes with a tone of unmistakable resolve – every bit as formidable as if it had been crafted by a veteran Italian lawyer. We are at the precipice of a world where language is no longer the exclusive domain of humans but a universal code shared with our machines.

The outcome was equally remarkable. Within an hour, the fraudulent charge was refunded, accompanied by a contrite apology. One can almost hear the bewildered exclamation of the rental company manager: “Che diavolo! Questo americano sa dell’Autorità Garante della Concorrenza e del Mercato!” (WTF! This American knows about the Italian Competition Authority!)

This seemingly trivial incident underscores a profound shift in the balance of power between corporations and individuals and between specialized knowledge and democratized information. With no expertise in Italian law nor language, I leveraged the power of AI to level the playing field, resolving in minutes what might have previously taken weeks and cost thousands in legal fees. The 300-euro refund, though modest in monetary terms, symbolizes a significant transfer of power in the modern era. At its core, AI operates as an indefatigable, 24-7 graduate level assistant, equipped with vast knowledge and ready to tackle any challenge – unfazed by the need for mental health days or the occasional Monday morning hangover.

The significance of AI's advancement extends far beyond this single anecdote, echoing the words of Kai-Fu Lee, a prominent AI visionary: “AI is going to change the world more than anything in the history of mankind. More than electricity.” In a world that prizes speed over contemplation, machines become our finest philosophers – silent, unsentimental, and terrifyingly precise. Just as electricity revolutionized social interactions and work patterns, AI is on the brink of transforming countless aspects of our lives. Its power lies not in what AI can do but in how little we truly understand what we are enabling.

In health care, for instance, AI algorithms are already outpacing human doctors in diagnosing certain types of cancer. The educational landscape, too, is being altered by AI-driven adaptive learning platforms that customize instruction to each student's unique needs and abilities, achieving a level of precision that even the most dedicated human teacher might find challenging to match.

Yet, this is merely one dimension of a far more intricate equation. While AI delivered exceptional legal assistance to me at no cost, there is, without doubt, a weathered lawyer somewhere in Milan who, after years of honing their craft, may now find their phone ringing less often. The culprit? A machine that performs

their tasks with greater efficiency, at a fraction of the cost, and without the need for rest or benefits.

This is the nuanced reality of the AI-driven world we now inhabit – a world where the boundaries between human and machine capabilities are not just blurring but being rapidly redrawn. As we stand on the precipice of this new era, we must grapple with questions about the nature of work, the distribution of wealth, and the makeup of our society. Existence is not simply living – it is the ongoing narrative of who we are becoming, and AI is writing the next chapter alongside us.

Meta: The Vanguard of AI-Driven Corporate Evolution

The power of AI extends far beyond individual experiences, reshaping corporate structures and strategies. Meta’s recent corporate maneuver is a striking example of this shift. In the fourth quarter of 2023, the tech giant formerly known as Facebook orchestrated a move so bold that even seasoned analysts were taken aback. Professor Scott Galloway, never one to miss a colorful analogy, dubbed it the “champagne and cocaine” of corporate performance. Meta managed to reduce its workforce by 25% while simultaneously boosting its revenue by an equally impressive 25%.^{1,2}

This achievement upends the long-held belief that revenue growth must be coupled with workforce expansion. To fully grasp the significance of this change, consider a more traditional scenario: If McDonald’s aimed to increase its revenue by a billion dollars, it would involve a monumental effort. New restaurants would spring up worldwide, construction crews would be deployed *en masse*, countless new employees would don the golden arches, and a sprawling logistical network would gear up to serve more Big Macs and, inevitably, more coronary bypass surgeries. In the old economic model, growth and workforce expansion were inextricably linked.

But we’re entering a new era. AI-driven capitalism allows companies to achieve exponential growth with a fraction of the human workforce once deemed necessary. We are witnessing the rise of AI capitalism – a system marked by extreme efficiency and maximized output, where a company’s success might inversely correlate with its number of human employees.

Meta’s feat is not an isolated incident. Across the digital landscape, similar patterns are emerging. Netflix, for example, employs sophisticated AI algorithms to curate content, optimize video streaming, and enhance user experience, driving subscriber growth and revenue without a proportional increase in human staff.^{3,4} In the travel sector, Airbnb’s strategic use of AI has powered its rapid ascent while keeping operations lean. The platform’s AI-driven systems not only craft personalized travel recommendations but also fine-tune pricing strategies, deftly balancing user satisfaction with host earnings.⁵

Even in the traditionally human-centric realm of finance, AI is making significant strides. JPMorgan Chase, a titan of Wall Street, has integrated AI into everything from customer service to fraud detection.^{3,6} In a move that might cause

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even the most experienced financial analyst to raise an eyebrow, the bank developed an AI system called “IndexGPT,” capable of creating and rebalancing investment portfolios in seconds – a task that typically demands teams of analysts and several days of effort.

Decoupling revenue growth from employment isn’t just a temporary quirk of the tech sector; it signals a broader transformation across the economy. As AI continues to evolve, industries across the board are leveraging its capabilities to do more with less, highlighting a profound shift in how we think about work, productivity, and success.

AI’s Enduring Legacy: From Ambitious Visions to Practical Revolutions

AI entices us with the prospect of a world transformed – a world where AI-driven innovations might one day cure major health crises like cancer or engineer solutions to reverse climate change. These grand visions capture our collective imagination and fuel relentless investment in AI research and development.

Yet, while these future possibilities captivate our attention, AI is already making a profound impact in more immediate, though perhaps less sensational, ways. Its most enduring legacy, at least in the near term, is not being crafted in futuristic laboratories or discussed in lofty think tanks but is unfolding within the day-to-day efficiencies coming from the operations of businesses worldwide.

Consider, for example:

- **Customer Support:** Klarna’s AI chatbot has effectively replaced 700 customer service agents, streamlining operations for the e-commerce giant.⁷
- **Content Creation:** Bloomberg utilizes AI to generate financial reports, reducing the need for routine human journalism and allowing for more focused investigative work.⁸
- **Retail and Warehousing:** Amazon’s AI-driven robots manage sorting, packing, and shipping tasks, significantly scaling operations without a corresponding increase in human labor.⁹

These examples illustrate the substantial productivity gains driven by AI across multiple sectors. However, as with any transformative technology, AI’s rise presents both opportunities and challenges. This newfound efficiency, while promising, also introduces complexities, particularly as it disrupts traditional concepts of work and economic distribution.

Dario Amodei, CEO of Anthropic – the company behind Claude, a leading large language model – offers a candid reflection on this issue: “I don’t know what I think will happen, but I do know that if we are not extremely thoughtful and deliberate about this, then yes, it will increase the gap”.¹⁰ His words underscore the critical importance of approaching AI’s development with a deep sense of responsibility, mindful of its potential to both empower and divide.

Balancing the advantages of AI with its inherent risks demands more than just technological advancement. It requires the implementation of thoughtful policies, adherence to ethical principles, and a commitment to a just distribution of AI's benefits. This careful navigation of a complex landscape is essential for realizing the full potential of AI while minimizing its potential downsides.

The Technological New World: Weaving Progress Through the Ages

To comprehend the transformative impact AI is having, it is instructive to first consider the historical shifts that have reshaped human society. Among these, the agricultural revolution stands as a particularly resonant parallel – an epochal change that redefined the trajectory of civilization.

In the preindustrial world, most of humanity – nearly 90% – was bound to the land. Life was dictated by the rhythms of the seasons, the fertility of the soil, and the whims of the weather. From dawn until dusk, our ancestors labored in the fields, their survival dependent on an intimate, yet precarious, relationship with nature.

Fast forward to the present day, where mechanized agriculture has drastically altered this ancient paradigm. Today, in developed nations, less than 2% of the population is engaged in agriculture, yet this small group produces enough to feed entire nations. Armed with GPS-guided machinery, genetically engineered crops, and AI-powered farming systems, modern agricultural professionals achieve yields that would have seemed miraculous to those who once tilled the soil by hand.

Now, imagine a farmer from the Middle Ages transported through time to confront a modern Big Bud 747 tractor – a colossal machine capable of cultivating vast fields in a single day. The time traveler might wonder, “If such a machine can do the work of 100 men, what is left for someone like me? Am I now as obsolete as a sundial in rainy London?”

This scenario encapsulates the challenges and anxieties we face in the age of AI. Just as the tractor revolutionized agriculture, AI stands poised to transform professions across the spectrum – from law and medicine to the creative industries, which were once thought immune to automation.

However, history offers a crucial lesson: technological revolutions, while often disruptive in the short term, have eventually led to net positive outcomes for humanity. The agricultural revolution did not result in mass unemployment for those who once worked the land. Instead, it laid the foundation for the rise of new industries and opportunities.

As the need for manual labor in agriculture diminished, there was a significant migration of both physical labor and intellectual capital. Former farmhands transitioned into new roles as service providers, engineers, artists, and innovators. The upheaval caused by mechanization was, in fact, the first step toward a future characterized by unprecedented prosperity and creativity.

Contemporary proponents of AI – our modern techno-optimists – see in AI a similar transformative potential. They envision a future where AI, despite causing short-term disruptions, ultimately leads to expanded employment opportunities and the creation of entirely new industries. Just as our ancestors could not have imagined careers like app developers or social media influencers – now the dream “job” of most teens – we too may be on the brink of vocations beyond our current imagination.

Yet, there is a key distinction that sets this AI-driven moment apart from its predecessors. While earlier revolutions primarily automated physical labor or basic cognitive tasks, AI ventures into the realm of advanced cognition – the essence of what we consider uniquely human. It doesn't merely augment our physical capabilities; it challenges the supremacy of our intellectual prowess.

Case Study: AI in Radiology: A Paradigm Shift in Health Care

The field of radiology serves as a compelling example of AI's transformative potential – not merely as an adjunct to human expertise but as a technology that could one day supersede it. A study led by researchers at Google Health, in collaboration with several esteemed medical institutions, revealed an AI system's remarkable ability to detect breast cancer in mammograms with a level of accuracy that challenges conventional expectations.

Trained on an expansive dataset comprising X-ray images of almost 29,000 women, this AI model not only equaled the diagnostic performance of seasoned radiologists but, in many cases, exceeded it.¹¹ The system demonstrated a 5.7% reduction in false positives and a 9.4% reduction in false negatives compared to human experts – a significant advancement in diagnostic precision.¹¹ Even more telling, when directly compared to six experienced radiologists, the AI consistently outperformed them on average.¹¹

Initially, the medical community welcomed this AI as an invaluable assistive tool, often described as a “second pair of eyes” that could enhance diagnostic accuracy and reduce human error. However, as the AI's capabilities advanced at an accelerating pace, its role within the clinical setting began to evolve rapidly. Within just a few years, several leading hospitals adopted AI-first diagnostic protocols, effectively positioning the AI system as the primary screener for mammograms. Human intuition once ruled these spaces, but now machines strip away guesswork, leaving only the brutal clarity of data. Medicine, once a practice defined by the art of healing, is fast becoming a practice of precision engineering. AI won't just assist doctors – it will erase their need for second-guessing, for better or worse.

The American Dream Reimagined: Thriving in the AI Era

The “American Dream” has long symbolized the aspiration for a better life, guiding countless individuals in their pursuit of success and stability. However, as AI reshapes our society, this ideal is evolving in significant ways. To grasp where

we are headed, it is essential to reflect on how this dream has transformed over the past century.

In the 1950s, the American Dream was relatively straightforward: a high school diploma and a solid work ethic could secure a stable middle-class lifestyle. This was the age of the “company man,” where loyalty to a single employer often led to a comfortable existence – a modest suburban home, two kids, a dog, and yes, that iconic white picket fence.

By the 1990s, the economic landscape had undergone a significant transformation. Manufacturing jobs that once served as the cornerstone of the middle class were increasingly outsourced or automated, leading to a decline in traditional blue-collar employment. In their place, the knowledge economy began to take center stage, demanding not only higher education but also a new array of specialized skills. College has eventually become the place where you enter with dreams of changing the world and graduate with hopes of just affording rent.

Today, the path to success is even more complex. Many view a Master’s degree as essential for maintaining a competitive edge, but even this may not be enough. The rise of microcredentials – short, targeted certifications – reflects a trend where employers prioritize specific skills. Over 70% of companies now prefer candidates with these qualifications, and 90% of students and recent graduates believe that microcredentials will enhance their career prospects.¹²

Navigating success in the AI era has become a challenging equation: Bachelor’s + Master’s + Microcredentials + Continuous Learning = Success (Maybe). Yet even this accumulation of credentials could be disrupted by the rapid advancement of AI.

At this crossroads, we face an intriguing paradox. AI technology, which poses a threat to traditional jobs, also holds the potential for substantial economic growth. By boosting productivity and reducing costs, AI could expand the global economy. However, the distribution of these benefits is increasingly skewed toward a few technology giants, raising concerns about inequality and economic balance.

Current economic indicators reflect this paradox. As of summer 2024, the United States and Australia boast near-record low unemployment rates of around 4%, while the Euro Area and China hover slightly higher at 6.4% and 5%, respectively. These figures paint a deceptively rosy picture of economies where most job seekers can secure positions with reasonable effort. But beneath this surface lies a more complex reality. These statistics, while comforting on the surface, obscure the underlying shifts in the labor market, particularly the looming threat of technology-induced job displacement. Such a scenario signals a pressing need for society to adapt to these changes.

In this book, we will explore how the American Dream can be reimagined in the context of the AI era. We will examine the forces driving these changes and consider how individuals, businesses, and governments can navigate the challenges and opportunities that AI presents. As we move forward, redefining success in a way that keeps the American Dream accessible to all will be crucial in this evolving landscape.

The AI Growth and Redistribution Impact Doctrine (AI-GRID): A Practical Path to Equitable Progress

As AI continues to permeate economic and social systems, its potential to influence industries, job markets, and daily life is undeniable. However, the outcomes of this influence are complex and multifaceted, requiring careful management to avoid deepening existing inequalities. The AI Growth and Redistribution Impact Doctrine (AI-GRID) is a unique framework introduced in this book, representing a major contribution to the discourse on AI's societal impacts. AI-GRID is designed to guide the equitable distribution of AI's benefits, ensuring that the advantages of this transformative technology are not concentrated among a privileged few but are instead shared broadly across society. By implementing AI-GRID, the book aims to pave the way for a more balanced and sustainable future, where AI contributes to societal well-being while mitigating potential risks.

This framework centers on two key objectives: first, to ensure that AI development keeps pace with global innovation, and second, to implement targeted redistribution measures that guarantee the benefits of AI reach all corners of society. At its core, AI-GRID is about ensuring that as AI enhances efficiency and productivity, it also contributes to a more inclusive and resilient economy. This involves updating tax systems to fairly capture the wealth generated by AI-driven industries and reinvesting it in critical areas such as education, health care, and infrastructure. By doing so, AI-GRID aims to support those displaced by automation while creating new opportunities for everyone. However, to harness AI's potential and mitigate its risks, a substantial and coordinated investment effort is required – akin to a modern Manhattan Project.

The AI-GRID is not about stifling innovation with heavy-handed policies. Rather, it seeks to balance the rapid pace of AI development with policies that ensure its benefits are broadly shared. AI-GRID thus offers a path to a future where AI's impact is positive and widespread, rather than concentrated among a few tech giants or elite groups.

Implementing AI-GRID will require not only visionary leadership but also a willingness to embrace new approaches to economic policy and social welfare. It's a call to rethink how society is structured in the AI age, ensuring that the technological advancements of today pave the way for a more sustainable future.

Throughout this book, we'll explore how AI-GRID can be applied in real-world contexts, looking at examples of where similar principles are already being used effectively. We'll also discuss practical steps that governments, businesses, and individuals can take to align with this doctrine and ensure they are part of a future where AI-driven prosperity is accessible to all.

Buckle up. The future is here, and it's stranger – and more intriguing – than we ever imagined.

Notes

1. Duffy, C. (2023). Meta's business groups cut in latest round of layoffs. *CNN*. <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/05/24/tech/meta-layoffs-business-groups/index.html>