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This newsletter features topics related to managing change and improving our work environments. If there are topics you would like to see covered or feedback you have about this newsletter, please submit your ideas and feedback to the following link: <http://www.anneoffner.com/contact.htm>

Globalization is happening rapidly and all around us.

Bobⁱ is a manager in a large global company. Two years ago he was heading up projects for a small, boutique technology firm that was acquired by his present employer. His main priority was ensuring projects moved along quickly and clients were satisfied with the progress. These days, as a project lead in a division of the large global company, he finds himself managing projects for two bosses, one in Asia and the other in Europe. In addition to being rewarded for moving quickly, he is now being asked to get the buy-in of his two bosses as well as others on his diverse project team before he can implement. He says this has required him to learn how to work with team members from cultures around the world as well as build his patience and ability to create influential communications and reports to help move the projects along.

Sue is an executive recruiter who started her firm fifteen years ago. She has been successful building relationships and identifying savvy executives for large companies in the mid-sized city in which she is based. Fifteen years ago Sue spent

the majority of her day on the phone calling executives, doing interviews and connecting with client organizations. These days, Sue finds that some of the best executive candidates can be located first on the internet so she spends up to 2-3 hours of her day searching internet sites. She says that many of her client companies have expanded globally or have merged with global organizations and are therefore increasingly seeking candidates with international experience and the ability to lead teams that are based in multiple countries.

Johnny is seven years old. He spends his free time playing Yu-Gi-Oh! with his school buddies. Yu-Gi-Oh! is a Japanese game that has become popular in the U.S. These kiddos also like watching Pokémon videos and often pretend that they too have Pokémon sitting on their shoulders (which only they can see of course). Pokémon are fictional little critters that are featured in videos and computer games.ⁱⁱ Johnny likes to brag that no one has beaten him at Yu-Gi-Oh! since he was six years old!

Globalization is happening. In fact, one author believes it happened "while he was sleeping."



Globalization

According to Thomas Friedman, author of *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, Globalization is

exactly what's going on and it's happening at such a pace that in twenty years or so we'll look back and be amazed at how it has affected everything from how business is run to what kids are exposed to in their everyday life.

Friedman is a best-selling author who writes a foreign affairs column in the New York Times. His book is interesting because it highlights global changes that have taken place over the past couple decades and how those changes have drastically shifted business operations such as out sourcing and off-shoring and allowed a much broader group of people to participate in the global economy.

For example, he says the introduction of the Worldwide Web and the Internet have enabled communications and information sharing that were cumbersome or impossible ten or fifteen years ago. This means that small business owners in India and China can now communicate instantly with customers across the globe.

He discusses how events like "tearing down" the Berlin Wall reverberated across the world as Communism faded and opened up doors for commerce and capitalism. This allowed India and China, for example, to become part of what he calls "the global supply chain for services and manufacturing".

Friedman has a fascinating perspective on the impact of events as different as Y2K and 9-11. He explains the affect of happenings like China joining the World Trade Organization in 1991 and the way internet search engines like Google and Yahoo have provided unimaginable connectivity to places most of us will never visit.

Much like Malcolm Gladwell, the author of *The Tipping Point*, Friedman believes

there are pivotal points in history that, combined with certain events and people, inspire powerful movements and shape our future.

The invention of the printing press, for example, is a pivotal point that Friedman mentions because it changed how we use information and altered the economy forever.

And he says, in his first chapter, this all seemed to happen "while he was sleeping." It all came into play quickly, as the 21st Century began and has the potential to truly "rock our world" as we come to grips with the changes that are occurring and that are ahead of us. So even if we don't consider ourselves worldly or well-traveled, think again. You might be more "globally-oriented" than you think.



Real Life Globalization

What has changed in your world over the past decade? I bet if you look carefully, a hint of change is on the horizon.

- If you have kids, you may be interested to know that, according to Friedman, some McDonald's are currently using *call centers* to take orders at the drive-thru as well as at the counter. They have found it reduces errors and wait-time for customers!ⁱⁱⁱ
- Another example, JetBlue Airlines uses housewives in Utah to make reservations – all virtual and most are part-time.^{iv}
- *What global influences are you seeing in your everyday world?*



Training the Workforce

Before getting into the work world, the internet is changing how students learn. Students at my nephew's private high school are required to bring lap tops to class. Most college dorms now have hook-ups for computer equipment. I know it was a long time ago but the room I used to play "Jacks" in on rainy days is now the computer room in my old grade school.

When I was a full-time graduate student in 1991-1994, the university library still used the card catalogue and we completed our statistics homework on the mainframe. Now, a little over a decade later, I teach college classes. Students do their stats homework on their PCs, many bring their lap tops to class to take notes, and one of the most popular offerings for classes these days involves virtual learning – classes that are taken from home, on-line and/or via satellite connection! In the future I won't be surprised to see students from all over the world taking a class together via satellite.

There are some downsides to all this globalization. For example, in the classes I teach, I have to remind students that

some research still must be done in the actual library building. While they can search fairly thoroughly on-line for articles, some resources are still only available via actual *paper* in the library. Most students these days find it too cumbersome to leave the computer and make a trip to read a reference that they can hold in their own two hands!



In Summary

So, yes progress has its' challenges but overall I'd say we're facing an exciting period of change. While we may be in for a bumpy ride as we adjust and learn new skills, what alternative do we really have? According to Friedman, it's a force that has been growing rapidly and without exception and will likely alter key components of our existence like our economic structures, business dealings, educational practices...and family entertainment just to name a few!

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This newsletter is edited by Larry Offner of West Palm Beach, Florida.

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ⁱ Names in this newsletter are fictional but based on actual situations observed by the author.

ⁱⁱ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pok%C3%A9mon> or <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yugio>.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Thomas Friedman, author of *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, p. 40-42.

^{iv} See Thomas Friedman, author of *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, p. 36-37.