

Rule Technology, Don't Let It Rule You

by Jeff Davidson

The variety of new technologies becoming widely available to consumers brings obvious benefits. As the chips and sensors within them become microscopic and increasingly versatile, everything – our homes, cars, and offices, as well as industries and professions everywhere – will be profoundly impacted. These smart devices will help us improve our health, manage our time, navigate and maintain our vehicles, pay our bills, monitor our health, and stay in touch with personal and professional contacts.

As usual, all of the buzz about such smart devices will lack commentary on their downside. As the world becomes more connected, the potential for hackers and deviants to wreak mass havoc rises markedly. Those are not merely the garden-variety viruses that infect your computer; massive systems such as air traffic control, hospital power generation, pension program administration, and nuclear power plants all represent potential targets.

Smart systems powered by smart devices increase the opportunity for greater government control. The larger the number of technologically employed individuals, the greater the chances that they unknowingly could transmit information to a variety of agencies, both public and private, who can use that data for their own ends.

The loss of individual privacy is perhaps the worst affliction accompanying new technology. Everything that John Q. Public does online and via smart devices leaves a digital trace. Even contained, offline smart devices could potentially contribute to the individual loss of privacy by revealing your level of health, calories consumed, movies seen, and the nature and quality of your personal relationships.

As smart devices become ever more powerful, it will become more difficult for individuals to understand precisely what occurs with their personal data. With many popular online sites, to achieve a modicum of privacy, one must know how to modify the default settings. In most cases – and Facebook is a typical example – in the past the default settings did not protect privacy in the least. Public outcry changed that, but you can't always assume that a site assures your privacy .

Smart devices ultimately will help each of us to improve the quality of our lives. However, much pain and gnashing of teeth will ensue until we're able to knowingly and skillfully incorporate such devices with complete understanding as to the ramifications of the choices we make regarding their use.

Jeff Davidson is "The Work-Life Balance Expert®," has written 59 mainstream books, is a preeminent authority on time management, and is an electrifying professional speaker, making 805 presentations since 1985 to clients such as Kaiser Permanente, IBM, Novo Nordisk, American Express, Lufthansa, Swissotel, America Online, Re/Max, USAA, Worthington Steel, and the World Bank.

Jeff is the author of "Breathing Space," and "Simpler Living." His 60 Second Series with Adams Media, including the 60-Second Organizer, 60-Second Self-Starter, and 60-Second Innovator, are popular titles in China, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Italy, Poland, Spain, France, and Brazil. Jeff has been widely quoted in the Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Christian Science Monitor, New York Times, and USA Today.

Cited by Sharing Ideas Magazine as a "Consummate Speaker," Jeff believes that career professionals today in all industries have a responsibility to achieve their own sense of work-life balance, and he supports that quest through his website www.BreathingSpace.com and through 24 iPhone Apps at www.itunes.com/apps/BreathingSpaceInstitute