Highlighting Some Amazing Things Before They Become Boring

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There is an ancient Chinese curse, often attributed to Robert Kennedy, which says, "May you live in interesting times." When life is a bit turbulent, you will always find people who wish things were a little more boring. And even for those of us who make our living by driving change, that might not be a bad goal.

Here's why. Every major technological advancement of the last century started out as something truly amazing. The most successful ones set a standard for how we work and live. But over time, even the most disruptive technologies – from steam engines to flying to the moon – become commonplace. The excitement fades, and we find ourselves distracted by the next amazing thing. The cycle repeats itself over and over again. Boring becomes synonymous with success.

As we enter a new industrial age driven by how we analyze and consume data, we can expect

more amazing things. The ones with the greatest impact will probably be the ones that manage to become boring faster than the rest. So, with that in mind, here are a few amazing things that might have you yawning in a few years.

The line between content and consumption has completely disappeared. Recently, I came across this YouTube video of **a 1999 BBC interview** with David Bowie, in which he offered some startling predictions about the future impact of the Internet. The news commentator tried to argue it was simply a "delivery system" for content, but Bowie accurately argued it was much more than that. He saw a world in which the developers and users of content operate in complete unison. We see that happening now. Take for instance the Internet of Things. Intelligent devices require extraordinary amounts of data in real time, especially when they are used for highly complex tasks, such as medical procedures or virtual reality.

Physical resiliency has been replaced by digital resiliency. The winners and losers of the past year have been pretty easy to spot. Businesses and institutions that could transition to digital environments are frankly crushing it. **I recently argued** our focus on the impact of COVID-19 obscures the fact that we have been moving quickly to digital environments for some time now, because many of the characteristics that we associate with a physical environment can be duplicated through applications. People are finding it easier and more convenient to use a mobile app to fulfill a need than to travel to a physical location, such as a retail store. Pretty soon, consumers will differentiate the brands they choose by the digital experiences (versus the physical experiences) their applications provide.

We have closed the gap between need and speed. The 4th Industrial Revolution promises to transform the way we live, work, and thrive through the way we acquire, analyze, and act upon data. People now expect their data connectivity to be as reliable and ubiquitous as our electrical networks (something that also went from amazing to boring within a generation). A platform like ours is in the right place at the right time, because its combination of global capacity and connectivity provides a truly unique infrastructure that transcends the mere transportation of data. It's a platform that delivers ideas, drives change, and redefines how we collaborate. But the promise of the 4th Industrial Revolution would be a hollow one if we couldn't move all that data at lightning speeds. With edge computing, we can reduce latency to an extraordinary degree, producing speedy, secure, and reliable connectivity that links enterprises with their cloud-based data and applications.

Boredom might not seem like a lofty goal, but time and time again, we see it serve as a launching pad for new ideas. Smart people refuse to stay bored very long. Give them enough time (and the right conditions for change) and something amazing is bound to happen. Or as that famous philosopher Ferris Bueller once put it, "The question isn't 'What are we going to do?'

The question is 'What aren't we going to do?'"

AUTHOR

Shaun Andrews is Lumen's Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer. With nearly 25 years of experience in technology, Shaun is responsible for the company's product and solutions strategy and go-to-market. He also has oversight of global marketing, including the brand, global messaging and digital campaigns and marketing technology. Shaun previously served as Lumen's Executive Vice President, Product Management. Prior to this role, he was Senior Vice President of IP and Real-Time Communications for Level 3 Communications and held several senior roles at IntelePeer, WilTel and SBC Communications.

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