The challenge of aligning people skills with different forms of technology has been a constant in human discourse for centuries. In fact, as early as the agricultural revolution, some form of optimizing human productivity was envisioned when the horse was tethered to the plow. The use of technology to enhance human performance was more progressively employed with the introduction of the industrial revolution. Frederick Taylor sought to design repetitive human movements to optimize factory line work. Henry Ford and other industrialists revamped the factory workforce and workplace with the view of successfully enhancing human productivity.

The technological revolution was inaugurated by the launch of Sputnik and President Kennedy’s commitment to beat the Russians to the moon. More recently, during my tenure as a corporate board member in leading manufacturing company, I witnessed the employment of robotic and extremely advanced technologies that were unimaginable less than five years ago. Technology is indeed indispensable in maximizing productivity. However, without the proper training of humans to use it, technology’s effectiveness would not have been maximized throughout the organization nor would it have had a positive effect on the bottom line. As recently as two years ago, one robot replaced 25 humans and produced 50% more without having to take one day off. Although the robots were effective, they required maintenance and modifications through constant human vigilance. The employees providing the maintenance and modifications were trained by the experts who designed the technology; proper training was essential to the success of introduction of robots into the workplace.

The past 50 years has ushered in an era of technological development that could once only be imagined in science fiction novels. During this period, the computer and Internet, along with massive technological innovations they inspired, such as global positioning systems (GPS), made it possible to instantly communicate throughout the world and find locations however remote. As startling as the technological developments over the last 50 years have been, according to Ray Kurzweil, a researcher in the field of technological advancement, it is the technological innovations of the next 50 years that are expected to be more dramatic. Dreaming of what can be more dramatic than a human on the moon communicating back to earth defies human imagination. Kurzweil emphatically provides a prediction that the technological progress over the next 50 years will be 32 times as fast and 32 times as great as it has been over past 50 years. The implications of these achievements are clear. Either society will be forced to find a comfortable balance between our human skills development and our technological prowess or may find itself being led by machines rather than humans employing the technology to enhance performance within the workplace.

The book *Valuing People and Technology in the Workplace: A Competitive Advantage Framework* affords researchers and practitioners insight into a world that at this point in time is not fully understood.
by organizational leaders. In reality we must begin now to understand, design, and operate workplaces with the values of people and technology as described in this book. The workplace of the future requires a different approach to remain competitive. Futuristic corporate leaders and academic scholars, today, must be in a position to understand how to motivate people and value them within the organization when they are essentially not the central focus of the workplace that is envisioned over the next five decades.

To make work rewarding for the human person, while maximizing the use of technology in its fullest form, will be the greatest challenge facing corporate leaders in the second half of the twenty-first century. To imagine what work will be like, just think about a robot with artificial intelligence that can do almost everything from transplanting human organs, to designing motors, to reading blueprints, and organizing the workspace for maximum human performance without human intervention. Organizations will need to realign human resources to accommodate these fundamental changes. The fact is that these technologies exist at this very moment. Recently, the President of the United States challenged all Americans to shift from our quest of exploring the moon to exploring the planet Mars. As the quest for the moon spawned new technology, the quest for Mars will spawn technology not yet thought of. The question is will we be prepared for the discoveries of the future that awaits those who are making preparation for it? This book is a step in the right direction.

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