

## The End of Snow Days



The world has changed. It's not going back. Snow days are over. Gone. Future blizzards will just be dealt with as an announcement: "These counties have cancelled in-person school for tomorrow; all students must attend online classes on Tuesday...." And at that point, parents would have had to work from home anyway, but now, no more days off. How do we plan for that? Sell the stock of the companies that make snow toys? And that's just the beginning of the list. We're entering a medical Renaissance, and everything is changing.

I spent some time at an online technology conference recently. Besides new products, there were discussions of “the new normal.” Like tech conferences moving online, for example.

Logitech’s presentation at the event said that back in March, they had two weeks of web cam inventory on-hand, beyond their sales predictions; it was gone in a few hours. Now, they’re 175,000 orders behind, and expect to catch up on webcams, and probably their washable keyboards, by late August.

And another, from SonicWall: “What Covid has done is move us 2, 10, pick a number of years ahead in the digital transformation.” That transformation is away from physical servers and virtual servers in offices, to more cloud servers, available from anywhere, with maintenance and hardware replacements automatic and silent. The changes for small business are that server costs go from a big replacement bill and offline time every year or so, to a fixed monthly cost with nothing to amortize or depreciate or replace, and nearly no downtime.

Another comment: “We expected work from home to build dramatically over the next three years. We had the products designed for employee monitoring and coordination, and in production. We didn’t expect it to happen over ten days.”

Going forward, home computers will be more powerful, because they’ll be used all day, whenever the next ‘wave’ hits. Or whenever the next superstorm or polar vortex rolls through. We’ve also dealing with climate change and the weather turbulence that triggers. That means better home internet connections, better WiFi, more homes wired with network connections in more rooms. Less commuting and less travel will help the climate, but Uber and companies like it will only survive as local delivery systems, unless they can switch to self-driving robots faster than they had planned.

### **Other predictions:**

- Get used to having employee-monitoring software on your work computer.
- Expect to always be on-camera, in public, with facial recognition and temperature sensors.
- The ability to use technology will be more important than knowing multiplication.
- Some futurists are saying “It’s the end of cities, work from anywhere, hire everywhere.”

### **Opportunities**

Air conditioning systems will be re-engineered for N95 filtering. That’s not just adding a filter, it changes the number of air intakes and isolates offices from each other. Someone has to install all these things. Better technology, air systems, WiFi, even kitchens designed to be used more often, all of that needs installers and designers and salespeople.

Employment: If you work from home, you compete for jobs with the entire world. I’m used to that from my days in the software industry. I know a software developer in Geneva, Switzerland who had a tech support worker in Florida. I

took orders here in Maryland for a software product published and shipped from California, and published another product out of Tennessee. It's been routine in tech industries for decades now.

Business real estate will change. Bigger offices, but fewer of them, and the redesign work and movers needed for that. Everything needs more network connectivity, wired in the walls with more networking and better WiFi and cellular.

Robots: Think robotic fast food; robo-fry cooks already exist. Robotic long-haul trucking is nearly here. Anything that can be made into a single-location "read the screen and reply" system, can be automated soon. And humans will have to repair all that.

## From Turmoil, Renaissance

Some historians believe that the Bubonic Plague, also known as the Black Death, was a major factor in starting the Renaissance. The Black Death arrived in Europe in 1348 as part of improved trade routes and rats exiting ships while in port, along with their fleas and bacteria. It struck in waves again in later years, and lasted, more sporadically, into the 18th Century. The results included the end of feudalism, increased belief in medicine and science, and a reduction in what may best be labeled as 'mystical thinking.' We're moving through modern parallels of all that.

Some of us remember the space race of the 1960s, with that famous goal, "to put a man on the moon, and return him safely to the Earth." OK, it was a race with the Communists to control space. The results, however, were spectacular. The integrated circuit was created because NASA needed lightweight computers on rockets. Those circuits and space flights made Global Positioning Satellites possible. Modern cell phones are possible because of those GPS satellites and early computers. The GPS allows phones to know where they are and very precisely what time it is, so that they can talk to the nearest cell tower. Basically every electronic gadget we rely on exists because of NASA and the space race.

## What's Next?

Covid-19 changes everything. The brainpower and cloud computing involved in the medical work being done for and around this virus is massive, millions of times more than even the Space Race. All that will result in hundreds of breakthroughs, vaccines, treatments, and prevention methods over the short term. In the long term, it will make the Renaissance and the computer revolution look like tiny bubbles of innovation. I expect the cure for the common cold. Next, medical breakthroughs only slightly connected to Covid, and then, longer-term, bigger and more spectacular results for decades.

Now we just have to wait for it. Safely. Wear your masks. See you next year.

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## Open for Business, Remote or Zero-Touch

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