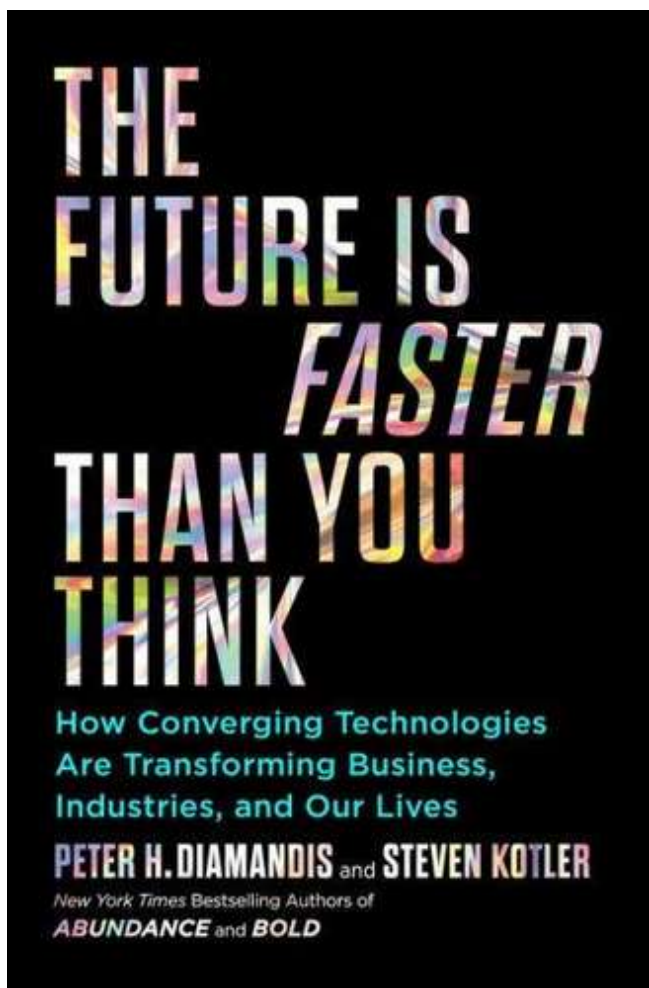


## ‘Future is Faster’ offers ultimately uplifting journey

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*“The Future is Faster Than You Think: How Converging Technologies Are Transforming Business, Industries and Our Lives” by Peter H. Diamandis and Steven Kotler. New York: Simon & Schuster. 2020, 384 pages, \$20 (hardcover).*



“There is little doubt that the decade to come will be filled with radical breakthroughs and world-changing surprises,” Peter H. Diamandis and Steven Kotler observe near the beginning of “The Future is Faster Than You Think: How Converging Technologies Are Transforming Business, Industries and Our Lives,” their exciting new treatise on what lies just around the corner and the impact it will have on everything.

“As the chapters ahead make very clear, every major industry on our planet is about to be completely reimaged,” they continue. “For entrepreneurs, for innovators, for leaders, for anyone sufficiently nimble and adventurous, the opportunities will be incredible. It will be both a future that’s faster than you think and arguably the greatest display of imagination rendered visible the world has yet seen. Welcome to an era of extraordinary.”

As someone who has read a fair amount on what various thinkers have written about the wonders and pitfalls the future holds, I tend to be somewhat skeptical of these kinds of hyperbolic proclamations. In the present case, however, after making my way through this exquisite

manuscript on where we currently find ourselves as a species, I have come to the conclusion their assessment is justified. We are indeed on the cusp of a revolution that will fundamentally change the world and how we function in it.

As might be expected given the nature of the subject matter, the book is exceptionally well-researched, with 76 pages of source notes at the conclusion of the foreword, 14 chapters and afterword that comprise the main text. Structurally, the content is arranged in three major sections: Part One, “The Power of Convergence,” consists of the first four chapters; Part Two, “The Rebirth of Everything,” is made up of the next eight chapters; and Part Three, “The Faster Future,” finishes out the narrative with chapters 13 and 14.

From my vantage point, Part Two constitutes the real meat and potatoes of their phenomenally insightful and intrinsically thought-provoking prose. The entire section is an interconnected description of what lies just over the horizon, as noted by the cascading chapters: “The Future of Shopping,” “The Future of Advertising,” “The Future of Entertainment,” “The Future of Education,” “The Future of Healthcare,” “The Future of Longevity,” “The Future of Insurance,

Finance, and Real Estate” and “The Future of Food.” Embedded in these themes is an overarching nod to the future of work, something we all have a vested interest in from a more personal perspective.

As is usually the case with this kind of book, I was naturally drawn to how Diamandis and Kotler envision the tremendous technological innovations occurring at a breakneck pace and transforming education at all levels. Although I was a little apprehensive as I made my way through many of their arguments and the evidence they provided to support them, I was nonetheless encouraged by the optimistic tone that was unmistakable throughout their thesis.

“Batch processing children is both an industrial hangover and an educational disaster because of basic biology,” they explain in “The Future of Education,” the eighth chapter and one of my personal favorites for reasons previously indicated. “Everyone is wired differently. Some of this is nature, some nurture, but the end result is the same: We’re individuals, and there’s no standard set of engaging experiences that can maximize learning for all.”

“But converging technology offers a host of new solutions to the challenges of quality and quantity,” the authors continue a little later. “Every technology that’s currently making an impact on entertainment is doing double duty in education, meaning, as we’ll see in a moment, one-size-fits-all is no match for the app store.”

Let’s just say I was not disappointed by the portrait they painted of the next phase in education’s quickly-evolving manifest destiny.

Diamandis is founder and executive chairman of the XPRIZE, executive founder of Singularity University and the co-founder of Human Longevity Inc., Celularity and Bold Capital Partners. He has degrees in molecular genetics and aerospace engineering from MIT as well as an MD from Harvard Medical School. The founder of more than 20 high-tech companies, Fortune magazine named him one of the “World’s 50 Greatest Leaders” in 2014. Kotler is founder and director of the Flow Research Collective as well as a best-selling author and award-winning journalist. His work has appeared in Time, The New York Times Magazine, The Atlantic, Wired and Forbes. His previous books include “Stealing Fire,” “The Rise of Superman,” “Tomorrowland” and “Last Tango in Cyberspace.”

In the final analysis, Diamandis and Kotler are realistic yet guardedly optimistic about the potential future that’s within our grasp. They are not naïve to the dangers that lie ahead, but they refuse to be paralyzed by them. In one sense, I interpreted their tome as a call to action – an admonition to be more purposeful and rational in how we use the amazing tools we have at our disposal. Keeping the glass half full will take our collective commitment.

“To be clear, there will still be terrorism, war and murder,” they concede in the afterword. “Dictatorship and disease won’t go away. But the world will quietly continue to get better. The goal here isn’t about creating a life of luxury, but rather a life of possibility. Thanks to the forces of convergence, the technological advances needed for that world of abundance are coming at an ever-increasing pace. Of course, creating that world won’t happen automatically. It will still require the largest cooperative effort in history. And this brings us to our final question: What, exactly, are you waiting for?”

I see that as a challenge none of us can afford to ignore. This was a very intriguing, sobering, enlightening and ultimately uplifting journey; highly recommended.

– Reviewed by Aaron W. Hughey, Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, Western Kentucky University.