
ANALOGOSAURUS

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Avoiding extinction in a world of digital business

By

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Simon is passionate about creating a better world through digital technology. He believes that technology gives us superhuman abilities when it comes to shaping our future and we need the know how to use these abilities wisely.

Simon may be somewhat unqualified as a technology commentator; the most technical training he has ever undertaken is Advanced Excel. Instead Simon has more than half a lifetime of experience in business. He has held roles in everything sales, business improvement, management and strategy development. He has worked in organisations with 5 employees to 50,000 employees. He holds a Master of Business Leadership, post-graduate qualifications in Futures Thinking and a long time ago he even completed a Bachelor of Commerce.

Simon lives in Melbourne, Australia with his wife Naomi and their two daughters Miah and Poppy. Apart from playing a bit of basketball, Simon's main hobby is his campervan, a 1990 Nissan Homy called Dennis. When he is not camping in the van with his family he can often be found cleaning it, upgrading it and fixing the things on it that he has recently bro

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I've decided that doing the acknowledgements might in fact be the coolest part of writing a book. When I look back on the 12 month journey that has got me to this point, I am almost overwhelmed with the generosity that has come my way. It gives me great pleasure to be able to thank those people who have supported me over the last 12 months – the book would not have happened without you.

Without a doubt my thanks must firstly go out to the wonderful Kieran Flanagan and Dan Gregory from the Impossible Institute. About eight months ago I bailed them up at a program we were both attending and asked them if they could help with the name of my book. At that point I had written 20,000 words that didn't make a lot of sense and I was struggling with a sense of direction.

That night Kieran and Dan went away and worked on my book idea during their own time and came back the next day with a mock up of a book called Analogosaurus, complete with a pink dinosaur on the cover. It is perhaps a sign of their branding mastery that in that one pencil sketch I immediately knew what the book was meant to be about whilst simultaneously giving me

licence to have a little fun with it. Kieran and Dan, every time someone says to me 'cool name for a book', it reinforces your awesomeness.

Kieran and Dan are members of a much bigger tribe that I am extremely proud to be a part of and who I also owe much thanks. The Thought Leaders community, founded by Matt Church and led by Matt, Peter Cook and Christina Guidotti, has been my main support mechanism during the writing of this book. A little over a year ago I made a commitment to write a book within 12 months, though at the time I had no idea what it would be about or who it would be for. The systems and processes that Thought Leaders put in place made it possible for me to achieve my goal. Quite simply this book wouldn't exist without Thought Leaders, so to Matt, Pete and Christina, as well as many others in the community such as my mentor Laurel McLay, Yamini Naidu, Jason Fox and Dermot Crowley, thank you. You guys are my tribe.

Another massive thanks must also go out to my editor Ali Davies. I am not sure whether Ali took me seriously when I came to her without a clear narrative and no solid chapters eight months ago saying that I wanted to publish a book in six months' time. Although we haven't quite achieved my more ambitious timelines it is only due to Ali that we got close at all. It has been a pleasure working with you, thank you for your support and guidance on my writing, for directing me through this process and most importantly for keeping me focused and on track for nearly eight months.

And finally, my deepest and dearest thanks must go out to my family. To my wife Naomi, thank you for your understanding when I took my laptop on holidays, and when I worked on weekends. Most importantly thank you for encouraging me to leave my last real job and set off on this crazy adventure four and a half years ago. What our life might lacks in certainty it makes up for in excitement and purpose. To my two girls Miah and Poppy, this book is ultimately for you. I only hope that by other people

reading it, in just a very small way, they will create a better future for the two of you to grow up in. If they do that, it will have all been worthwhile!

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book has been written for people who work in business. This is not to say other people won't benefit from it, in fact I am sure they will. There are whole chapters written about the challenges of technology in our personal lives, and as you will find out later bad technology use in our personal lives is intrinsically linked to bad technology use in our professional lives. So although there is something in here for everyone, this book is about technology in business, and for a few reasons. Firstly, business is what I know; secondly, improving the way we work is the difference I am here to make; and thirdly, despite the relationship between personal and professional technology use, there is a big difference in how we make decisions about technology at home and at work.

I started working in my family's business from about the age of 18. While completing my undergraduate degree I had a part time job helping out my dad and doing the bookkeeping. Since then I have studied business and owned businesses, consulted to them, started them, trained them, worked in them and managed them. This is

where I have tested my theories and developed my skills and knowledge.

What my experience has taught me is when used well, digital technology has the potential to improve both the processes and the outcomes of work. I believe that digital technology can amplify our awareness, communication and collaboration, and it can enhance our decision making, which in turn has the potential to create a better society for all of us. This is the difference I can make. I have worked in a business that literally moved a mountain and I want that power to be used well.

There are few boundaries to where digital technology can be found (and for some that is a genuine problem) but not all technology is created equal. The way we approach digital technology in our personal lives is fundamentally different than how we do at work[i]. At work we are much more concerned with actions that provide a competitive advantage – in fact we almost have an obligation to pursue them. In our personal lives we have the option to ignore faster, cheaper more effective ways of doing things for no other reason than because we feel like it[ii].

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[i] Normally I am not one to make a big distinction between our work time and our leisure time. I much prefer the idea of work-life integration than work-life balance. When digital technology allows you to work anytime and anywhere, why not work from where you want when you feel like it?

[ii] It is perhaps somewhat ironic that many of us have been faster to integrate digital technology into our personal lives than in our work lives, but perhaps one of the reasons that we have been slow to adopt technology at work is because of negative experiences that we have had in our personal use of it.

So, if you are struggling with digital technology at work, this book is for you. I hope it guides you towards a more rewarding digital future.

INTRODUCTION (MY LITTLE RANT)

The first dinosaurs emerged on the earth about 230 million years ago and they could certainly teach us a thing or two about both survival and extinction – survival because they were the dominant land animals for about 135 million years, and extinction because, well, now they're gone.

Around 66 million years ago, there was a mass extinction event in which nearly three-quarters of all plant and animal species on Earth disappeared. Amongst them was almost every species of non-avian dinosaur. Although the exact cause of the extinction is unknown, a 180 km wide crater discovered in the 1990s provides strong evidence to suggest that it was caused by a comet or asteroid hitting the earth.

If this were the case, the dinosaurs would never have seen it coming. They had no satellite-based early warning system to help them detect such threats, and with rather unsophisticated brains (at least compared to what we now possess), they would have had no real understanding of what an asteroid was. The dinosaurs weren't

completely stupid, but they were unlucky. Their destiny was outside their hands.

There is another mass extinction coming, this time not an extinction of life but an extinction of jobs. The outcomes might not be quite as catastrophic but they will be just as inevitable and just as widespread: research at Cambridge University suggests that about two-thirds of jobs are at risk of going extinct over the next 20 years.

Unlike the dinosaurs, we can see this extinction coming. The proliferation of digital technology is already affecting our workplaces, it is constantly in the news – in fact, it has even changed the way we access news. We have time to react and do something about it. If we don't survive this extinction, it won't be down to luck; it will be down to the decisions that we make, and a fair dose of stupidity.

Of course, after the asteroid hit 66 million years ago, not everything was wiped out. Based on 75% of species disappearing, simple maths would tell you that about 25% of existing species survived. Amongst these was our distant ancestors. In the post extinction era, many of these species thrived by evolving to fill the void left by the dinosaurs. This will also be the case following the extinction we are about to see, as people with the willingness to evolve and build new skills will survive as well as thrive in the new business landscape.

As they say, nothing lasts forever. The way we work has continually evolved in much the same way that animals and humans have throughout history. As part of this evolution, we have continually discarded old work tools and adopted new ones. Sometimes these were physical tools, but they have also included human tools such as communication techniques or the way we organise work, and increasingly they are digital tools that allow us to share information and communicate. This evolution in the way

we work has been continuing for almost as long as human existence and it's not going to stop any time soon.

The use of tools to leverage ability is older than human existence itself. In 2010 the earliest evidence of stone tool use was found in the Lower Awash Valley in Ethiopia. Fossilised bones dating back approximately 3.4 million years bore markings that provided evidence they had been hit by sharpened stone[1]. *Homo sapiens* wouldn't walk the earth for another few million years but our ancestors had started our love affair with tools.

At this point in our historical development, change happened slowly and it took nearly two million years before our ancestors developed the first 'advanced' stone tools. In 2011 a number of stone tools were uncovered in Kenya that dated back a mere 1.7 million years. What made them advanced? They were sharper because the edge had been chipped at from both sides[2].

Without taking anything away from the significance of our ancestors' progress, the use of the term 'advanced' is relative to say the least, as these tools are unlike anything that we would consider using today. The use of stone tools largely went extinct with the start of the Bronze Age between 6000 and 2000 BCE, and Bronze Age tools were subsequently replaced in the Iron Age.

At a similar time as Bronze Age tools were being replaced, new technologies in information sharing also started to appear. Around 3000 BCE, our ancestors developed the written word – in essence the birth of information technology. Even though these early writing systems universally used stone as the recording platform, they allowed information and knowledge to be shared and disseminated in ways that were previously not possible.

The written language has gone on its own evolutionary process. Stone was eventually replaced by wood, then papyrus, parchment and paper. This in turn led to a transition away from the use of

chisels (which are fairly useless when used with these more fragile media), and we created new tools such as quills, and later fountain and ballpoint pens.

Before the appearance of pens came the Industrial Revolution. Both the productivity of organisations and the quality of goods were dramatically improved as we engaged steam and electrical power to drive the machines that replaced muscle power.

The Industrial Revolution was not just a revolution of machines, it was also a revolution in the tools for managing people. We created new ways of structuring organisations that allowed them to grow in size and at the same time better control the quality and the distribution of goods. The Industrial Revolution also saw the introduction of the Gutenberg press and then in the mid to late 19th century the development of mass-produced paper and pens. This allowed for another evolution in how we captured, managed and shared information.

These technologies and tools didn't develop in isolation; they were steps in a journey and often interdependent, creating and reinforcing each other. Improved physical processes that allowed for the mass production of paper and pens were enabled by the improved organisational systems; those systems were in turn enabled by the improved information management systems that the paper, pens and press provided. This ongoing evolution in the way we work also resulted in the extinction of the old tools and technologies of work in the face of the new ones. The use of stone and bronze tools has all but disappeared and even more 'modern' technologies such as fountain pens and parchment are now only used for nostalgic reasons.

Tools have been an integral part of human evolution. Whether it be at the scale of individuals, organisations or nations, those who have developed and employed tools to their advantage have outcompeted those that haven't. Over thousands of years nations

have risen and fallen based on their comparative use of tools and technology.

At an individual level it may not be so obvious, but the same forces are at play, especially in a work environment. The ability to use our tools well (whether they be physical, human or digital) can improve our performance and provide a competitive edge when it comes to promotion or future employment.

And this now brings us to the digital age. We are seeing a new generation of tools that provide a level of advantage like never before. They are providing benefits that 50 or even 20 years ago we couldn't have imagined. And unlike the changes in technology we have seen in previous eras, this one is happening really fast. We are no longer measuring change in millennia, centuries or decades – we are now measuring it in years or even months.

These digital tools are so powerful that we are redesigning our other work around them. The digital age has allowed human and physical work to be increasingly represented in lines of code. The design of a car is now stored in computer files rather than on paper or in the head of a master craftsman. Communication and collaboration are now enabled as much by technology as by human endeavour. And although we may complain about digital technologies encroaching on our lives, the continued growth of these technologies reflects the distinct competitive advantages they offer.

Digital tools are quickly outcompeting their analogue alternatives. And like the generation of tools before them, analogue tools are quickly going the way of the dinosaurs. They are quickly becoming extinct.

Whether it is a result of ignorance, fear or laziness, many of us will find it difficult to let go of our analogue past and embrace our digital future. We may make excuses to ourselves so that we can

avoid the inevitable change. We might say things such as, "I can remember more when I write things down", or you might claim that you like the 'feel' of pen on paper. But the reality is that we live in a world that is being digitised, being captured as information. Information has become the lifeblood of business and in this world our analogue tools can no longer compete.

This digital shift is no longer restricted to a particular industry or job role. Although it will undoubtedly impact some more than others, there are very few people, if any, that won't be affected by this change. Our individual choices don't really matter, because the digital revolution is as inevitable as the Industrial Revolution, and every other revolution that has come before it. The potential for improvement is so great, the opportunity so big, that no one has the power to stop it.

So here's the hard sell: your future is being shaped by your customers, your suppliers, your colleagues and your competitors. Some of them are already developing and implementing new tools, and they will set the new standards that everyone else will have to meet, or exceed, if they want to maintain relevance in a world of digital business. When it comes to the crunch, you just won't be competitive if you don't.

You may not be able to shape the future, but you can still influence your destiny. You get to choose if, when and how you join the digital revolution and this book has been written to help you make that change.

As they say, the Stone Age didn't end because they ran out of stone, and the analogue age won't end because we don't have enough paper. The question isn't whether your analogue tools will go extinct. The only question is: will you go down with them?

Office, and in the same way everything looks like a nail when all you have is a hammer, everything used to look like an Excel problem when all you had was Excel. Need to create an invoice? That's an Excel problem. Want to add up some numbers? That's an Excel problem. Want to track your customers? Clearly an Excel problem. Want to create an advanced business model? Another Excel problem (actually, that really could be an Excel problem).

But with the arrival of the iPhone as well as a new breed of online services, this era has thankfully come to an end. The development of smartphone and web apps means we now have a multitude of tools to choose from and we can get one specifically tailored to the task at hand. It is like moving from the tool kit that you keep under the kitchen sink to what you might find in a mechanic's workshop. A mechanic is likely to have a full set of imperial and metric ring spanners, a socket wrench set and a torque wrench just for tightening up nuts and bolts, and likewise a modern knowledge worker can now easily have a range of specialised tools.

This 'appification' of work and the ability to choose a specific app for a specific task has a number of advantages. Because modern apps and services are more specific in their use, they are often much simpler than the more generic tools of the past which had to accommodate everyone. The options and functions contained in the app are restricted to ones that are specifically required for a particular task.

Additionally, if an app is generic with many functions you need to have the expertise to apply it, whereas with specific apps you can tap into the expertise of the developers. For example, if you use Excel as a way of tracking customer interactions it won't guide you as to which fields or bits of information you should be tracking and it won't suggest when or even if you should reach out to them regularly. In comparison a modern Customer Relationship Management (CRM) program will provide text fields that guide you on which information needs to be collected, it will provide a funnel or some form of pipeline that indicates how you should

segment your current leads and some will even auto-assign follow up tasks to make sure you keep in contact.

Each app has the opportunity to provide a single, simple solution to a task that we want to perform. We should look to have one app per task and one task per app. By focusing on one task and one app at a time we can dramatically reduce the overwhelming burden of learning new technology.

Apart from engagement and ease of learning there are a number of other advantages to this approach. We only need to invest a small amount of time before we start to generate a return; and at least some of the knowledge and confidence we build learning one app is transferrable to subsequent apps. If an individual app doesn't meet your needs you can just get another one – you don't need to replace the whole system.

Although simple solutions can make learning easier and they are an excellent way to start your digital learning journey, the eventual shift to system solutions should ultimately be seen as desirable. There will still be occasions when we need more complex system solutions. Tasks will still need to be rolled up into activities and these activities will still need to be aligned with larger business objectives. This will require our simple solutions to be integrated together and also that certain solutions are used by everyone. Integrating solutions with each other can improve productivity by seamlessly moving data and information to where it is required and common solutions can allow for the sharing of knowledge and information across an organisation. What doesn't work is when organisations start with a system approach and end up with a highly capable solution that no one is capable of using.

So if we can't necessarily have each user choosing to use a different document format or having them implement their own preferred CRM system, where do we start? There are a number of tasks that we currently undertake that are neither integrated nor common:

the tasks we carry out in analogue form, or more specifically, the tasks we do on paper.

Each sheet of paper works in isolation. Apart from being stapled together with other sheets (which can easily be overcome) it is in no way integrated with any other system, and although we may all use the same brand of notebook we all use our own methods and approaches.

So the best place to start with digital technology is with your analogue activities. Think about the activities you do on paper (taking notes, creating task lists, reading and marking up documents). It is no coincidence that there are 100s or even 1,000s of apps available to help you do each of these tasks faster, cheaper and better than you can do them on paper. Tasks you do in analogue are the best opportunity for you to begin your journey to digital.

To Read more you can purchase Analogosaurus: How to Avoid Extinction in a World of Digital Business from

simonwaller.com.au/analogosaurus

NOTES

[1] S McPherron, 'Evidence for stone-tool-assisted consumption of animal tissues before 3.39 million years ago at Dikika, Ethiopia', *Nature*, vol. 466, August 2010, pp. 857-860.

[2] C J Lepre, 'An earlier origin of the Acheulian', *Nature*, vol. 477, 2011, pp. 82-85.