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The KIT – Knowledge & Information Technology

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➔ **Digital Transformation News**

Barbara Humpton, CEO of Siemens USA, discussed her company digital strategy in this 45-minute [YouTube interview](#) by CXOTalk.

In the Oil & Gas industry, based in Houston or coming to the Offshore Technology Conference on May 6-9? Then don't miss the first edition of the SPE's [Digital Transformation Annual Congress \(DTAC\)](#), a full-day event filled with keynotes and panels by industry leaders.

After the Chief Data Officer, we now have the Chief Transformation Officer trend, according to the Global Center for Digital Business Transformation. Which raises a good question: if the CEO, the CTO (with T = technology), or the Board of Directors are not focused on continuously transforming the business, then is this lack of strategy going to be solved by naming a new CxO? This echoes the criticism of the Chief Data Officer position we have voiced more than once in this newsletter (if the Chief *Information* Officer was not empowered to manage the data, is this going to be remedied by assigning a new person to the job?).

➔ **Exhibits A and B in the Automation Debate**

This past week saw two problems, one tragic and the other just inconvenient, that fuel the debate about automation vs. human control.

In the case of the Ethiopian Airlines accident, it appears that the changed location of the jet engines required a new automated system to control the plane's pitch, but that pilots may not have been sufficiently trained to react (or not react) properly to it. In the case of the [Facebook day-long outage](#) of its messaging functions, it appears that the cause was one bad server configuration change made by a system administrator.

Are these both examples of why humans should be taken out of the loop? Not so fast, say some analysts. First, in the Boeing case, the investigation is in progress, so we don't know the root cause for certain. Secondly, someone still needs to program the software that will be used to fly the plane or to manage configurations. If there is an error in *that* software, and there is no human ready to take over, will the results be worse (and widespread, since the faulty software will have been widely replicated)? This is of course the debate that's been raging about autonomous vehicles. If humans can occasionally avoid accidents but more frequently cause them, then we should embrace fully autonomous systems, but we seem to have a strong reluctance to this. Is it a cultural issue, a generational issue, a maturity issue, or what? Send us your opinions!

➔ **WAN, LAN, PAN... and now BAN**

The "body area network" is a set of technologies used to transmit signals within the human body, which could be useful to secure medical devices against external interference. Another name for this is Internet of Body (IoB). This is all explained in an [article](#) and paper from Purdue University.



IT & Knowledge Management

www.cebe-itkm.com

info@cebe-itkm.com

+1 415 870 ITKM

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→ IT, Ethics and the Public Good

Two events this past week seem to be coincidentally related. One, well publicized, is a [talk by Tim Berners-Lee](#) (it's "Sir Tim" to mere mortals...) bemoaning the fact that the Web, which he invented almost 30 years ago, has strayed from its intent -- including disinformation, government surveillance, hacking, and more. Berners-Lee calls for a new social contract in which governments, companies, and the public ensure that the Web is made accessible to all and is used for the public good.

The related news is the creation of the [Public Interest Technology University Network](#), an alliance of top universities that promise to teach students about the impacts of technology on society. Whether this will go farther than previous efforts on so-called "ethical computing" remains to be seen.

And of course, the debate on the good vs. bad impacts of new technologies is nothing new. The best known non-IT example is probably [atomic energy](#), almost 75 years ago.

→ Seen Recently...

"By far my favorite thing about being on the internet is being able to send my mother pictures of strangers' dogs & receiving, in return, a rich variety of emojis."

-- [R. O. Kwon](#) on Twitter, demonstrating that "look what I had for breakfast" is so passé...