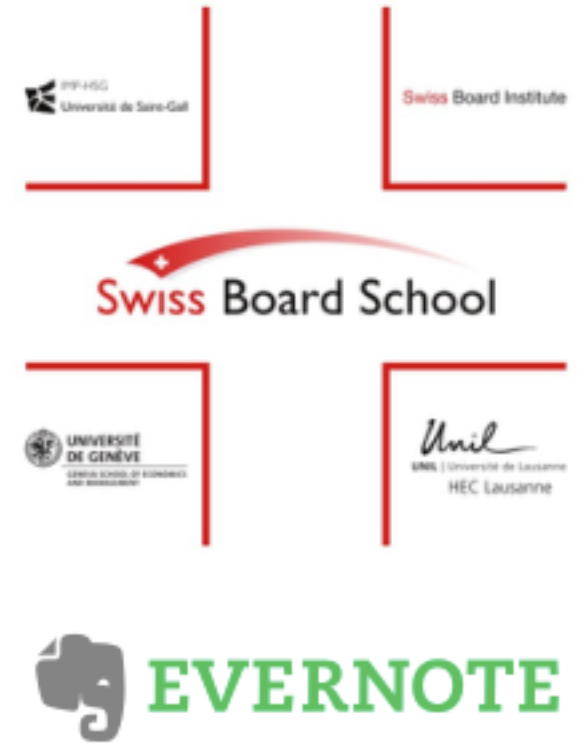
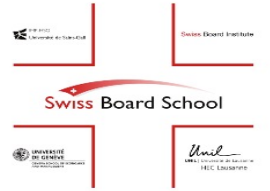


The Key Challenge of Today and Tomorrow: Triple Overload



The Triple Overload of Knowledge Workers



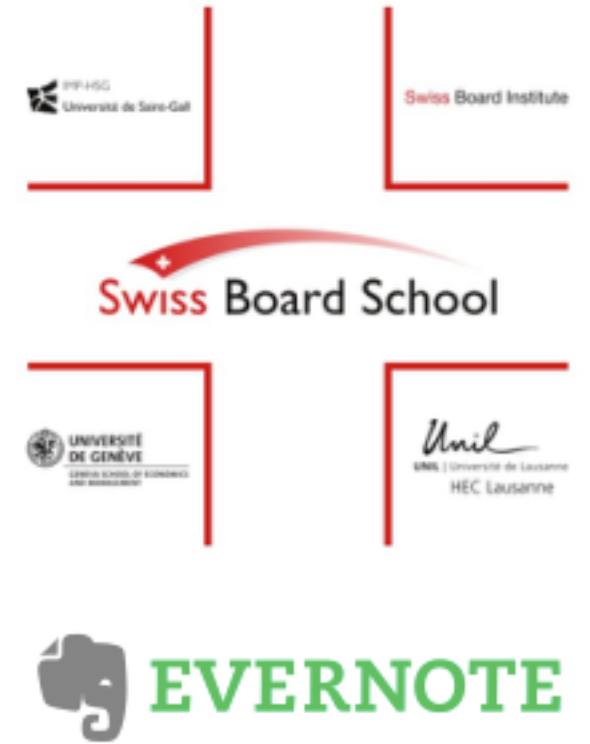
- 2.5h per day
- 14 months
- 80% of working time
- 5min time span

ML* and AI* are the Answers to the Triple Overload Challenge

<i>WHAT</i>	<i>SITUATION</i>	<i>IMPACT</i>
Data Overload	Data Doubling Curve: - today at 14 months - 2020 below 1 month	2.5h searching for information per day
Communication Overload	80% of working time spent for communication (Meetings, Email, Chat, WhatsApp etc.)	Not much time left for actual work (Deep Work)
Cognitive Overload	Max. 5min of time between two interruptions – GTD* not possible at all	Makes people tired and exhausted without real output. Going home frustrated.

*ML: Machine Learning / AI: Artificial Intelligence / GTD: Getting Things Done

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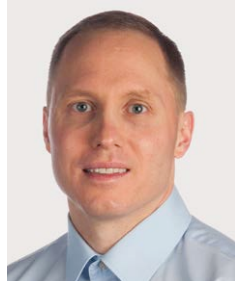
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By Beat Bühlmann
General Manager EMEA,
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Managing the Triple Overload Challenge

Being successful in today's digitized world partially requires new approaches and a new skill set. What has worked in the past may not always work again. While the digital age offers many opportunities arising from new data, it also poses a significant challenge with regard to constant distractions and multiple areas of information and data overload.

Digital Transformation Is Nothing Special, Or?

Over the last few centuries, we have seen constant changes in the business environment. The First Industrial Revolution (steam and mechanical production) started around 1780, when companies and leaders had to adapt to new circumstances and, hence, had to learn new skills. The same occurred during the Second Industrial Revolution (electricity and mass production) as well as the Third (IT and automation). At first sight, there is nothing new or special nowadays. According to Klaus Schwab (2016), "now a Fourth Industrial Revolution is building on the Third, the digital revolution, that has been occurring since the middle of the last century. It is characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres."

Yes, the current revolution looks like it involves more changes happening at once, but it is still not unique. So, why is there such a hype about the Fourth Industrial Revolution, especially about the digital transformation? Is digitalization just another management fad? Or are companies and leaders required to understand a crucial difference to survive?

The Difference: Speed, Number of Changes and Trend Scouting

The industrial revolution happening now has one significant difference compared to the previous ones: speed. Constantly increasing computation power and storage capacity at a lower cost are allowing researchers to make greater progress in shorter periods of time. Such progress leads to more changes and new trends that need to be evaluated. Those changes impact our businesses and private lives with increased frequency. Who has not heard

the phrase "change is the only constant"? Fifty years ago, a board member had to deal with a maximum of one large, truly relevant change during his or her tenure. But now, a new breakthrough seems to occur every four to five years (e.g., the Internet, Wi-Fi, mobile phones, robotics, artificial intelligence, and machine learning, just to name a few). What are the business implications of the massive number of changes we all have to undergo? How do we deal with this situation of constant information overload? Changes are interconnected with emerging trends. Ignoring megatrends may hurt a business significantly or even lead to bankruptcy. However, trend scouting is complex. Often, trends are overestimated in the beginning and then underestimated after the initial hype fades. A great example is the print newspaper industry. You might recall how, around 1998, scholars claimed that in a few years, there would no longer be any printed newspapers. In his *Harvard Business Review* (HBR) article (2014), Roger Martin said "It's only in the last ten years that the Internet has really started to kill newsprint and newspapers." As changes do not manifest overnight, constant trend scouting and trend weighting are essential.

The Triple Overload Challenge

Besides speed, there is another major difference between the current and the former Industrial Revolutions. There is an increasingly significant challenge that is often underestimated or not even dealt with at all: the triple overload challenge (data, communication, and cognitive) of the First World business environment.

1. Data overload

How much time do workers spend each day looking for information? Research suggests the average knowledge worker wastes about *2.5 hours per day* searching for information, which is not productive at all. Given the vast data growth expected, investing in an efficient information-retrieval solution for your company is essential for future success. Furthermore, finding information is key to preventing duplication of work.

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2. Communication overload

Today's workers spend about *80% of their labour time* communicating or collaborating (e.g., through emails, meetings, and texting). As a result, not much time remains to do deep work.

3. Cognitive overload

Research shows that a knowledge worker gets interrupted or switches tasks every *3-5 minutes* on average, leading to a very unhealthy cognitive overload that ultimately results in exhaustion.

All three forms of overload together represent a serious challenge, be it for productivity or health reasons (i.e., burn-outs).

Successfully Tackling the Challenge

Thanks to the increasing amount of data available, today's business environment allows leaders to do less guesswork. This might be considered beneficial, but it requires a fundamentally new approach to management in order to turn it into something positive. Measuring and testing repeatedly have to become our state of normalcy. Learning quickly is more important than finding a perfect solution that is outdated at launch. Moreover, it is crucial to have key performance indicators (KPIs) at all levels which are, ideally, shared with the entire company. Such transparency is a strong signal of inclusion for employees. Of course, speed is instrumental when it comes to working with data, too.

One often overlooked but important step towards the path of digital transformation is setting the correct communication expectations. To put it simply: if a house catches on fire, do you email the fire department? Decide as a team which communications should happen via video conference, phone calls, chat or email by creating a team communication charter. Having such a document in place can go a long way towards building cooperation, meeting deadlines, and creating an atmosphere of trust and accountability in our digitized society. For more tips on a successful digital transformation, consult the accompanying checklist.

CHECKLIST FOR A SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

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1. For a successful transformation, board members and CEOs need to lead.
2. Working with internal and external data should be a natural part of your company DNA.
3. Create performance dashboards at all levels and share them with employees.
4. Regularly scout for new trends and analyze them. Try creating "Do Not Disturb" or "Deep Work" hours in your calendar.
5. Create a culture of failure at all levels of your organisation and talk about it publicly.
6. Think strategically, but act short-term (ie. 2-3 tests per quarter): try fast, fail fast, and apply what you learn.
7. Address the information overload challenge and lower unproductive communication.
8. Don't think and operate in online and offline silos; there is no separation anymore. The world is now "noline".
9. Remember that speed beats perfection: companies most adaptable to change survive.
10. Bring on a CIO with the right can-do attitude: your IT department should be an enabler.