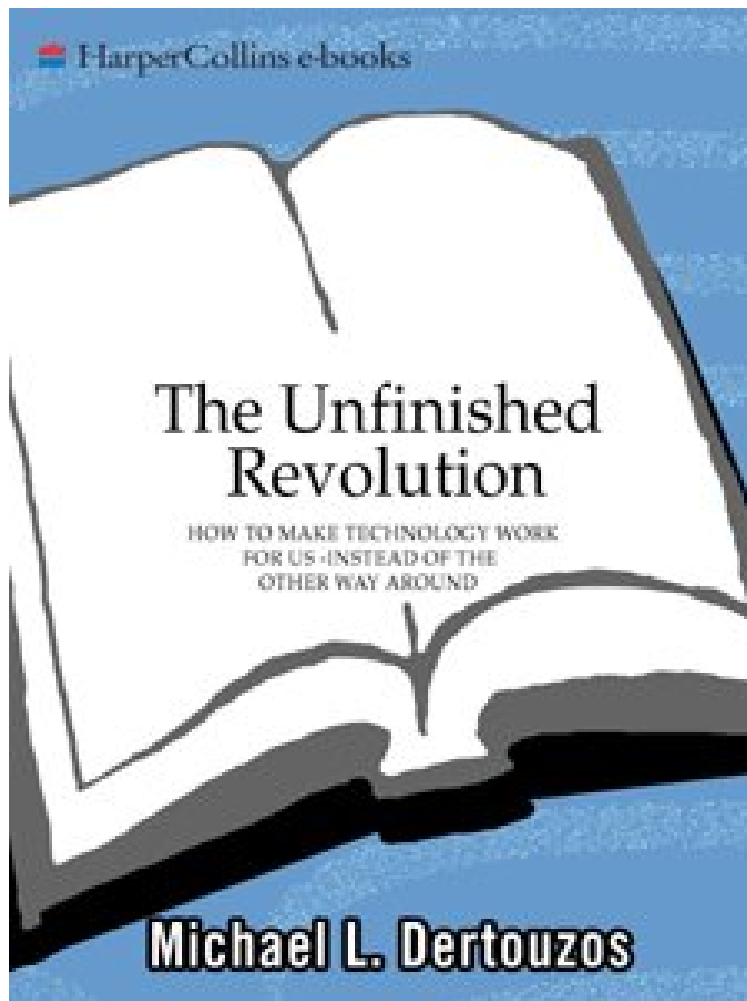


(Read free) The Unfinished Revolution: How to Make Technology Work for Us--Instead of the Other Way Around

The Unfinished Revolution: How to Make Technology Work for Us--Instead of the Other Way Around

Michael L. Dertouzos

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must read for anyone that's interested or is exploring how tech will make our life better, from the perspective of utility and not technology. 8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Great Thoughts, Limited Reality, More to Do....By Robert David STEELE Vivas In some ways this is the gold-collared knowledge worker counterpart book to Ted Halstead and Michael Lind's *The Radical Center: The Future of American Politics* (citizen-centered). Those who liked *The Cultural Creatives* or *IMAGINE: What America Could be in the 21st Century*, can adopt this book as their user's guide for demanding change in information technology. I recommend it because it is full of common sense, is the first really helpful "requirements document" for a clean sheet new approach to software and hardware and ergonomics (\$3000 word for user friendly). The bad news is that nobody is listening. We are ten years away from this being a reality because the legacy providers (big hardware, one certain software company) are not about to retool their empires for the sake of delivering better value. It is more than a little amusing to me to have this book endorsed by the CEO of the one company that prides itself on producing software with mutated migrated Application Program Interfaces that are used to extort tribute from third party software developers, where no sane consumer will invest in his products until they've had three years to "mature" in the marketplace. The opening listings of the "standard faults" in today's "consumer electronics" is alone worth the price of the book--unintegrated systems fault; manual labor fault; human servitude fault; crash fault; excessive learning fault; feature overload fault; fake intelligence fault; waiting fault; ratchet fault... The book ends on a low note and high note. The low note is a description of Oxygen, a \$50M project seeded by DARPA and including several major company partners such as HP and Nokia. This project has some excellent ideas, including a new focus on an architecture for nomadic computing with three aspects: a Handy 21 (hand-held), Enviro 21 (intermediate personal computers at home, office, and in car), and N21 Network (Intentional Naming System, every computer and peripheral everywhere is in the public domain and broadcasting its location and status, use on the fly). Good stuff. What he doesn't mention is that the U.S. Government is spending over half a billion dollars on completely uncoordinated desktop analysis toolkits, and there is probably 2-3X that much being spent in the private sector. He does note that we will never get our act together if we continue to develop hardware and software in a very fragmented and hardware-based manner. On the high note, the author has clearly thought about the consequences of having an information revolution here in the USA, creating information royalty, while leaving the rest of the world dispossessed, in poverty, and unconnected. He has a very practical appreciation for the fact that the USA must fund two distinct foreign assistance programs--a Digital Marshall Plan (my phrase) to jack in the entire world; and a commensurate literacy, birth control, disease control, and famine control program to stabilize populations to the point where they can be productive within the global grid. I read this book on the airplane coming back from the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas (Federal Emerging Technologies Conference sub-set), and I was really struck by the contradiction between the vast fragmentation spread out over Las Vegas (the man who has everything also has to carry it) and the elegant simplicity of this book's vision--one hand-held able to be any of 100+ devices. "It's the software, simpleton...." What saddens me, especially when considering the billions of dollars being given away by our richest software developer, someone who seems to favor gestures on the margin instead of quality control and open source at the core, is that we knew all this in the mid-1980's. The eighteen distinct functionalities needed for a desktop analysts' workstation were identified by CIA in 1986--everything from data ingestion and conversion softwares to modeling and simulation and pattern detection and of course desktop publishing. The year after the CIA prototypes were working so successfully on UNIX (Sun), CIA decided that the PS2 would be the standard "dumb" terminal, and all UNIX efforts were ordered to shut-down. The big organizations, the ones with the power to make the revolution, chose control and dumb terminals over freedom and smart software. I am very skeptical that the vision in this book will come to fruition...

In a world spiralling into a state of technological excess, Michael Dertouzos shows us how to make technology work for, rather than against, us in our everyday business lives. Now includes a new foreword by Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the World Wide Web. At its core, Dertouzos' manifesto is this: Simplify the use of technology to the point where it works FOR us rather than having it dictate the way we live and work. This book is about getting to the point where computer fads give way to a true Information Revolution. To get there, we must abandon our current preoccupation with machine complexities and set a goal that is as simple as it is powerful: Information technology should help people do more by doing less. Dertouzos offers a look at the future and place of technology in everyday life: Where would a world of truly easy to use technology lead the human race? How might people change their way of life and work, their politics, their self perception and their quest for the meaning of life in such an environment?

.com Do you sometimes feel you're serving the computers and other techno-gadgets in your life, rather than them serving you? If so, you have prestigious company in Michael L. Dertouzos, who has headed up the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Laboratory for Computer Science for more than 25 years. In *The Unfinished Revolution*, Dertouzos unmask the deficiencies of our present systems and makes a compelling case for "human-centric computing," which has the potential to dramatically reduce our techno-aggravation, while improving our productivity

and effectiveness. Written for people who use computers, and for the technologists who design and build them, Dertouzos's latest work clearly lays out a vision of human-centric computing. But it doesn't stop there. As in his previous works, Dertouzos connects his strong vision of the near future with practical ways computer users and designers can help create that future. At the book's core, Dertouzos identifies five human-centric forces--speech understanding, automation, individualized information access, collaboration, and customization--and then provides specific examples of how each can be used to improve how we work with information technology. He goes on to offer vignettes that show how human-centric computing, when implemented, may improve health care, commerce, disaster control, medicine in developing countries, financial services, and even play. Michael Dertouzos has already helped shape the information age, most recently in the 1997 bestseller *What Will Be: How the New World of Information Will Change Our Lives*. With his latest book, he is destined to prove prescient once again. --Fred Zehradnik

From Publishers Weekly

With wry humor and searing wit, the man *Time* magazine calls "MIT's #1 computer guru" disparages the high-tech devices (PCs, laptops, Web-friendly cell phones, hand-held digital organizers) what the author dismissively calls "weird animals") we've come to rely on so heavily but that often take forever to boot up, then crash and frustrate us to no end. (In a few years, he warns, there will be 10 times as many of these "creatures biting at" us.) Enough is enough, says Dertouzos (*What Will Be*). Instead, he envisions a time when we alternate ample leisure with intellectually stimulating work, seamlessly integrated by technology that spares us the inconveniences of modern life. The key, says Dertouzos, is "human-centric computing," technological devices that "talk with us, do things for us, get the information we want, help us work with other people, and adapt to our individual needs... [that] truly serve us, instead of the other way around." These are not generic recommendations; the book discusses both the existing technology and what is needed to bring it up to human-centric standards. It then offers a five-pronged approach that takes into account "both the human and computer sides of the relationship." A weakness in Dertouzo's argument, however, is the lack of discussion of competing design views or past failures in implementing these ideas. Human speech interaction, in particular, has been controversial since the 1960s and has occasioned many expensive flops; there is also a school of thought that early adopters have consistently preferred cutting-edge features to user-friendly ones. Still, the book is a readable and sensible application of design principles to computer technology, written at a level accessible to nonprofessionals.

Agent, Ike Williams. (Jan. 31) Forecast: A well-known futurist and technology expert, Dertouzos will command significant attention on his 15-city tour to East and West Coast technology hot spots. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Booklist

Dertouzos is the longtime head of MIT's Laboratory for Computer Science. Twenty years ago, he anticipated the Internet with his outline of an "information marketplace" that describes today's Internet. In *What Will Be: How the World of Information Will Change Our Lives* (1997), he presented futuristic applications of developments in the interface between humans and machines. The "revolution" in Dertouzos' current title is the information revolution, and heretofore it has been driven by hardware. Dertouzos complains that today's software caters to the machine, and he calls for a "human-centric" approach to computing. He details advances that will enable computers to understand and respond to speech, automate human tasks, individualize access to information (with enhancements that suggest a computer-guided "reference" interview), facilitate interpersonal transactions, and be readily customized. The realization of Dertouzos' vision is well under way with the project Oxygen at his Laboratory for Computer Science, which has been funded by the U.S. Department of Defense as well as Bill and Melinda Gates. David Rouse

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