

## **Be Mindful of What You Wish For: A robotic scientist's answer to the demand for a \$15 minimum wage**

By Christopher Paul 09/04/2014



As fast food employees in more than (supposedly) 150 cities strike and demonstrate for an increase in the minimum wage, talented engineers educated at Berkley, Stanford, UCSB, and USC continue to perfect an artificial intelligent (AI) robot replacing the need for fast food restaurant employees.

Alexandros Vardakostas, cofounder of Momentum Machines said, "Our device isn't meant to make employees more efficient, it's meant to completely obviate them."

AI robots are becoming more sophisticated paving way for opportunities for replacing human beings in jobs that were once thought of as the sole domain of human beings.

Benefits of a burger-bot may include increased consistency and sanitation, speed (360 burgers/hr), and superior quality. These benefits could facilitate spending on gourmet ingredients thereby providing consumers with high quality food at fast food prices.

Burger-bots would reduce the \$135,000 spent per year on burger line cooks, reduce liabilities in the workplace, management duties, and significantly reduce the overall food preparation footprint facilitating smaller kitchens.

As one door closes, so another opens. Although without a doubt, many line cooks would be replaced. Burger-bots would increase the need for more engineers and technicians to design and maintain the machines.

"Momentum Machines wants to help ease the move for displaced employees by partnering with vocational schools to offer discounted technical training for anyone displaced by their robot. Their

goal is indicative of the overall tenor of an increasingly heated debate about how AI and robot employment may reduce human employment in the near future.”

In a recent Pew survey, approximately 1900 technology experts were split as to whether robots would be good or bad for employees. 52% believed AI and robotics would be a net positive for the workforce and 48% believed the opposite.

Those in the positive camp reasoned that throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century “traditional jobs have been shredded replacing them with new modes of work requiring higher levels of knowledge and skills leading to higher wages. This is what history indicates and should happen again with the advances of AI and robotics.

The negative camp is less sure that these new technologies will prove to be overall, a good thing. As with any technological paradigm shift, there are those who will be left behind, those who will re-train, and those who will seek out new opportunities.

If we look toward Ray Kurzweil’s roadmap for the progression of artificial intelligence, we note that the looming transitional period looming ahead will be exponential, hence the transitional period will be more difficult because of the speed, depth, and breadth of change that will inevitably occur.

Momentum’s offering to assist some of the cost to retrain employees may provide the necessary boost. Others still point to a change in policy by raising the minimum wage standard. Perhaps we are already well equipped to adapt to this new leap in automation, more than we realize.

Our workforce is as flexible as it has ever been. We search for employment opportunities online, we have reduced geographic limitations, we have immediate access to masses of information, we now earn certifications and degrees online, and cycle through multiple industries in our employment careers.

Of course automation will present a challenge to some people. Without a doubt this topic will become a public discourse and politically divisive. Yet history has shown that the net result will be positive as it has over the last two centuries.

Image Credit: Momentum Machines

Researched 09/04/2014 sourced from: [http://singularityhub.com/2014/08/10/burger-robot-poised-to-disrupt-fast-food-industry/?utm\\_source=Singularity+University+Lists&utm\\_campaign=cb5d4581f8-Newsletter\\_February2014&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_9c706260a1-cb5d4581f8-57690549](http://singularityhub.com/2014/08/10/burger-robot-poised-to-disrupt-fast-food-industry/?utm_source=Singularity+University+Lists&utm_campaign=cb5d4581f8-Newsletter_February2014&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_9c706260a1-cb5d4581f8-57690549)