

Excerpts  
from  
**Megatrends**

by John Naisbitt

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Today's information technology—from computers to cable television—did not bring about the new information society. It was already well under way by the late 1950s. Today's sophisticated technology only hastens our plunge into the information society that is already here. . . .

It makes no sense, for instance, to reindustrialize an economy that is based not on industry, but on the production and distribution of information. Without an appreciation of the larger shifts that are restructuring our society, we act on assumptions that are out of date. Out of touch with the present, we are doomed to fail in the unfolding future.

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The real increase has been in information occupations. In 1950, only about 17 percent of us worked in information jobs. Now more than 60 percent of us work with information as programmers, teachers, clerks, secretaries, accountants, stock brokers, managers, insurance people, bureaucrats, lawyers, bankers, and technicians. And many more workers hold information jobs within manufacturing companies. Most Americans spend their time creating, processing, or distributing information. For example, workers in banking, the stock market, and insurance all hold information jobs.

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The entrepreneurs who are creating new businesses are also creating new jobs for the rest of us. During a seven-year period ending in 1976, we added 9 million new workers to the labor force—a lot of people! How many of those were jobs in the *Fortune* 1,000 largest industrial concerns? Zero. But 6 million were jobs in small businesses, most of which had been in existence for four years or less.

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The restructuring of America from an industrial to an information society will easily be as profound as the shift from an agricultural society

to an industrial society. But there is one important difference. While the shift from an agricultural to an industrial society took 100 years, the present restructuring from an industrial to an information society took only two decades. Change is occurring so rapidly that there is no time to react: instead we must anticipate the future.

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Not surprisingly, China will emerge as the textile leader. By the year 2000, it will probably be employing 4 million textile workers, whereas textile employment in South Korea and Taiwan will remain about steady, and in Hong Kong will decrease by 25 percent. In fact, textile employment decreased in Hong Kong for the first time ever in 1979.

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We have two economies in the United States today: a sunrise economy and a sunset economy.

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Generally speaking, the government should stay out of the way of the sunrise industries (electronics, computer software, cable television, biotechnology) and allow the mature industries to level off.

The one exception is training: not that the government should do the training itself, but it could pay workers who have lost their jobs in the old industries to obtain training in the new.

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Biology will be to the 21st century what physics and chemistry were to this century. In this field, there are three main areas of interest: (1) fermentation technology, from which the Japanese have produced new drugs and chemicals; (2) the production of enzymes or "living catalysts," which act the same way as chemical catalysts, that is, they drive chemical reactions further than they would otherwise go without themselves changing; and (3) the aspect we have heard most about—gene splitting.