Automation invades workplaces

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Office Automation.. it seems to be a nice jargon for Impressing people working in all kinds of work environment. However, there are several opinions on this. Some believe, it could refer to the use of technology for improving the productivity of the white collar workers. Even today, there are many offices which claim to be modern because of their sophisticated pin cushions and paper weights. Obviously, to be a modern office there has to be more....

Machine readability of data, text, voice and image/graphics are some of the greatest gifts of contemporary technology. A report can not only be prepared on the word processor, but can also be mailed on the wire. Also, the data on a spread sheet or the pictorial details of a complex design can be sent from one point to another. Not only that a face to face conference or any sort of an office announcement is also possible.

Not very long ago, if a copy of an important document was to be made, the text had to be pounded again on the typewriter, as the secretary had not seen a photocopier. Just imagine the extent of trouble one must have experienced each time a draft was corrected! The whole material had to be input all over again, mainly because of an unintelligent machine.

Editing a text, cut and paste. global delete and replace, merging with other texts or graphics inbuilt thesaurus, indexing outlining, fonts are but a few features. that a word processor can do. Think about all the labour saved by these software packages!

Next to the word-processor, the spread-sheet technology, generates a generic format for handling the matrices both in figures and text. It also operates tools, such as column summing, row swapping etc. Databases help in the storage, collation, and reporting of information to the management.

As you enter your chamber, you browse through your machine. You find there is new mail. Some payments have been effected. You may now confirm the holiday to the hill resort you had planned earlier. You ask the machine to file this receipt in the

appropriate collection. Meanwhile, you draft a letter to the bankers requesting them to release the payment to the travel agent and schedule it to be mailed at a time when the tariff will be low Like the cheques that replaced the currency, the machine to machine communication has done away with the paper.

No longer a wild imagination! With Electronic Data Interchange, offices can now be paperless. Filing Cabinets may now be Electronic. A wrist-watch can by no stretch of imagination be called a time computer. For any device to be addressed as a computer, it has to have the adaptability to be programmed. A personal computer for example, if properly programmed can even be used for daily chores like to read the day's temperature or to turn on a heater or switch off an air-conditioner. But you and I know that it is rarely done… Why? Because most people are under the impression that computers can be used only for getting information of one kind or the other from a Keyboard, Printer or a Modem. We are still illiterate to a great extent on the practical applications of the Programmable Large scale Integrated devices.

Computers can make decisions, but only as long as they are logical. According to Scientists and Industrial Planners, it is obvious that in the near future any work environment will be filled with intelligent machines, multisensual media and artificial creatures. These new advances are likely to fit within familiar forms. Office workers will toil before computers, although those machines will probably respond to commands that are spoken or scribbled as well as typed.

The stand-alone machines that dominate office desktops today, will eventually merge themselves with the walls and furniture and exotic display devices will serve as interconnected networks. In future, computer screens could even be etched on to the lenses of eye glasses.

The networks will become increasingly populated with new kinds of software entities which will monitor the outside world, with exact information, filtering out the unwanted clutter and tracking down appoinments.

As a rule of the Thumb, Technology will provide a majority of people of the future what only the wealthiest can buy today. Of course, lots of fantastic new advancements in technology are sure to come. The hard part will be deciding which ones to accept and which to reject…