

The rise of the digital co-worker

 By [Ryan Falkenberg](#)

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While some commentators talk about the 4IR as something that is happening in the future, the reality is a little more immediate. Not only are we currently living through the fourth industrial revolution, but the machines have also arrived and are working alongside us.



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Don't believe me? Who do you think you were talking to last you got an insurance quote on your providers website? Or when you asked Siri to call a specific friend or send a specific message? Or when you handed over the job of providing directions to Google Maps instead of your partner?

From chatbots to virtual assistants and virtual advisors, digital workers are here, and they're engaging you more often than you probably realise.

Within many legacy companies, digital workers first arrived in the back office with Robotic Process Automation (RPA), which takes manual, replicable system-based tasks and automates them. So now staff don't need to do as much of the system capture work - they can hand this over to digital workers who are happy to work 24/7 365 days a year just doing that.

Now we are seeing digital workers move increasingly into the front office, where they work alongside humans and assisting them navigating in real time all the complex sales and support processes while they focus their efforts on the customer.

Rather than the exception, this is increasingly becoming the norm. The reality is that digital workers can perform all the rule-based decisions and actions that humans can, just faster and with no errors, making them ideally suited to repetitive tasks that are governed by defined processes. Humans, by contrast, are better suited to tasks that require them to engage their unique traits - empathy, creativity, problem-solving, collaboration.

Working together, digital and human workers can offer new levels of customer service and benefit both the organisation and its client-base through improved efficiency, productivity and problem-solving.

Digital workers will soon be installed across all stages of any given process and, contrary to popular fears about the rise of the machines, are expected to lead to greater employee satisfaction as they relieve humans of tedious, repetitive tasks, and free them up to do things they can derive real enjoyment from.

The future of work is one in which humans and digital workers partner to collectively perform at levels previously unimagined. The building and deployment of digital workers is getting easier and quicker, and given the ability of digital workers to rapidly expand their numbers and capacity to handle changing work volumes, it means that most companies now view a digital workforce as a critical means to scale.

Digital workers also offer agility within a legacy reality. So if you have not yet started to build and deploy digital workers within your existing business, it may be time you did.

ABOUT RYAN FALKENBERG

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