

THE WORLD IS FLAT

A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century

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MAIN IDEA

The availability of cheap, ubiquitous telecommunications in the early 21st century has had the effect of creating a “flat” world. In other words, no matter where a company is physically located, it can now compete for customers who may similarly located anywhere in the world. This is generating some profound changes as these technological advances cut across many national and social boundaries which were previously well established and pervasive.

The driving force and engine room of this flattening process is generally labeled as “globalization”. Regardless of whether companies and countries resist change, globalization is gathering momentum. The resulting flattening of the world is making possible all kinds of complex supply chains which are based on value-added services. Products in all industries are becoming increasingly commoditized to take advantage of labor and services provided by emerging economies like China and India.

The great challenge for the business world of the 21st century will be to have sufficient leadership, imagination and flexibility to adapt quickly enough to stay up with the speed of changes as they occur. These changes are inevitable and unavoidable, so it’s worth taking the time to develop a framework for how to think about this task and manage it to generate maximum benefit.

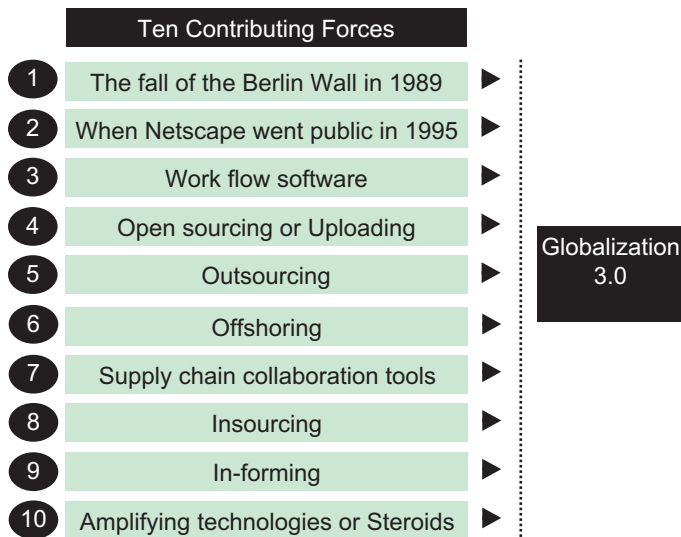
“I am convinced that the flattening of the world, if it continues, will be seen in time as one of those fundamental shifts or inflection points, like Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press, the rise of the nation-state, or the Industrial Revolution. If the prospect of this flattening – and all of the pressures, dislocations, and opportunities accompanying it – makes you uneasy about the future, you are neither wrong nor alone.”

– Thomas Friedman

1. Globalization 3.0 Page 2

Many people have become so preoccupied with the war on terror and America’s response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 they have not noticed Globalization has already entered a new phase. To use the numbering system of the software industry, Globalization 3.0 has already arrived. It will be marked above all by the empowerment of individuals rather than organizations.

2. The ten forces which have flattened the world Pages 2 - 4



3. The triple convergence already underway Page 5

The impact of Globalization 3.0 has also been heightened by the fact there is, at the present time, a triple convergence taking place of three separate forces, each of which has the potential to bring about significant changes in society. Having this triple convergence come together at the same time as the ten flattening forces are moving through the economy means one thing is certain: dramatic changes lie ahead during the rest of the 21st century.

4. A framework for moving forward from here Pages 5 - 8

The flattening world and the triple convergence will profoundly impact on the United States of America, developing countries, companies and also on geopolitics. The emergence of a level playing field which everyone in the globe can harness for their own purposes is almost certain to be a watershed event in the history of the world. Globalization 3.0 is about to free the human imagination to move to new heights and to achieve great things never before feasible. The key, however, is to spend more time focusing on what to do next and less time finding someone to blame when the changes generated are uncomfortable and disconcerting.

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