

The Human Cost of Convenience: Reflections from a Digitally Shrinking World

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Views are personal and does not reflect the views of the organization I am employed.

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The Everyday Symphony of the Digital World

As we go about our daily grind — paying bills, ordering food or groceries, transferring money to loved ones — we are reminded of a cashless, contactless, and paperless world — driven by agility, accessible anytime, anywhere, on any device, through any provider, in any currency.

From automation to autonomous, from preventive to proactive to predictive — the journey of intelligence continues. From chauffeur-driven to driverless, the shift is not just technological, but philosophical. AI is everywhere; while people are dreaming, sleeping, talking, debating, securing, transforming, and transitioning. From mainframe to mini, from desktop to laptop, and now to mobile, the shrinking is unmistakable, yet the possibilities have never been larger.

And through it all, one truth endures:

Less is better, but only when it does not make us less human.

But here lies the other side of the story

- Less sleep.
- Less patience.
- Less smiles
- Less tolerance.
- Less physical activity.
- Less family time.
- Less *me* time.
- Less time for vacations.
- Less time to read.
- Less time to reflect.
- Less time to bond.
- Less time to enjoy.

The Hidden Hands Behind the Green Tick

Technology has made life effortless — but not always meaningful.

We are becoming faster, smarter, and more connected, yet sometimes, a little less human.

Identification, Authentication, and Authorization are on the rise.

Integration and Unification — that's the new game.

Each time we tap a card, scan a QR code, or click **"Pay Now,"** we're rewarded with a nice green tick and a cheerful message on our screens. We smile because in that instant, technology has worked for us.

But the smile turns into a frown, sometimes even anger, when that tick doesn't appear. We forget what lies beneath that single second of convenience; the innumerable hands working tirelessly behind the scenes to make it possible.

Yesterday, I visited my bank — an imposing skyscraper, gleaming in the sun. As I looked up, I saw men crawling along the façade like spiders, cleaning the glass to keep the building compliant with safety standards. Yes, they wore protective gear, but the risk to life and limb was still immense.

We expect buses, trains, and planes to run on time, and our deliveries to arrive in minutes. Yet we remain blissfully unaware of the many unseen workers who keep this precision alive,

- the traffic controllers orchestrating flow,
- the law enforcement teams ensuring safety,
- the mechanics and ground crews inspecting every bolt, every signal, every circuit so, our journeys remain smooth, predictable, and safe.

The Human Side of Compliance

Once, I was invited to a breakfast gathering. Among the guests was a **nurse** who had just completed her night shift in the maternity ward.

As she joined us, smiling, polite, and visibly tired, my thoughts drifted to the unseen weight she carried. Here she was, fulfilling her social obligations, staying relevant and compliant as a “**social being**.” Yet, in doing so, she was also carrying a different kind of risk — **the risk of fatigue**, one that would follow her into her next shift.

This fatigue is not just personal; it is systemic. It has a profound impact on her work; caring for expectant mothers, newborns, and anxious families who depend on her focus and calm presence. In our pursuit to appear present, connected, and compliant with social expectations, we often overlook the **risks of depletion** — emotional, mental, and physical, the very risks that compromise the care and safety we strive to deliver.

The Illusion of the All-Knowing Machine

For some time now, we humans — **the greatest creation of the Almighty** — have been in a relentless race to create systems that mimic the human brain.

Some call it Artificial Intelligence; others prefer Machine Learning or Neural Networks. And now, we have entered the era of Generative AI, known to many by a single name — ChatGPT.

The hype surrounding these technologies has pushed human ambition beyond imagination. We chase a simple, seductive premise: “**One size fits all.**” That AI is the medicine for all ills, social, economic, psychological, even moral.

Yet in this pursuit, one must pause and ask:

Are we expanding intelligence, or merely outsourcing it?

Are we enhancing humanity, or eroding its essence?

Technology may automate processes, but it cannot automate gratitude. Behind every seamless experience is someone who makes it possible, often unseen, often unacknowledged.

How Much is Enough? — Redefining ‘Business as Usual’

Progressing from our earlier reflections on AI as the all-knowing machine, the hidden hands behind progress, and the human side of compliance, another question has emerged ; one that became especially relevant in the years following the pandemic:

How much is enough to declare **“Business as Usual”**?

We have witnessed organizations resuming operations at 40 to 50 percent capacity yet confidently labeling this state as **“normal.”** This, in turn, has blurred the definition of what we traditionally understood as **Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery.**

The new reality appears to be tilting toward a different paradigm — that of **Minimum Viable Availability to sustain a Minimum Viable Business.** In essence, survival itself has become the new metric of success.

The question, then, is no longer about returning to normal, but about redefining **what ‘normal’ means in a world that is perpetually adaptive.**

Final Thoughts

Our journey through the industrial revolutions — from 1.0 to the current 5.0 — has been a pursuit of building systems designed to make life easier. Yet, in the bargain, life itself has become a system.

Speed is no longer about doing things right; it is about meeting deadlines.

Deepfakes are no longer confined to the digital realm they have become a mirror of ourselves, reflecting the personas we construct to stay relevant, with AI now the new idol of convenience.

In our pursuit of efficiency, we are cloning ourselves; working twenty-five hours in a twenty-four-hour day as if exhaustion were the new measure of success. Unshackling from the bondage of unrealistic expectations may be the first step toward recovery.

Perhaps the next revolution is not Artificial Intelligence, but Authentic Humanity.