

# Opinion: Embracing change on Labor Day

By Kathryn Reed

It was in 1894 that Congress passed legislation making the first Monday of September a holiday in honor of those who labor.

More than 120 years later the labor force is dramatically different, and yet not so much. There are still carpenters, teachers, nurses and many other professions from the 19th century.

But who could have envisioned the shared economy we have today that is upending the norms of long-held traditions? Visionaries. That's who.

Innovation and progress are the American way. People are always looking for new ways to provide an old product. We are looking for new products to improve upon what we have. And then there is the creation of entirely new commodities and services.

The world today is moving fast. It's easy to fall behind. Technology is a blessing and a bane.

I look at when I was in college. I had an electric typewriter. There were students who couldn't type who paid me to type their papers. Today, every elementary school student can type because they are using computers in the classroom. I think about the discs I had for old computers. Now I'm on the couch typing this on a laptop; my work is automatically saved in the cloud.

(This device also serves as my Kindle, stereo and primary communication tool to the world.)

As a kid I looked forward to watching certain TV shows on set nights. "The Wonderful World of Disney" was on Sundays, and was family time. Is there even that sense of anticipation anymore? It was a big deal when I got my first VHR player. Then a DVD player. Now I don't own either. I stream and watch shows at all hours of the day and night, nothing to record. Binge watching – gotta love it.

It's easy to take these advances in technology for granted. It's easy to ignore that these "improvements" displaced some workers. Jobs were eliminated. It was more than downsizing; it was that the actual job no longer existed. It's happened in my own profession. While I don't remember lead type, I do remember newspapers being pasted up. I even remember paper.

Nothing stays the same. That can be sad. We all have a sense of nostalgia for the good ole days – whenever those were for each of us.

I hear a lot of grumbling about the shared economy from those who are content with the status quo. Change is hard. It's especially difficult when you've built a successful business – the model has worked for years – and suddenly you feel blindsided. It's not an enviable position to be in.

But change isn't new.

Successful businesses provide the consumer with what they want. Steve Jobs, the late Apple Computer co-founder, told *Business Week*, "A lot of times, people don't know what they want until you show it to them."

Who knew people wanted lime colored bikes to ride in South Lake Tahoe? Apparently the owners of LimeBike. Much to the consternation of some folks this concept of renting a bike for a few minutes and dropping it off pretty much anywhere is too much for them. It's upending their business model.

Ah, those words – change, adaptability, innovation, progress.

It's hard when it's forced upon you. It's hard when you are the follower and not the leader. It's hard when all you want to do is keep things just as they are and the world around you won't let that happen.

The founders of Airbnb didn't really create something new; they put a modern twist on a short-term boarding house. The lodging industry is adapting.

Ride sharing companies have turned the taxi industry upside down.

Food trucks and delivery services are changing what it means to eat out.

Massage therapists travel to people's houses; not everyone needs a spa.

Businesses don't need their own four walls, but instead are content to share space with others – even on an hourly basis.

The news comes to an inbox and not the front porch.

Change. It happens in every business. Sometimes it feels like it comes at a glacial pace, sometimes at the speed of light.

Fighting it is rarely successful. It's the consumer, really, who will dictate what succeeds.

Hopefully, it's a labor of love that keeps you punching that proverbial time clock. Just don't get too complacent, change is coming – it always does.

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