



Randy Wolken  
President & CEO

## Is Your Next Teammate a Cobot?

Is your next teammate a Cobot? The likely answer is yes. So, what is a cobot? It is a computer-controlled robotic device designed to assist a person. They are human-safe collaborative robots who work alongside humans to make incredible products more efficiently.

Manufacturing, and all jobs, are becoming more automated and technical. Economists Carl Frey and Michael Osborne of Oxford University have estimated that close to half of U.S. jobs could be at risk from automation. This means our current jobs will be transformed using technology. Therefore, every job in the future will need us to guide and optimize the best technology we have. In fact, we all must learn to be continuous rookies and relearn jobs using the latest technology. The good news, it does not mean that we are going to get replaced by robots. But, we will mostly likely be working with a cobot or other new technology to assist in our work.

What we also know is this trend of assisted work with cobots is accelerating. According to James Stettler, an analyst at Barclays Capital, the cobot market could grow from just over \$100 million last year to \$3 billion by 2020. From what I am seeing, it means we will need to learn to use the newest technologies and upgrade our skills constantly. And, as we all know, this is not easy to do. However, it has a huge potential to make our lives easier and more productive. How much more productive? Working with German carmaker BMW, researchers found that robot-human teams were about 85 percent more productive than either alone. This combination shows that man and machine can win together.

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As a leader, we will need to help our teams see the value of the newest technology advances and guide them to using it. This will require substantial behavior changes over a sustained period of time. For many, this will be a culture shock from what they expected when they entered the workforce. The entire pattern of learning has shifted. When I was entering the workforce, I was taught that we would receive our education and then our training and we were then expected to use it to be successful. Learning and education upfront was emphasized. In the last two decades, due to the speed of change, the winning formula has shifted. Continuous learning and upskilling has become the necessary rhythm of every job. Along with skillset upgrades has come the necessary requirement to use new processes and technology—and adapting as technology continues to change at an ever-increasing pace. As Will Rodgers said, “Even if you are on the right track, if you stand still you will get run over!”

As leaders, we must model the need for continuous behavior change and the use of new technologies such as cobots. This is where our use of the millennials' understanding of new technologies, especially software solutions, can help. It can also bind us to the fast growing part of our work teams – the millennial generation. It will take humility to admit we don't know the answer and need to learn the technology. However, this is exactly what all others in our organizations will need to do. If we go first, they are much more likely to follow. Future leaders of excellence will ask more questions, take more risks, and be more humble. The sooner we learn and demonstrate this with excellence the sooner our teams will follow and grow on their own path to success.

Despite the fear being generated around robot use, it is not likely that a robot will replace you. However, new technology, such as cobots, will certainly change everything you know about your current work and your current business. What are you doing to get ready for it? What is your team doing?