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For Immediate Release

Future Hype

The Myths of Technology Change

By Bob Seidensticker

“This clear-eyed, level-headed, and historically sophisticated view of the realities of technological change by a knowledgeable insider will be absorbing reading for early adopters, neo-Luddites, and everyone in between.”

—Edward Tenner, author of *Why Things Bite Back: Technology and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences*

Everyone knows that the rate of technological change today is unprecedented. The Internet, the personal computer, cell phones, digital pictures and music, and so many other breakthroughs are revolutionizing our way of life. And everyone knows that, as a result, the social impact of technology been never been as profound as it is today.

But everyone is wrong.

In fact, according to high-tech industry veteran Bob Seidensticker, the pace of change isn't notably faster than in times past, and most highly touted “revolutionary” technologies of the past few decades are just refinements of existing technologies that were, in their time, far more life-changing. The telegraph made it possible to communicate instantly across thousands of miles for the first time in human history. That was a big deal. The cell phone allows you to do the same thing walking down the street. It's cool, but it's just not nearly as fundamental a break with the past.

In *Future Hype*, Seidensticker uses dozens of such examples to entertainingly debunk wrong-headed notions about technological change, notions that all too often result in people adopting new products too quickly, too unquestioningly, and for the wrong reasons. He demolishes nine High-Tech Myths, proving that the rate of changes is not exponential (Myth #1), that important new products do not arrive any faster than they ever have (Myth #3), and that the Internet does not really change everything (Myth #8). And he surveys the past few hundred years to show that many of the technologies we now take for granted transformed society in far more dramatic ways than recent developments so often touted as unparalleled and historic.

This iconoclastic book provides a new way of looking at technology, one that will help readers take a shrewder, more skeptical view when the latest expensive “must-have” innovation is trotted out.

More...

“Future Hype takes us on a technological rollercoaster over a landscape of exaggerated promises and failed dreams. Required reading for journalists, teachers, business managers and, well, everybody else.”

—A. K. Dewdney, author of *Beyond Reason* and *Yes, We Have No Neutrons*

“A must-read for those who think the Internet changes everything.”

—Bob Frankston, VisiCalc developer and computer industry pioneer

“Future Hype is a great antidote to the familiar boosterism about unprecedented technological growth. Seidensticker puts technological change into historical perspective, which enables us to measure progress against what we have known, rather than against what we are promised.”

—Henry Petroski, Aleksandar S. Vesic Professor of Civil Engineering and Professor of History, Duke University, and author of *Pushing the Limits*

“Bob Seidensticker draws a fine, dark, witty, and kaleidoscopic picture of technology here. When he’s done, we realize that the dark side belongs not to technology, but to the people who misrepresent it and misuse it. The moral of his story is that we had better show greater respect for all the things that we, by our nature, are constantly compelled to build.”

—John H. Lienhard, author of *How Invention Begins: Echoes of Old Voices in the Rise of New Machines*

*“A wise and clear-eyed book, **Future Hype** challenges the conventional wisdom about technological change and provides a fresh perspective on our so-called computer age.”*

—Nicholas G. Carr, author of *Does IT Matter?*

“Future Hype... is a wonderful compendium of the way the world works, and not just the way it should work. Hope springs eternal, and there are good reasons for optimism, but **Future Hype reveals more accurately when we should be optimistic and when we should be skeptical. **Future Hype** is an important contribution to the skeptical literature.”**

—Michael Shermer, Publisher of *Skeptic* magazine, the "Skeptic" columnist for *Scientific American*, and the author of *Why People Believe Weird Things*, *The Science of Good and Evil*, and *Science Friction*

BOB SEIDENSTICKER graduated from MIT and spent 25 years in the technology industry, including an 8-year stint at Microsoft as a project manager. He resigned from Microsoft in 1997 to write software as an independent developer and to pursue a writing career.

Future Hype: The Myths of Technology Change

By Bob Seidensticker

Published by Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Paperback Original

Number of Pages: 254

ISBN: 978-1-57675-370-5

\$15.95

Publication Date: April 2006