**BUSINESS SPEECH**

**FOR**

**BRIAN BANMILLER**

**FINAL**

The eminent futurist, Faith Popcorn, often poses the question... “If you knew everything about **tomorrow**, what would you do differently about **today**? Ladies and gentlemen, we are in the midst of a **technology tornado**... tomorrow is approaching quicker than we.... **OOPS**!!! There is goes!!! (**Wait for the laugh**)... if any one of us thinks he or she has the luxury to “sit one out,” to disregard or minimize the impact of the evolution and **revolution** we are experiencing in every facet of life and business, if any of us wakes up one morning with the realization, like Dorthy Gale, and “have a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore,” let me tell you... you’d be as perplexed as Toto being jostled in his basket as he and Dorothy grow frustrated, trying to find their way down that yellow brick road....

But here’s the rub... we’re not in a movie... we’re not even dreaming... and we can no longer brush aside the obvious. Technology rules. You may find that it’s provided a modicum of convenience, or, you might be a big fan. What we know, as a society, for the most part, is cursory and superficial. If we could have seen into the future twenty or thirty years ago, how accurate would those visions have been? Things were just heating up... gaining momentum... back then. As an example, According to sources, Motorola released the first mobile phone for personal use back in 1983. The model was the DynaTAC... and boy, was it equipped!!! It had the capability to provide **thirty minutes** of talk time, six hours of standby time, weighed almost **TWO pounds**, and cost about $4000.00. It’s starting to make the iPhone X look like a bargain! Imagine the advancements in technology we’ve witnessed... and even so, through all of it, I’m **STILL** debating whether 200 gigs of iCloud storage is sufficient!!! Wow... how times have changed!!! We now have the capability to, in a sense, rule the world from our phones. That’s just a small.. well not so small... example of how times.... and trends in technology have changed. The swell is building... the ground is rumbling... and it’s warning us to **pay attention**.

There’s an expression that stays with me and reminds me to be open minded, patient, and willing to accept the changes that life throws our way. “Adapt or die...”. Simple enough, but being a journalist, I wondered about its origin, wouldn’t you know, it was Charles Darwin, in his tome, “Origin of Species,” who expounded on that principle... “It is not the most intellectual of the species that survives, it is not the strongest that survives; but the species that survives is the one that is able to adapt and to adjust best to the changing environment in which one finds itself...”. So... with that gauntlet tossed onto the ground, how do we identify the changes and adapt in order to sustain and maintain ourselves in life and in business?? Let’s take a look.

Communications... as we’ve come to know it... started years ago... I mean **YEARS** ago. Back in pre-historic times, people innately sought for ways to express themselves... to convey a more permanent message, etched in stone or painted in mineral paste, for posterity. Of course, one false whack on that crudely formed chisel or slip of that simple stroke, and.... the earliest evidence of **FAKE NEWS**!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Throughout the millennia, man has sought to “upgrade” his connection to his fellow man... From ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics to the pictograms of the Lascaux Caves back in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Era to the advent of the printing press... from the town crier screaming his lungs out in pre-Revolutionary War scenarios to the newsboys of Tin Pan Alley singing their headlines, civilizations thirst for information...communication...and innovation... it’s been apparent... and somehow mystically connected... I can’t help but find a correlation between the ideograms on those prehistoric cave paintings to those ubiquitous symbols we all use today... smiley face... surprised face... crudely formed wheel... crossbow... **OX**!!! Same difference!! (**Wait for the laugh)**

We can joke about it for a while, but it is essential, and **URGENT**, that we examine where we are, where we’re going, and the prices we’ll pay, for being swept up in the **Technology Tornado**.

Google the phrase, “Amazon world domination,” ... just **that** action **alone** has revolutionized the way we live, learn, and function in this world... yes... **GOOGLE** the phrase and there is no shortage of articles attesting to the fact that whoever named the company demonstrated that their imagination was fortuitously prescient.... they **could** have named it, “Buy a Book...” it probably would have been somewhat more limiting... (**Wait for the laugh**). In an article on the website, Optimize, it tells us, “It wasn’t long ago that Amazon was a sleepy little online book seller with aspirations to **rule the universe**. According to [CB Insights](https://www.cbinsights.com/research/report/amazon-strategy-teardown/), the company now represents **four percent** of all retail and **forty-four percent** of ecommerce. Since its IPO in 1997, the stock is up a **modest** **8,000 percent**.” I know someone who bought the stock at $15.27, sold at $105, and they thought they made a **KILLING**... just this past week, in one market swing, share price dipped by $58.00... can you imagine?? Amazon has grown to be way more than a sleepy little online bookseller. Its river of outreach dwarfs its mighty namesake... on the other hand, it was estimated that, in 2018, almost **THREE THOUSAND** stores would be facing extinction... I’m not referring only to “mom and pop” operations... estimated store closings in 2019 place the number closer to **FOUR THOUSAND**. With names like Bon Ton, the Children’s Place, Dress Barn, the Limited, Radio Shack, SEARS/KMART, the staggering roster of store closings shifts from a “**who’s who**” to “**who’s NOT**.” The face of retail is shifting because of the innovations and ubiquity of Amazon... it has forced us to sit up and take notice, and while the “death of the shopping mall” and the way in which we earn and spend our time and money has radically shifted as well, other support industries have picked up the slack.

When we take a look at our changing times, what we can see is that the **technology tornado** is impacting the way we communicate... and whether we’re discussing politics, business, commerce, or life in general, it’s **ALL** communication. Our world is being rocked and some of us are still sitting on the sidelines, tuning our fiddle...

Every era seems to have been defined by its own unique advancements. From prehistoric man to present day, civilization has found its way to connect.... communication is a basic fundamental operating principle of life. In the mid-19th century, once Manifest Destiny became a reality, Americans developed the methods that were precursors to swift, modern, communication. With the advent of the Pony Express, parcels and letters were able to reach from the east coast to San Francisco in a matter of **DAYS**... probably around ten... as opposed to the “old fashioned” delivery routes that took at least three weeks.... but don’t be impressed... just yet... while there was a network of relief stations set up along the way... and riders would go at “breakneck” speeds and switch horses every ten to fifteen miles, there were conditions that had to be met... riders had to take an oath of loyalty.... there were weight limits imposed on them... and because of the uniqueness of the service, it was cost prohibitive for the average person. Back then, the charge was $5.00 for every half ounce of mail, which would amount to about $130.00 in today’s money, or, as we probably already deduced, about the same rate as Fedex or UPS today.... As the French might say, “Plus ça change.” ... And if your parcel gets flagged for an “exception” alert, it, **TOO**, can take **TEN** days to arrive in San Francisco!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

As we look back and reflect on our own lives, I know each of us can remember a time or an incident that provided a milestone in our ability and facility to communicate... and I bet that technology was involved. For me, even though I’ve based a lifetime career in connecting with people and providing compelling, pertinent information, I will never forget the “**Summer of ‘69**.” I was living in Tehran at the time, and in the house in which I lived, there was a family who took care of the housekeeping of the property. In the family, there was a young boy. ... **didn’t speak a word** of English... yet right around July 20th, as we all stood outside, this young boy pointed to the moon and declared, “**AMERICAN!!! AMERICAN!!**” ... and while we didn’t get to discuss the lineup at Woodstock less than a month later,... I mean, let’s not **PUSH IT**... (**Wait for the laugh**), I realized...the winds were brewing... the storm was coming... innovation was revealed to be unstoppable... **650 MILLION PEOPLE**, including my houseboy, shared that moment.... globally... the technology lid was about to be blown wide open.

**650 MILLION PEOPLE**.... mind blowing... until you stop and realize that **today**, Facebook has **OVER 2.1 BILLION** unique users worldwide... and counting!! And that doesn’t even include China, where the app is still currently blocked... Add another **1 BILLION** plus once **THOSE** kinks get ironed out!!! With every innovation, with every step towards convenience, there comes a caveat. The good news is that we can basically control our lives from our phones. The **BAD** news is that others have the ability to control **OUR** lives from **THEIR** phones as well.

While we are able to applaud the conveniences that come with the tremendous influx of technological innovations, and as we condition ourselves to adapt and optimize its advances, we must also brace for the downside of such a tsunami of change. For every advantage we reap... more immediate access to pertinent information, ease and ubiquity of communication, unprecedented connectivity to family, friends, and colleagues... throughout the world, there are warning signs that we must heed...The Technology Tornado has provided a means to the “**End of the Ignorance,**” but has opened the door to the “**Death of the Innocence**.”

Throughout the years, we’ve been conditioned to believe what we see... after all, there it is!!! In **BLACK AND WHITE**!!! It **MUST** be true!! Before the advent of modern day tech advancements, there **WERE** ways in which the “innocent” observing public was being duped... we just didn’t know it, or if we did have a hint, **FAKE NEWS** wasn’t so **IN OUR FACES** that we were **FORCED** to sit up and take serious notes. It seems that as far back as 17th century England, “seditious printers” falsely alerted their communities that “King George II was ill”... in order to destabilize the monarchy...in May, 1803, “as Britain was planning to declare war on France, a letter was written by, and sealed with, the personal seal of Lord Hawkesbury, claiming the disputes with France were amicably resolved...” **NOT TRUE**!!! And who will ever forget, back in June of 1897, the famous declaration by Mark Twain, who said, “The report of my death was an exaggeration. The report of my poverty is harder to deal with. My friends might know that unless I were actually **dying** in poverty I should not **live** in poverty....” (**Wait for the laugh**). Yes. There it was. **In black and white.**..Twain’s death knell, in the New York Journal...

Times have changed. Technology has advanced..... and it’s gotten **WAY** more insidious. Today we are challenged to learn a whole new language... beyond **augmented reality**, **autonomous architecture**, and “**Alexa**...” yes. We have to concede that’s a “**THING**.” Consider this: Global warming may not be the only or greatest existential threat to the planet. There’s also the technological challenge to our way of life coming from China and Russia. With the ability to manipulate elections, shoot down satellites, or hack into entire networks, we need to be aware that the next war will be fought on the **battlefield**... **of the keyboard**... with **technology**. Real possibilities can potentially decimate you and me... shutting down power grids would be just the beginning. We have reached **the** defining moment of our time. In his book, “The Shadow War,” written by Jim Sciutto, a CNN national affairs reporter, he discusses the frightening way Russia and China are using tech to take over the world... and beyond...even in space.

There’s so much to consider.... so much to be done.... All in all, we are living in very exciting times.... but I believe we must be vigilant in maintaining awareness. There is no longer any excuse to **NOT** be informed... just about everything we need is **RIGHT HERE**... at our fingertips... for good... and for bad... we need to be alert and informed... the train has left the station and it’s not stopping any time soon...while some may operate through life with the mantra, “I don’t know what I don’t know,” it’s important for all of us to learn what we can... Know the terms... be aware of the threats... and do what you can to offset their impact. Be conscious that there are deep and dark webs... and while we, as average people, may not have access, these webs are like a “netherworld”... a layer unseen by us... where nefarious communication has the ability to take place. Know that Artificial Intelligence is proliferating... even though there is still a human/machine synergy.... what happens when the scales tip to the other side? Be conscious of Augmented Reality and how it is being used in education, business, commerce, and leisure.... it’s not just for gaming anymore. It’s incumbent upon all of us to be prepared. If you knew a hurricane ... or a blizzard... or a possible earthquake was brewing, you’d stock up on provisions... you’d get informed... you’d run out and **buy milk**.... well ... the time has come to stock your technology survival kit. “Where and how do we start?” you might ask.... Well.... **RIGHT HERE** is as good a place as any. Pay attention.... be aware... be conscious of what you send and how you do research... **VET** news information... check your sources... use good old fashioned common sense when sharing information, and familiarize yourself with the language and processes as much as you can.

“It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity.” Do you know who said that??? **ALBERT EINSTEIN**... and he **DIED** in **1955**!!! Ladies and gentlemen, we have work to do! It’s not insurmountable... it’s not impossible... but as leaders in our businesses and in our communities... as professionals who are trusted to provide guidance and reassurance, we, ourselves, must be vigilant, prepared, and informed. Although technology and communications have always been my areas of focus, I look at every day as an opportunity to learn... and to prevail... in this rapidly advancing world in which we live. I invite all of us to rise to the challenge... inspired by the theories of Darwin, **I choose to adapt.** I hope that you will as well. Thank you all!!