

Community Comment
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Technology in 2014

High tech is here to stay. As a society and as individuals we are depending more and more on high tech and the devices created to get through a day in our life. My youngest daughter is teaching middle school and we were talking the other day about the use of media presentations in the classroom. When I was teaching at HSU, visual aides consisted of overhead projections and slide presentations. The use of a visual aide can be a great asset to get a point across but to make them effective often requires a great deal of preparation and creativity. I spent untold hours on such classroom presentations.

My daughter, on the other hand has many more options at her demand. She can still do slide shows or static projections as appropriate but the time to create these aides takes a fraction of the time that I had to spend. This means she can be much more flexible in what she creates and can change or update a presentation at the speed of a computer. She can use her own photographs or search the web for an amazing array of options. She can even find films of various lengths of times to enhance her lecture. Since kids today, all of us really, are used to movie presentations, this is a great option for her arsenal.

The internet and the devices that have been invented to access and display the information available is a tremendous asset for teachers and trainers. Most of our schools locally are providing fairly good equipment for teachers to use.

This is generally true for most such devices that many of use in our daily lives. Think of the devices we cannot avoid; cell phones, smart phones, computers, tablets, remotes. These things, wise or not, are everywhere. They make our lives more flexible and timely but they also add a certain vulnerability.

We tend to think of terrorism when we think vulnerable but that's only a small part of the problem. To continue this high tech trend, we need to have more and better electrical power, we need to have more equitable distribution of power and the internet. And we need to have adequate protection for users. To protect the power sources and supply lines from terrorists or vandals is one need. But, as highlighted by the hacking problem at Target just recently, we need to protect the private information of the users of this technology.

The problems we need to address are many and challenging. The privacy guarantees are certainly one. The issues surrounding power, power development, and resource use and degradation are others. But one issue I hear little discussion of is the speed at which these devices are changing. My computer, for example is about six years old. The makers of these things upgrade software and hardware so rapidly that my equipment is nearly obsolete. This is a problem. Every time we change, we dispose of knowledge and

resources. We can retrain but the disposal is a major problem. We also eliminate real jobs at every change. Worse, Every improvement means more automation and less real work. Society can make these changes given enough time. The current race for the next big thing to make someone a billionaire is mindless of the kind of society we want to have.

Consumers drive this technology; we need to watch where we are going.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.