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Robots more than job-killers

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I watched a rather compelling video the other day that someone had posted to Facebook.

The video took place in an industrial setting. It was a fairly large warehouse facility with racking designed to hold wooden pallets that contained nondescript cardboard boxes.

I've been there, done that job. When you're a poor college student, that type of work is valuable.

In the video, two robots were hard at work taking the boxes from one pallet and transferring them to another pallet or onto a conveyor line to be sent to the shipping department.

The robots were of a unique design I had not seen before. They have two wheels and a long arm for picking up boxes and a counter weight between the wheels that kept the robot balanced.

Box after box, the robot did its job.

At first I thought it was a science video demonstrating achievements in the world of robotics. These machines were in fact quite impressive.

After watching the video for a few moments, you get the real message.

The video was hosted by a labour union to show how this type of interference in the workplace is taking away jobs from human beings. The union seems to think that the introduction of non-human workers is a slap in the face to the hard-working man.

In this instance, yes, some guy who used to do this job of manhandling boxes would have had to find employment elsewhere.

What the video does not mention are the jobs created by these robots.

The robots didn't design themselves.

I'm not exactly sure what all is involved in building robots, however I'm pretty sure there are engineers of various capacities both male and female, experts in electronics, computer software, and robot design who put the plans to paper.

Someone built the parts and electronic components to make these machines work. Someone was even responsible for designing and manufacturing the rubber tires that grip the concrete floor and keep the robot from slipping.

After the robots arrive at the workplace and are put to task, there is someone or maybe a team, of people who will maintain them and keep them running. Robots aren't self-sustaining works of ingenuity.

So yes, they will replace some workers ? but at the same time they have created other jobs.

It's a sign of the times and a sign of things to come.

If you have checked out new cars and trucks over the past couple of years, the number of driver assist functions now available is remarkable. I've driven in a truck that corrects the vehicle if you stray from centre lane. I read an interview with a car owner who claims he drove through downtown Toronto and never touched the gas or the steering as a forward collision mitigation system,

pedestrian detection, and a few others features guided the car effortlessly though traffic.

All these driver assist functions are the result of a lot of ongoing research that will also be used in other industries as the world becomes more and more automated.

During recent radio program about the subject, a truck driver called in and said his job could never be replaced because it takes a human to carefully deliver a truck to a loading dock. It was pointed out that self-driving trucks are already in the works and would be a huge benefit to industry to have their raw materials delivered and off-loaded without people having to be involved.

Yes, it's a sign of the times. I'm pretty sure when steam-powered tractors first started making an appearance in the 19th century, at least some farmers grumbled that no ?new-fangled' machine could ever replace a horse.

In a world where technology is taking over more and more every year, a lot of jobs will be terminated.

Soon enough, you're going to see the receptionist at a local business or your doctor's office become nothing more than a computer generated image that will have the ability to ask you to fill our a form and direct you where to sit to wait for your appointment. In fact, that technology is already operating in some places.

Yes, jobs will be lost, but others will be created.

The key is to make sure your future work force is educated and trained in some kind of useful skill.

As for the lost jobs ? stacking pallets isn't much of a career anyway. I've done it and would recommend a different career path.