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The Technology That Could End an Industry

Sam Volkering / 1 week ago / Featured / New & Emerging Technologies

There's one thing I hate about bars and pubs. If there are enough people, it takes forever to get a drink.



When you're out with friends and you just want to enjoy yourself, it can be a bit of a pain. The last thing you want to do is stand in line waiting...and waiting for a drink.

Then, once you do get there, the price is often far above odds. By the time you do get back to your mates, you're in a huff. And then the cycle repeats.

However, a few nifty **technologies** could help ease the pain of waiting for drinks. I've seen a few first hand. But there's one that I think will leave everything for dead. And it's likely to put a lot of bartenders out of a job.

Technology to help us drink more efficiently

Thirsty Bear is a pub near my London office. On the outside, it looks like any other pub. But inside is a different experience.

You see, at Thirsty Bear you don't need to order drinks at the bar. All you do is sit at one of the main tables that has a tablet built into the table.

Most of these tables also have two beer (or cider) taps. So when you want a drink, you tap it yourself. As you pour, a little number in the bottom right corner of the tablet starts to creep up. It's tracking how many litres of beer you tap.

Not everyone drinks beer, so if you want to order wine, spirits or anything else, you do so though the tablet. Then wait staff bring it out to you.

Want food? Easy. Order through the tablet. You can even custom build your own burger through the app on the tablet. And then once you've got all the food and drink you want, use it as a normal tablet. Surf the net. Check Premier League scores.

When you're finished, you just pay and go. It's a technologists dream pub. And possibly my favourite in London.

I'm pretty sure the Thirsty Bear isn't the world's first pub to utilise this system, but it's the only one I know of.

But even as good as the Thirsty Bear is, the winds of change are blowing hard.

The robot barman debuted in 2013 at Google I/O. I hope you're not imagining some kind of fridge that spits cans of beer at you. It's far more complex than that.

Makr Shkr is a fully-fledged, robotic, drink making system. It took two high speed industrial robot arms, 30 spirits, one app, and 41,600 man-hours to put together.



Source: Makr Shkr

The result is a system that can punch out 120 cocktails an hour. That might not sound like much, but it's two drinks a minute. Or think of it in dollar terms. Say a cocktail costs \$12, this robot can bring in \$1,440 an hour in revenue.

And remember, the robotic barman doesn't get tired. It doesn't need breaks, and if you had the licence for it, it could run 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The efficiency of the robot system is astounding. Imagine having a bar with two Makr Shkr systems. That'd be 240 drinks an hour or \$2,880 in revenue (at \$12 a throw).

The argument against this system is that it will eliminate jobs. It's a valid point. I showed Makr Shagr to my mate and brother. One said 'awesome'; the other said 'not for me... I'm a human interaction kinda guy'.

Clearly, this kind of technology will divide popular opinion. And what about the hoards of travellers who come to Australia, many of who find work in bars to supplement their dwindling savings? That'd be the end of that.

My colleague, Vern Gowdie, recently spoke about robots too, suggesting they're a threat to middle class employment. Vern highlighted an example from a recent article in *The Weekend Australian Magazine*. The article mentioned that **Asciano's [ASX:AIO]** \$350 million automated cargo handling upgrade of the Port Botany terminal will reduce the workforce from 380 to 180.

In many cases, yes, **robotic workforces** will reduce repetitive, menial jobs. This happens all the time throughout history. [New technologies](#) replace old ones. But in the process, something new is created.

New technology builds on previous technology. Pre-telephone, we sent telegrams. Before planes, we used trains. Before email, we wrote letters. Would you change any of it? People lost jobs along the way, but surely we're better off for the progress?

New technologies force old industries to change. They become more efficient. New jobs that didn't exist before appear out of nowhere — jobs we didn't know we needed...until we needed them.

So robotic workforces like Makr Shagr might well replace barmen in the near future. But then it could also create an entirely new set of work for the hospitality industry.

Like with Thirsty Bear, I might not need the barman to pour my beer anymore, but then the pub might need more staff to ensure speedy service of food. Or perhaps the pub will hire someone to ensure patrons are using the system to its full potential. A maître d' for the 21st century.

Just because one job is no longer necessary doesn't mean the end of a workforce. If anything, it means a new workforce begins. And that might be in robotics, programming, and maintenance. What some might consider as highly-skilled work now, might be routine for the next generation of workers. But that all starts with the education system (which is another *huge* topic for discussion).

The middle class isn't at risk. Employment isn't at risk. This is just a shift to a new kind of work. We need technology and innovation. It's how the world moves forward. It might be hard for some people, but perhaps we're at the very beginning of a completely new era of civilisation.

Regards,
Sam Volkering [±](#)

Editor, *Tech Insider*

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Oh no. This isn't good. Worried about your own security? If not, you should be. See that little tiny webcam staring back at you now? Who's on the other side? [Who's watching?](#) Scary stuff isn't it?

Robots are coming. Maybe you'll see them first at the bar. Soon enough, they'll be in our homes. As soon as next year actually. But it's okay. They'll be friendly [robots that help us and work with us.](#) They're certainly not about to end humanity.

And this...

One area off the coast of the Philippines contains up to 380 million barrels of oil. A hardened team of Aussie drillers holds exclusive rights to extract it...and they're going for [every last drop.](#)

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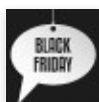
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