

Guidance Tech Leader Scholarship Winning Essay

“How do you see the role of the Internet and technology evolving over the next decade? Explain what that means for businesses today”

“With the evolving role of the Internet and technology over the next decade, I will own a driverless car and have solar (or its successor) as my main source of power. I will speak or swipe what I need and expect to see it materialize almost instantly. My home environment will need to be ever more able to adapt to my lifestyle as I will likely spend more and more time there. Who needs to drive across town or across the country when we can see and communicate with each other in 3D? I will have a fully functioning robot in my home.

It's possible today – although I would not recommend it – to live your entire life without leaving your home, yet still get an education and a job, as well as interact with other people. It's possible to live your entire life without ever handling paper money or writing a check. Everything you need to do can be done online. I can visit the Louvre anytime.

What does this mean for businesses today? They are nothing like the businesses that will be needed tomorrow. Amazon buying Whole Foods does not mean anything to me unless Amazon uses machine learning to determine when to automatically re-order the items I need, coordinating their delivery based on my schedule, which they should be tracking right now through my phone and my calendar inputs. At some point, Amazon should be able to determine what I will want to order at the exact time I want to order it. My only need will be to review and click OK to have everything delivered.

With that, my robot should be able to receive the delivery and put everything where it belongs in a seamless transaction. This means Amazon will need to have the ability to control my robot. That will be just one more service I can purchase from Amazon.

Let's look at another business: travel. In the future, I should just need to say, "I want to go to Morocco." From there, my digital assistant will make all the arrangements, from finding the best airline/hotel/car deal and offering me several itineraries to choose from, including alternates that I did not originally request. Again, all I will need to do is select one and click OK.

What this boils down to is that businesses will rely on anticipating needs and minimizing consumer actions down to a "Yes" or "No". Businesses won't be able to rely on consumers going to a physical location, walking around, selecting things and bringing them home. They won't even be able to rely on consumers logging onto a device, selecting things, and waiting for delivery.

Businesses will have to rely on data, preferences and patterns to stay solvent, condensing big data down to the person level in order to be relevant in a person's life. A business will have to function as the consumer's all knowing personal shopper in order to be a merchant of choice in the future."

- Charlotte Ehlers