



## Long-Term Implications of Current Trends

Author	Publication	Publication Date
Steven M. Worth	ASAE Executive Management Section	June 2008

It seems to me that this discussion touches on a number of interesting trends that have very long term implications for us all--individually, organizationally and nationally. Some are: rising energy costs; increased concern about our carbon footprints; personal quality of life concerns; and generational differences in technology comfort levels.

Certainly fuel costs and pollution consciousness are having and will continue to have a major impact on consumption and commuting patterns in the US. The price of a gallon of gasoline in US dollars in Germany today is \$11.90 as it is in Turkey--the two countries that pay the most for its automobile fuel. But even outside of these two countries much of the rest of the world pays at least close to double what Americans currently pay at the pump; can the US be far behind? So as we Americans contemplate the near term possibility of eight dollar a gallon gasoline prices as well as the impact of greenhouse gasses (enjoying these record-breaking temperatures and bizarre weather patterns?--good, because this is just a a foretaste of more to come!) can changing consumer patterns and lifestyle changes be far behind?

This shorter workweek discussion has been the subject of passionate debate in France for many years. France currently has a legally mandated 35 hour work week (along with six weeks of legally mandated vacation time a year) that was designed to address quality of life issues and to combat the perceived "race to the bottom" effects of globalization.

But, as Thomas Friedman ("The World is Flat" author) pointed out, while the French were trying to create a 35 hour workweek the Indians were busy figuring out how to fit 35 hours into a single work day!

I thought of Friedman's comments when I had a discussion recently with a small business owner in France who prides himself on his concern with quality of life issues. He is against what he sees as brutal American-style capitalism and therefore against any rollback of these hard-earned French workers rights. Later in the conversation I inquired about how his own business was doing. Without skipping a beat he informed me happily that his business was doing just fine since he sent most of his production to an affiliate operation in China.....

The added dimension in all of these concerns I think is global. As US fuel prices go up and we turn more corn into ethanol, riots are taking place in Egyptian cities over the rising costs of bread. And as we rationalize how easy it is to telecommute we come to the same conclusion that professionals in India have reached--telecommuting works! Who knows or cares whether the person on the other end of the fax, email or telephone call is in India as long as the work gets done? If you don't think this global dimension affects us all then we need to think again.

Talent has become a commodity to be bought and sold over the Internet. It used to be that

westerners had a competitive advantage over the rest of the world through their advanced education and training; but as I look at the MBA classes I teach at Johns Hopkins University I see that the majority of my students are from China, Korea, India, and other countries whose economies are growing at near double digit rates. When I ask these students what they intend to do with their degrees their answers have changed over the years. It used to be that they wanted to stay in the US. Now, most aspire to go home to their own country where their professional opportunities are greater. For some time now businesses have learned they can find good, English-speaking, US trained talent in Shanghai, Seoul, and New Delhi who work for salaries that are less than half of their US counterparts and whose access to the Internet is just as effective as those working from their homes in a US suburb.....

This is a Brave New World that Huxley never envisioned. But it seems to me that as we talk about all these issues, we would do well to realize that there are now literally millions of talented, hard working, well-trained professionals elsewhere in the world who are happy to help!