

Dependency vs. productivity

Does tech work for us or do we work for tech?

We live in a world that's more connected than ever — a world where everything is social, smart and digital. In concept, all this connectivity sounds great. But it somehow seems that all this very well-intentioned technology tends to complicate the tasks they were meant to simplify.



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The future is here. And to be honest, it's amazing that we're able to get anything done at all. If all the accounts, logins and passwords to remember aren't enough to slow us down, there's the software updates, malware, startups, helpdesks, training and licenses to deal with that certainly will. What a mess!

I'm often left asking, "does the technology work for us or do we work for the technology?"

For decades, more technology often meant more productivity. But now I wonder if we're confusing dependency with productivity. It's not a good thing. Our tech tools are beginning to fail us.

As a high-technology manufacturer of productivity products, I spend a lot of time talking with my team about this very topic. Together, we've identified a few key trends to guide where we'd like to see technology products go, including our own.

Simplify your life. Your smartwatch might remind you to breathe and stand, but it also nags you that it needs charged. Is it relieving your life's problems or creating new ones? There's no point in letting technology manage your life if your life must now be dedicated to managing the technology. In fact, this was the genesis behind Boogie Board, our brand of electronic writing tablet. That's because we had to focus a great deal of our competitive energy on the

most back-to-basics technology of all: paper.

Work without distractions. We understand that those little red notification bubbles are addicting, but they're also distracting. Technology that enables you to escape the fatiguing chaos will prevail.

Always on and ready to use. It seems that instruction manuals are a thing of the past for most products these days, and that's a good thing because it means products have gotten easier to use. But the learning curve that once held us back has been replaced with setups, updates and boot-ups. We see a future where the technology is always waiting for you with no disruption between when you're needing it and when it's ready for you.

Social without a login. Despite all the connectivity, face-to-face communication is not dead. The desire for tech tools that enable us to work together collaboratively, but not necessarily remotely, is greater than ever.

In an era where new tech products are constantly fighting for our attention to justify their purpose with LEDs, notifications, alerts and so on, this back-to-basics vision for the future will undoubtedly be among technology's greatest challenges yet. ●