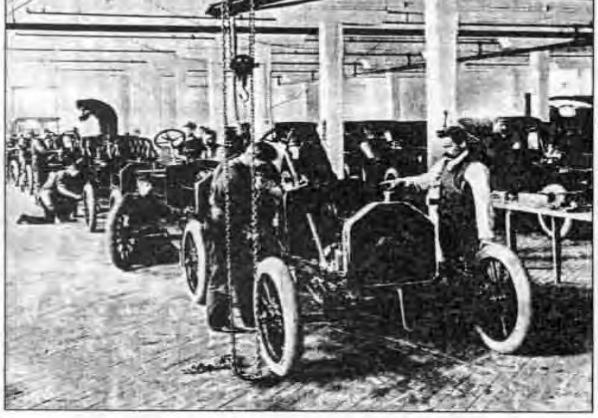
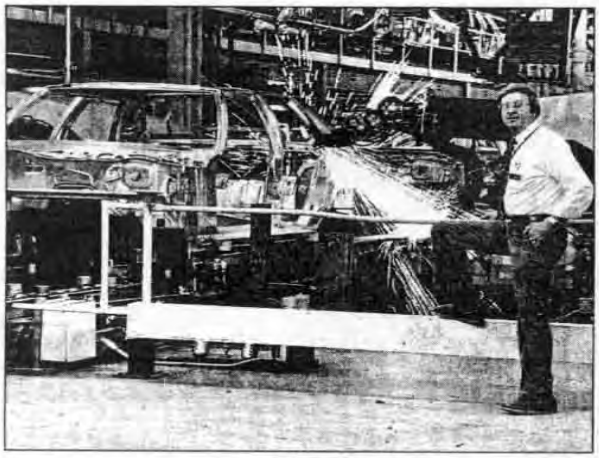


CHANGING JOBS: The workplace revolution will continue this century, experts say. An Oshawa assembly line 1908, top left, contrasts with a 1982 Oakville line, bottom left. In 1966, workers assemble typewriters in T to, top right, while a 1990 depiction, bottom right, shows how computers would soon create a paperless of



TORONTO STAR

Free agency com to the shop floor

The 21st century will see workers demanding their own work terms, just like athletes, pundits predict

BY VANESSA LU
WORKPLACE ISSUES REPORTER

Imagine negotiating your own terms on salary, benefits and vacations. And if you don't like the team you're with, you'll scout out another offer.

Does that sound like the world of Roger Clemens or Alexei Yashin? Well, it could be you.

The workplace is going to evolve into a world of free agents, predicts Roger Martin, dean of the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto.

That's because the concept of loyalty to an employer is fading, while loyalty to one's career and individuals within an organization is on the upswing, he says.

"People will stay in an organization that is consistent with their own personal development path and development desires or there are people in that organization that they connect with," Martin says.

A VISION FOR TORONTO

It won't be just salary that determines whether an individual stays in an organization, experts say, but a combination of factors including wage incentives, challenges, time off and whether specific work is valued.

That mentality reflects a fundamental shift in the way companies or organizations will operate in the 21st century.

In the 19th century, business success depended on owning physical assets such as a mine, a forest or a port, Martin says. In the 20th century, financial assets were key, including the ability to raise capital to buy equipment and expand and hire staff.

"The world has changed," he says. "It has become more clear to companies and the people in them, that financial assets are not the number one asset."

Human assets and knowledge assets are now more important, Martin says. Human assets are what people have in their heads while knowledge assets are a patent or a method of doing things, for example, and they stay with the company after a worker

☛ Please see Workers, H4

KEITH

ROGER MARTIN: Management s predicts this century every w negotiate a custom-made co their boss.

Workers will have more demands

Continued from H1

leaves.

"People are now asking to be treated as an individual. 'I'm unique and valuable,' " he says, adding if workers aren't treated that way, they'll go elsewhere.

In time, human resources policies where all employees get the same wages, benefits and vacations will disappear, Martin argues. Instead, workers will demand "one-on-one contracts" that recognize individual needs.

That's why it's not surprising more jobs have been created recently in small businesses where employees get more individualized treatment. Big companies won't disappear, Martin says, but "they are going to transform themselves fundamentally with respect to the way they treat their human assets, or they will die."

This turning is partly a result of a demographic shift — where a smaller group of workers will have more bargaining power compared to baby boomers — and different societal values.

"There is, at least in North America, a desire for more meaning and purpose in one's job," says Martin. "Individuals are requiring that there be a greater moral purpose, from their perspective to their work."

Stephan Pamukoff, a principal with the KPMG consulting firm, goes further in suggesting that we are in the middle of a workplace revolution, in part because of technological advances.

"You're going to see more employers allowing employees to regenerate and rejuvenate themselves," he says. "We have changed. People used to work for one or two or three companies their whole life."

Expect people leaving school to work for 12 to 15 different companies and have three to five occupations in their lifetime.

> 'The best employers still have a soul. They still appreciate the importance of developing their human resources'

Pamukoff argues the reasons for this include the sheer force of change, boredom and the fact the shelf life of an employee is no longer a 20-year or 30-year proposition.

"We have a very stressed-out work force . . . in spite of technology."

That stress will lead to more workers taking sabbaticals, returning to school, switching careers, and changing jobs for different challenges. "People will go to Tibet to navel gaze. People will go to do an MBA. People will do whatever it takes to regenerate themselves."

And workplaces that recognize this need will be successful in attracting and retaining talented staff.

The best employers, Pamukoff says, "still have a soul. They still appreciate the importance of developing their human resources. And they fundamentally respect the balance question. They know all work and no play makes Johnny and Sally a dull person."

JOHN MAHLER/TORONTO STAR

STEPHAN PAMUKOFF: KPMG consultant argues workplace stress will lead to people taking sabbaticals, returning to school, switching careers, and changing jobs for different challenges.

Anders Hayden, research and policy co-ordinator for 32 Hours: Action For Full Employment, hopes this means workers will be toiling for fewer hours.

Hayden admits reduced work hours depends on public policy as well as a strong economy. But if rampant consumerism continues, then people will continue to work more hours to pay for the things they want to buy, creating a vicious cycle.

"I think you can imagine the emergence of people working two to three days a week, and then have the rest of the time to do what they really want," he says. "What kind of civilization is it if nobody has time to spend with each other?"

In the past, CEOs used to compete over who could survive on the least amount of sleep, but Hayden argues attitudes are changing, so working long hours are no longer seen as a status symbol.

Pamukoff adds many people are tired of working for large corporations where they have no say or little control. As a result, he believes in just 10 to 15 years, more entrepreneurs or mavericks will sprout up, in part as a backlash to the broken social contract.

Pamukoff refers to the recession of the early 1990s when corporations and governments — which had "a contract" to look after their staff — downsized operations, laying off many employees permanently.

That resulted in displacing hundreds of thousands of workers, the reduction of the middle class and a general sense of insecurity for Canadians, he says.

As a result, people will want to chart their own future and not depend on a company. As well, with two-career families and more women in the paid work force, the need for flexibility becomes essential. And one way to ensure more freedom and a better quality of life is working from home offices.

Of course, some jobs such as police officers, teachers, doctors, assembly line and construction workers will always require a physical presence in the factory or workplace.

But in the future, experts predict, more Canadians will work from home on a regular basis thanks to e-mail, computers and fax machines. That means they could live in rural areas or even the Muskokas, and only go to downtown Toronto office towers when a face-to-face meeting is required.

"If I were an investor, I would not be investing in a commercial real estate space in any big city," says U of T's Martin. "The reason is the notion of large, personalized offices in which individuals stay for most of their day or week, are going to be a thing of the past."

Martin argues people will have customized spaces at home where they can work with a cat on their lap or keep an eye on a baby in the crib.

However, individuals, who are still going to crave social interaction with colleagues, are more likely to have flexible spaces in offices — for use once or twice a week — for team gatherings where ideas are generated.

But Jim Stanford, economist with the Canadian Auto Workers union, warns that working at home is not always glamourous. The classic example, he says, is a garment worker, doing piecemeal sewing at home for low pay.

Technology can still create low-paying jobs such as call centres out of workers' homes. Individuals are unlikely to form a union because they are isolated from others, he says.

But Martin argues organized labour will have less of a role to play in the future, especially with the increased use of robotics in manufacturing.

"If people are going to want a one-to-one individual relationship with their company," he says, "this thing called organized labour is completely inconsistent with that world."

"I think workers are going to increasingly find that what is forced upon them by the structure and framework of organized labour treats them as a generic thing," Martin says.

For example, talented skilled tradespeople will be able negotiate better compensation, especially when there is a shortage. Those working on the factory floor will have "individualized, personalized contracts with their employers of the sort that athletes have," Martin says. "And they'll be happier by a longer shot."

The CAW's Stanford dismisses talk that information technology will revolutionize our lives and our workplaces.

"Information technology is changing the way we produce goods and services, but information in and of itself is not going to be as important as it has been made out," he says. "Frankly, I don't think work life is going to look all that much different in 30 or 40 years for most of us.

"We will still need manufactured goods and services which we consume right now. And I think that's where the vast majority of people are still going to be working 20, 30, 40 years from now," he says, adding that workers will be making circuit boards or computer chips instead weaving textiles.

"Even in this so-called information economy, people don't eat information. You don't wear information. You don't build your house out of information," Stanford says.

"The problems of an average worker, in terms of fighting for dignity, decent treatment and fair wages, are exactly the same things workers were fighting about 200 years ago. And probably, we're going to be fighting about 100 years from now."

> 'The problems of an average worker are exactly the same things workers were fighting about 200 years ago'

As people contemplate the future of work, it raises the question about whether it will mean the demise of cities such as Toronto.

Martin argues Toronto will continue to be vibrant and healthy because its urban centre attracts people here.

"I think the role of cities is to be cultural and social magnets. I think we're well-served with Toronto," he says. "It won't die."

While people won't necessarily need to be close to their workplaces, Martin says people will want to be near cities that are safe, well-planned with green space and attractions. People want to go to good restaurants as well as experience the arts, cultural and sporting events, he says.

"If your city stands for nothing, people won't want to be there. That's why I think having a sense of what the city should be and trying to promote a vibrancy is key."

Martin suggests that the Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge area will do fine because of its universities, a strong economy, a growing arts community and they are generally, nice cities to live in.

By contrast, he says he can't say the same for London, Ont. While it is a leader in the field of medicine, it's harder to express what that city stands for.

He predicts all the small communities in Greater Toronto will be popular with residents, in part, because of the city's amenities. And if people are only going to the office once or twice a week, or working flexible hours, rush-hour commutes won't be an issue.

"Increasingly, in the modern economy, people are going to live where they want to live."