

Let's boil the 3,000 year history of work down to three minutes. First, there were hunters and gatherers. Everyone contributed, and their business was basically to survive. Eventually they began to tame plants and animals, opening up new kinds of work. And, if you were lucky, pleasure.

In early civilizations, powerful ruling classes emerged for the first time. They could outsource work to slaves and servants because that mundane, hard work was considered beneath their dignity, even though it made their lifestyles possible. In the Middle Ages, new religious philosophies changed that. Working hard became synonymous with doing good, pleasing God, and repenting for one's sins.

Then came the rise of the family farm. Working the land took on a sense of community. All family members literally pitched in, depended on each other, and the farmer's work was never done. But as civilization ticked on, more and more people moved to cities.

In those cities, artisans specialized more and more, and along came the craft stage of work, like shoemakers and carpenters, all very skilled and specialized. Then the Industrial Revolution came along and brought with it mass production. Humans adapted. New kinds of factories created new kinds of workers eager to earn a living however they could in a rapidly changing world. Some workers banded together. They took historic stands for humane work conditions and demanded all kinds of fundamental rights including the 40 hour work week.

The development of computers, the World Wide Web, and widespread education ushered us into the knowledge-based economy. As fewer people and fewer hours are needed to do the work of yesterday, people are adapting again. Today some do work that didn't even exist five years ago. So here we are. Is this the end of work's evolution?

No. How you live and work will invent the future. You'll work to eat. You'll eat by outsourcing food production to other workers. You'll tap into a deep human drive to work on something and to make a genuine difference doing it.

You'll rely on your networks and connections to help you out, and you will help others in turn. You'll specialize in something no one has thought of before using technology no one's seen before. You'll wonder how to better tip the balance of work and life to the needs of a new world. So keep on working, creating, and inventing the future of work.