

Here Is a Strategy For Making Yourself Irreplaceable Before Artificial Intelligence Learns to do Your Job

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[Artificial Intelligence](#)

The best way to avoid losing your job to a robot is learn how to do your job working with one.



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The robots are coming! They're not coming to destroy us, they will [take some jobs](#) -- and if it's your job, that's nearly as frightening.

We're no strangers to seeing jobs replaced by automation. Despite various claims that we're losing trade jobs to China and Mexico, the majority of lost manufacturing jobs in the United States -- which [a Ball State study estimates to be 87 percent](#) -- are due to increased productivity and efficiency (i.e., better machines and automation).

But, the losses aren't going to stop there. One PwC study found that by the early 2030s, approximately [38 percent of all United States jobs](#) could be replaced by artificial intelligence (AI) and automation. That's higher than the U.K. (30 percent), Germany (35 percent) or Japan (21 percent), and for many Americans, much too high for comfort. Other futurists are even more optimistic (or pessimistic, depending on how you consider it); venture capitalist Kai-Fu Lee believes [50 percent of jobs will be replaced](#) within the next decade.

Regardless of where you find yourself on the spectrum of prognostication, it's certain that AI and robotics are going to replace many jobs within the next couple of decades, including white-collar jobs previously thought impossible to automate. So, in this world of advanced AI, what can you do to make yourself irreplaceable?

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Know your industry.

First, you need to understand your industry and how AI could affect it. Some will be more heavily impacted than others and each will be affected in a different way. [The Future of Work community](#) outlines five industries that are going to be most heavily impacted by automation:

- 1. Medicine/healthcare.** AI in healthcare is already being used to crunch big data and provide better diagnoses for patients -- it's also being used for more precise surgeries (such as with the [Smart Tissue Autonomous Robot -- STAR](#)).
- 2. Manufacturing.** Manufacturing jobs have been on steady decline for the past several decades as we've gradually advanced the [technology](#) we use to manufacture. AI will accelerate that trend even further.
- 3. Transportation.** Self-driving cars are the big advancement here. Frontrunners like [Tesla](#) and Waymo are already testing early rider programs, and Waymo cars have [driven more than three million miles](#) by themselves.
- 4. Customer service.** Customer service roles are starting to be replaced as customer service tech improves natural language recognition and conversational capacity.
- 5. Finance.** Robo-advisors, like those from Wealthfront and Betterment, are starting to step in and replace traditional human advisors. Considering the lack of trust the public has in the [finance](#) sector, there's going to be little opposition to this trend.

If you find yourself in one of these industries, and feel your role is replaceable, you could be proactive and start preparing for a change to a different, less vulnerable industry. For now, creative roles and ones that require personal interactions (such as design, writing, event planning and PR managers) are on the safer end of the spectrum.

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Focus on ideas and management.

If a process can be documented and modeled, it can be automated. That used to apply to highly repetitive tasks only, but today's advanced AI can tackle unbelievably sophisticated tasks -- as long as they're bound by a set of rules.

For example, [Google's DeepMind can beat the best human Go players](#) because there's a clear victory condition and clear rules dictating the game -- even though the game itself is astronomically complex. In fact, their new version, AlphaGo Zero, not only taught itself to play, but was able to [beat the old AlphaGo 100:0](#).

Where AI fails is in generating novel ideas, thinking in abstract concepts and providing overall direction. If you spend your career following the rules and doing repetitive tasks, you're going to be replaceable. Instead, focus on bringing forward new ideas, setting direction and collaborating with others on big-picture work; machines won't be able to touch you for many years.

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Build relationships.

[Even if they can mimic it](#), machines don't have empathy. They don't have personalities, and they can't build relationships. If your bosses can replace you with a machine, they still may not want to if it means sacrificing you, the person, in that role. If your role depends on your ability to connect with other people (such as in sales or HR), you may not be replaceable at all. Accordingly, you should spend significant time improving your relationship-building and relationship management skills, which machines don't currently have the capacity to master.

Related: [Artificial Intelligence Is Likely to Make a Career in Finance, Medicine or Law a Lot Less Lucrative](#)

Learn to adapt.

Finally, and most importantly, be prepared to adapt. Though high-level projections anticipate jobs being "replaced" by AI, it's more likely that they'll be displaced or augmented. Instead of your bosses firing you and putting a machine in your place, they'll probably promote you and put you in charge of operating the machine that did what you used to do.

Of course, not everyone will be cut out for this transformation. Some people will be reluctant to change, others will have a hard time learning the new technology. If you want to survive in the job market, you need to be better than that. You need to be flexible and roll with the punches. Learn everything you can about the new tech in your industry and stay open to multiple career options.

Are the machines coming for your job? Almost certainly -- but that's no reason to fear. Machines will probably take your job, or at least make the attempt, but that just means you can transform your job, work alongside the machines or find a new role entirely.

[The term "luddite,"](#) now used to refer to someone reluctant to accept new technology, originally referred to English textile workers who were afraid that weaving machines would take their jobs. In retrospect, those fears of a now-primitive technological advancement seem ludicrous. Perhaps, a few decades from now, we'll feel the same way about the AI revolution.