

# EWORkSTYLE

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## What Are The Next Steps For The American Workforce?

We can no longer ignore the direct impact of technology and communications on our lives. The world's industries are now dominated by communications technologies. We've witnessed millions of people laid off around the world and we've seen technology influenced corporate mergers evolve into global economies of scale. But we haven't figured out what all of this means as next steps for Americans looking for work.

In order to better understand where we fit in this emerging global economy; let's quickly review how America became a global economy and then go forward to see where we stand. The shortest way to do this is to summarize three major historic trends in the United States' gross domestic product (GDP); the measure of our country's overall economic revenue and the total market value of all finished goods and services made within one year.

During the 1600's, the US began its GDP with an agricultural revolution based on good soil, large plantations and high-value cash crops. Cotton, sugar and tobacco agriculture grew into textile, food and service industries; and these developments expanded and waned over more than 200 years. During this difficult and oppressive time, parents and grandparents taught their skills to younger generations. Eventually, a wide variety of machines were invented which made this work easier and required far less people. Machinery and related advances changed the GDP, bringing the USA to its first major set of work related layoffs.

Enter the making and using of massive machinery, metal manufacture and tool and transport becoming industries and the foundation of America's industrial income or

GDP; better known as the "Industrial Revolution;" lasting about 130 years. Machinery advanced agricultural techniques and practices to the point where far less people were needed to generate a tremendously increased supply of foods and raw materials. Mechanical technologies also changed the business of industrial organization; bringing to it super-efficiency, increased domestic and foreign commerce and large profits.

Again grandparents and parents taught their skills to younger generations; wherein a nation of factory workers joined assembly lines to make parts and equipment such as cars, trucks and trains, as well as packaged food, attire, chemicals, medicines and weapons. As machinery became more technologically sophisticated by the end of the 20th Century; computers began to automate factory work and even ran machines that duplicated themselves. These advances in machinery became the basis of a "Technology Revolution" GDP; spearheading a second round of mass layoffs in the USA.

During the Technology Revolution, which lasted about 30 years; citizens scrambled to colleges and universities to update their skills. Computer technology had a huge impact on destabilizing the American workforce, because parents and grandparents had no time to either learn use of - or teach these machines.

However, before the technology revolution could take hold at the beginning of the 21st Century, the internet came on the scene in 1995.

Over the following ten years, the internet brought phenomenal software ap-



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plications that mimicked robotic behaviors; and digitization that made all text, music, photos, video and film electronic. The internet provided access to a global web frontier; which made neighbors out of people in distant countries, by shortening day long travel times to "webinars" and video phone calls. These changes happened in the marketplace quickly because they offered corporations a savings in billions with huge layoffs and salary cuts of most paid staff. Even as hundreds of thousands of employees began scrambling to prepare to participate in the technology revolution, the shortened time frame devastated the economy as it left millions of people scrambling for direction as their jobs and industries simply disappeared.

We are now approaching an "Information Revolution" GDP (also known as the Information Economy); where software, technology and web aided 'ease of communications;' has impacted research, sales and every area of our lives. This ease of communications is based on the simple formula of your information plus my information equals double the information. Well, multiply this doubling among billions of web users and you have what experts define as

the “total collective global information;” which began doubling every 5 years, in 1995. Within three years (by 2013), experts anticipate the total collective global information will double every 11 hours.

Now imagine for a moment, going to a library for a book - only to find their entire collection of materials piled all over the floors. How would you find anything? That is where we are with this new economy. The “Information Revolution” is based on sorting, organizing, storing and categorizing all of this continuously doubling information; so that it can be used efficiently. Opportunities for work in this Century lay within helping corporations, agencies, governments, etc., get precise up-to-date information; at any given moment, in every area of expertise. And that is at least one answer for the American workforce. The basis for next steps in preparing to be competitive in the workforce means: investing in an area of information expertise, combining it with academic and professional experience; converting it to knowledge and presenting it well. For these reasons, we must be vigilant about growing our fluency in communicating with others and understanding the truth and farce in their communications with us. Mastering the use of computer technology is a fundamental necessity in the 21st Century. Additionally, whether we deliberately capitalize on our knowledge and skills; or are continually and blindly led, cast aside and/or exploited; will depend on our strength of, and commitment to communications literacy, as well as understanding its impact on our economy, work and lifestyle.



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## ADVANCING EQUITY

People are impacted every day by public policy decisions. But too few of us really understand what it takes to contribute toward changing policy. In communities across Massachusetts, we keep hearing people say they need change. As families of diverse incomes struggle to secure affordable housing, maintain decent employment, and feel protected about the environmental safety of their neighborhoods; they are also receiving mixed views about what it takes to pay for these things. Both urban and suburban commuters feel the impact of a transportation system that is trying to adequately address mass transit needs; however the infrastructure for this transit has to be paid for. Granted, the economic meltdown hammers at the sustainability of towns, cities and municipalities throughout the state. That means achieving regional equity is no longer simply an issue for low-income communities or communities of color; even though there is no question that they are disproportionately impacted. One of the principal challenges facing Massa-



chusetts in the 21st century is advancing local to regional equity in preparation for a global economy. This challenge involves reducing social and economic disparities among individuals, social groups, neighborhoods, and local jurisdictions throughout our metropolitan areas. It means reversing patterns that have concentrated poverty, segregated communities,

- Balance land use, affordable housing and open space issues equitably across jurisdictions;
- Integrate solutions to public transit, workforce development and carbon footprint issues;
- Make environmental justice and social equity central components of local, regional and global economic development decisions.

and families in all communities can participate in and benefit from local to global economic growth and activities.

Because public policies and investments shape regional development patterns, it is important that all of us vote for policies that provide local and regional development; and also do our fair share in paying the taxes that are

**Even in a difficult economy we must think equitably  
Advancing Equity Means  
voting equitably & pitching in  
with a fair share of tax costs!**

and limited opportunities for the lower-income residents across the state. Advancing equity also means creating and voting for policies that contribute to and value working class communities, strengthen the state, and benefit all of its residents. To achieve this kind of equity, it is necessary to:

- Prevent displacement of low-income residents by creating mechanisms that connect them to opportunities, resources, and the political process;

Equitable development connects the quest for full equitable inclusion and participation to local, metropolitan, and regional planning and development. Advancing equity is grounded in the guiding principles of: integrating people and place strategies; reducing local and regional disparities; promoting “double bottom line” investments; and including meaningful community voice, participation, and leadership at the policy table. Equitable development ensures that individuals

required to support these policies. As a state, we need to make sure that the towns, cities and municipalities have the revenue to distribute the resources needed for the policies that we put into place. And regardless of what promises get made during elections, taxes are the primary finances used to provide us all with sustainable development.

