
Internet Will 'Disappear', Says Google Boss Eric Schmidt at the World Economic Forum in Davos

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Speaking to the business and political elite at the World Economic Forum at Davos, Schmidt said: "There will be so many sensors, so many devices, that you won't even sense it, it will be all around you."

"It will be part of your presence all the time. Imagine you walk into a room and ... you are interacting with all the things going on in that room."

"A highly personalised, highly interactive and very interesting world emerges."

On the sort of high-level panel only found among the ski slopes of Davos, the heads of Google, Facebook and Microsoft and Vodafone sought to allay fears that the rapid pace of technological advance was killing jobs.

"Everyone's worried about jobs," admitted Sheryl Sandberg, chief operating officer of Facebook.

With so many changes in the technology world, "the transformation is happening faster than ever before," she acknowledged.

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"But tech creates jobs not only in the tech space but outside," she insisted.

Schmidt quoted statistics he said showed that every tech job created between five and seven jobs in a different area of the economy.

"If there were a single digital market in Europe, 400 million new and important new jobs would be created in Europe," which is suffering from stubbornly high levels of unemployment, he said.

The debate about whether technology is destroying jobs "has been around for hundreds of years", said the Google boss. What is different is the speed of change.

"It's the same that happened to the people who lost their farming jobs when the tractor came ... but ultimately a globalised solution means more equality for everyone."

EVERYONE HAS A VOICE

With one of the main topics at this year's World Economic Forum being how to share out the fruits of global growth, the tech barons stressed that the greater connectivity offered by their companies ultimately helps reduce inequalities.

"Are the spoils of tech being evenly spread? That is an issue that we have to tackle head on," said Satya Nadella, chief executive of Microsoft.

"I'm optimistic, there's no question. If you are in the tech business, you have to be optimistic. Ultimately to me, it's about human capital. Tech empowers humans to do great things."

Facebook boss Sandberg said the Internet in its early forms was "all about anonymity", but now everyone was sharing everything and everyone was visible.

"Now everyone has a voice ... now everyone can post, everyone can share and that gives a voice to people who have historically not had it," she said.

Schmidt, who said he had recently come back from the reclusive state of North Korea, added he believed that technology forced potentially despotic and hermetic governments to open up as their citizens acquired more knowledge about the outside world.

"It is no longer possible for a country to step out of basic assumptions in banking, communications, morals and the way people communicate," the Google boss said.

"You cannot isolate yourself any more. It simply doesn't work."

Nevertheless, Sandberg told the assembled elites that even the current pace of change was only the tip of the iceberg.

"Today, only 40 percent of people have Internet access," she said, adding: "If we can do all this

with 40 percent, imagine what we can do with 50, 60, 70 percent."

Even two decades into the global spread of the Internet, the potential for opening up and growth was tremendous, she stressed.

"Sixty percent of the Internet is in English. If that doesn't tell you how uninclusive the Internet is, then nothing will," said the tycoon.

The World Economic Forum brings together some 2,500 of the top movers and shakers in the worlds of politics, business and finance for a four-day meeting that ends on Saturday.
