

Keeping new technology in its place

By Jeff Davidson, MBA, CMC

The variety of new technologies becoming widely available to consumers brings obvious benefits.

As the chips and sensors within them become microscopic and increasingly versatile, everything - our homes, cars and offices, and industries and professions everywhere - will be profoundly impacted.

These smart devices will help us improve our health, manage our time, navigate and maintain our vehicles, pay our bills, monitor our health, and stay in touch with personal and professional contacts.

As usual, all the buzz about such smart devices will lack commentary on their downside.

Never to be overlooked, as the world becomes more connected, the potential for hackers and deviants to wreak mass havoc rises markedly.

Not merely the garden-variety viruses that infect your computer, massive systems - such as air traffic control, hospital power generation, pension program administration, and even nuclear power plants - all represent potential targets.

Smart systems powered by smart devices increase the opportunity for greater government control.

The more technologically employed individuals, the greater the chances that they unknowingly are transmitting information to a variety of agencies, both public and private, who can use that data for their own ends.

The loss of individual privacy is perhaps the worst affliction accompanying new technology. Everything that John Q. Public does online and via smart devices leaves a digital trace.

Even contained, offline smart devices could potentially contribute to the individual loss of privacy by revealing your level of health, calories consumed, movies seen, and the nature and quality of your personal relationships.

As smart devices become ever more powerful, it will become more difficult for individuals to understand precisely what occurs with their personal data.

With many popular online sites, to achieve a modicum of privacy, one must be knowledgeable in how to modify the default settings.

In most cases - and Facebook is a typical example - the default settings do not protect privacy in the least.

Smart devices ultimately will help each of us to improve the quality of our lives.

However, much pain and gnashing of teeth will ensue until we're able to knowingly and skillfully incorporate such devices with complete understanding as to the ramifications of the choices we make regarding their use.

Jeff Davidson is the "Work-life Balance Expert®" and time management authority who has "Simpler Living" and "Breathing Space."

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