

TECHNOSTRESS
The Human Cost of the Computer Revolution
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This book states that the computer can insidiously affect people in various ways. The computerization of our society can change people's attitudes and norms via the socialization process, since the computer is held in high esteem. What we follow, we shall become. This book is timely since computers are being used ubiquitously in business and industry. But very few managers are aware of the effects computers can have upon workers. It's important that we are aware of the impact of our machines so that we control the machines rather than the machines socializing us.

Technostress is a modern disease of adaptation caused by an inability to cope with the new computer technologies in a healthy manner. This disease may manifest itself in the struggle to accept computer technology, and by overidentification with computer technology. Those who struggle to accept computer technology often feel pressured to accept and use computers. This pressure may cause headaches, nightmares, or resistance to learning about the computer. While people who intensely and constantly spend long hours with the computer begin to unwittingly internalize the characteristics of the computer and are transformed into a machine like state.

Symptoms of this state include a high degree of factual thinking, poor access to feelings, an insistence on efficiency and speed, and a lack of empathy for others. These people are known as technocentered; their desire to conquer the system becomes greater than the desire for human relationships and human pleasures.

Human nature is not fixed, but to a large extent shaped by technology. People must be able to assimilate the machine properly and thus free themselves to move beyond it. Victims may once have been sociable, relaxed, and caring; upon leaving their computer job they can return to this state. Achievement oriented workers believe that emulating the computer will make them more productive, while in fact their creativity and productivity can be reduced by mirroring the computer. Man's mind is shaped by the tools he uses; for example the spear shaped early man's mind by requiring improvement in eye hand coordination. Those who assimilate the computer's qualities will find that logical reasoning can improve, but there remain seven other learning venues that must not be ignored. Cognitive psychologists are suggesting that today's teacher imitate the computer and adopt an information processing approach to teaching. They say that teachers will be more efficient if they adopt this machine like approach. The norms of our society are beginning to shift; in several years warmth and sensitivity may be viewed as an aberration, while uniformity and efficiency may be

considered as the standard. We must move beyond the computer model and reveal it for what it is: another myth that limits our ability to explore the genuine richness of learning to be human. We need to reject the seductive notion that the values of the machine are values worthy of emulation.

Analysis

The author has done an excellent job of diagnosing technostress, however he does not provide a solution to the problem. He states that workers begin to mirror the computer's traits; this is an astute insight. Many of my fellow workers have displayed lack of patience, arrogance, and an inability to relate to people. They have unwittingly assimilated the traits of the computer. Through introspection, I have observed my mind assimilating several of these traits. Educators understand this principle and have emphasized the importance of quality role models for students, since people will become what they follow.

What's more, the author recognizes that the computer affects us socially. It affects our families, it affects our educational processes, and it affects communication. Electronic communication is not as rich or full as personal communication and it tends to be more blunt or obscene. The computer is changing our social structure and the manner in which business operates. I concur with the author on these points. Many of the people I work with prefer to communicate electronically. This eliminates social interaction and communication also tends to be blunt. Studies on the consequences of the Longwall Method of coal-getting also indicate that technology affects social structures. This study parallels the author's beliefs that certain technology can have a negative impact upon society.

The author does not specifically indicate how to overcome technostress. He states that we must hope that the mechanization of the mind does not continue. As a software engineer, I must do more than hope that the computer doesn't negatively affect me, for if it does the quality of my work life shall be impaired. There are various techniques that can be used to lessen the computer's mental imprinting. These include working in teams rather than solitary engineering, using abstract design methods and being involved in activities that are not computer related. Many of our great mathematicians also excelled in music; the right side of their brain needed to be exercised. It seems as though they realized this need intuitively and gravitated toward music.

The author states that this book is an opportunity for people to measure their experiences against the discovery of technostress and to provide solutions to this type of stress. The author does not clearly provide solutions to technostress, but he does enlighten our minds and allow readers to be cognizant of technostress. The year 1984 has passed and people have

stated that George Orwell's book *1984* did not correctly predict the future, yet after reading *TECHNOSTRESS* one could argue that Orwell's predictions were accurate. We are being socialized by an unfeeling entity that is suppressing our feelings and our emotions and shaping our minds: the computer. This book serves as a harbinger, it's a warning of what society may become.