



Tempus Fugit



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Tempus fugit, or time flies, in Latin couldn't be more true today – than it ever has been. The speed warp, especially via technological change, becomes more obvious if one person looks back in real life. This note attempts to bring the reader to times gone by in order to share the incredible contrast. Perhaps reviewing my 75 years on this planet, most of it as an engineer, offers such a reminder between today and the past. Here is a quick set of vignettes.

Horse Power:

As a youngster, horses were everywhere in my city, used for milk and bread delivery, garbage pickup, snow clearing and digging house foundations.

Ice box: Blocks of ice were delivered daily for the top of the fridge ‘ice’ box (via horse carriage, natch).

Home Delivery:

Bread, milk, ice, and mail were among the many daily deliveries to every home.

Gathering around the radio:

Each Sunday night, the family gathered around the radio, which occupied a full corner of the living room to be entertained by *Amos and Andy*, *Our Miss Brooks* or *The Green Hornet*.

TV:

In 1953 television was introduced to Canada – black and white of course. As a young engineer in the early 60's, I heard a wise engineer predict that colour TV would become standard someday, as it offered far more information.

Stereo:

Moving from single sound source high fidelity to a two channel system that offered realistic depth perception was seen as amazing then. Added to the realism was delayed sound (of about 50 milliseconds) that created the perception of the concert hall. Further enhancements that stunned us, music listeners, were the subwoofer for deeper sounds and the super tweeter for audio beyond human hearing – but not beyond human sensitivity.

CD Player:

The idea of digitizing sound seemed so ridiculous at the time, until I heard the results myself – clean sound, background free of noise, flat response, and a dynamic range (volume) two or three time greater than before. That was enough for me to plunk down \$1,200 in the 70's for this remarkable device.

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Fax:

Sending a written message electronically seemed beyond comprehension. It took time for the fax machine to become integrated because both a sender and a receiver were necessary. Thus the number of recipients at first was quite limited. Professional football teams took this leading edge technology to send 'plays' from spotter's booth up high to the coach on the field.

Computers:

I was introduced to my first IBM computer (early 60's) with an amazing memory of 1600 bytes, using programming cards and a dashboard of lights that actually showed the binary process in action. That was superseded in the late 60's when I designed a computer from scratch for a rocket research range using Digital Equipment modules – flip-flops for memory, power supplies, etc. and a printout on a ticker tape. By 1980 I could boast a newly acquired computer for my software company with a 28 MB memory and a price tag of \$150,000. Then, all was hushed as a revered laptop made its presence into my office, in the 1990's, for only \$3,500 each.

Internet:

After attending a seminar on this new communications concept, I returned to my office of computer engineers only to have them think I was looney for even considering such a bizarre idea.

Newton:

Apple's pocket assistant, the Newton, allowed people to write on its glass plate, which the Newton read and converted to a Times New Roman script. The more I wrote, the more it understood my indecipherable writing (and the less anyone else's) creating its own level of security. The first hand-held computer was born.

Cell Phone:

The huge box-like phone with its protruding antenna was held close to the head. As it grew smaller, it became handier and a main means of communications. In those days I shared my number with everyone. But, I became so overwhelmed with messages and lack of privacy that one day, in mid-conversation, I tossed my cellphone into the Rideau Canal. I lived without one over a 10-year hiatus. Eventually I returned to the cell phone – but am less quick to share the number.

Social Media: That brings us to today. Social media exists; it's real; it's here to stay.

We say that "management is finding solutions to problems caused by change". This paper is a history of personal management responding to change. Maybe, you can write your own management story at the age of 75.

Bill

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