

Future Hype

What You Should Know about Technology Change

The Internet isn't that big a deal. Neither is the PC. Live in the woods for a week and see if it's your laptop you miss most. ☞ Moore's Law is only amazing. A PC that's ten times faster isn't ten times better—it isn't even *two* times better. ☞ The pocket calendar, address book, and notepad are tough to beat. Low tech often wins. ☞ Today's technology didn't advance particularly quickly—it was faster than some, not as fast as others. ☞ Today's technology is significant enough to stand on its own. Don't exaggerate its worth. ☞ The Internet is the plastic of the twenty-first century. Its important applications aren't new and the new ones aren't important. ☞ The battle between the haves and the have-nots isn't about money—it's about access to technology. ☞ Sometimes exponential change drives specific technologies, but never technology in general. Instead, imagine a spotlight highlighting one or two technologies at a time. They bloom and grow under its warmth, then the spotlight moves on. ☞ The PC doesn't let you do much new, it just lets you do it better. ☞ Don't worry too much that technology is leaving you behind. Often the train leaving the station is only an amusement park ride. ☞ The latest development is certainly more new, but that doesn't make it more important. ☞ Technology change is disrupting, but it has been for centuries. Change is unchanging. Relax—the carousel isn't spinning faster. ☞ The press is a slot machine, applauding the technology successes and ignoring the failures. In this casino, everyone's a winner! We must ignore the hype and remember that most bets are bad. ☞ Technology is no more inevitable than twins, and most new products fail. ☞ The past predicts the future. Tomorrow will look more like today than most predictions expect. ☞ Don't believe the hype just because it's fashionable. The emperor will often have no clothes. ☞ Technology is like coral—advancing only at the edges, but with a huge mass of past technology to support and guide it. ☞ Buying a PC is not a single purchase but a lifelong commitment. A PC is like a leaky balloon: you must frequently put more into it to keep it useful. ☞ Before you were born, societies produced fire and the wheel, newspapers and the telegraph. They invented the telephone and writing, and the car, train, and airplane. They developed agriculture, civil engineering, and electricity; architecture and cities; steel and concrete. Have a little humility about the importance of today's technology—our advances are minimal compared to what we've inherited. ☞ Remember that technology answers to us. We control the horizontal, we control the vertical. If you think you don't need a technology, then you don't. ☞ Sure, today's technology is a big deal. But so was yesterday's. We stand on the shoulders of giants.