

This is the **MUSICAL** edition of Monthly Musings, with several references to lessons from song lyrics.

There's **SO MUCH** going on that there's not enough space to write each story that you need to read. Therefore, our July edition offers a menu of options to choose from.

Songwriter/Singer **Bob Dylan** wrote almost 60 years ago in 1964:

Come mothers and fathers
Throughout the land
And don't criticize
What you can't understand...

For the times, they are a-changin'

Well, very few mothers and fathers – and really, mainly technical gurus – fully understand quite how fast the technology is changing. If we continue to move at breakneck speed solely for the sake of change, we run tremendous risks.



In the Ever-Changing World of AI:

Here are some of the most intriguing recent headlines about Artificial Intelligence:

- [AI bartenders who recognize regular customers](#) could become the future of dining or a real Big Brother!. Just imagine the comfort of walking in your favorite spot and robot R2D2 says: **“Great to see you, Tony. Do you want your regular Scotch on the rocks?”** Then R2D2 says: **“Hey, wait. Where’s Julie who was with you last Tuesday?”** or **“Have you told your wife about your winning lottery ticket yet?”** Yes, there could be quite a risk with sharing your “news” with loose-lipped AI bartenders!
- [Forbes reports](#) on “The 15 Biggest Risks of AI.” Among these are:
 - How to “program moral and ethical values”
 - Security risks (hackers)
 - Job displacement in many industries
- [USA Today](#) reports that [automation will kill jobs sooner than thought – by the millions](#)
- And check this out: [The FBI is already seeing signs](#) that bad actors around the world are using AI as a tool to commit crimes. The FBI references AI as a “Force multiplier for bad actors”.

An attorney friend of mine recently said that while AI could definitely speed up the process of researching dense case studies, it would eventually displace some paralegals and some entry-level attorneys.

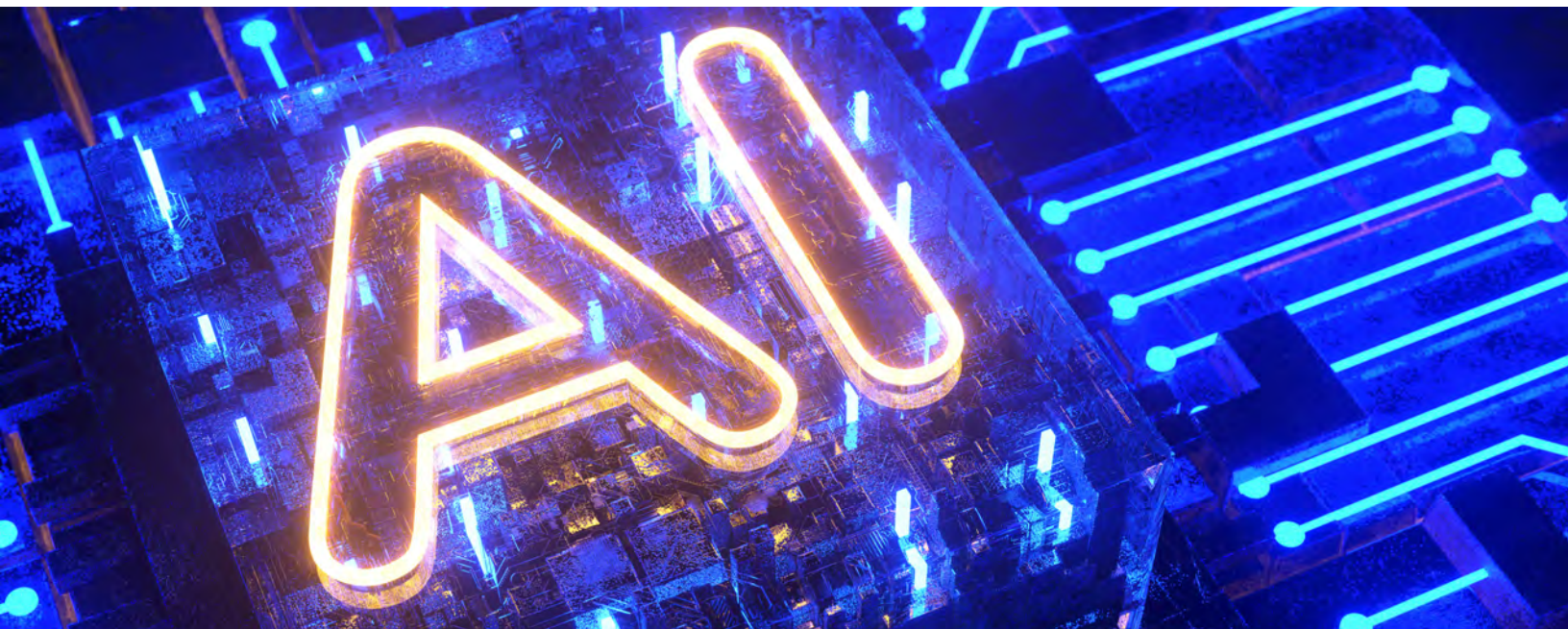
These articles all share that entry-level and routine positions will largely be eliminated and replaced by AI. Tech leaders say those employees will then learn new skills and make higher wages.

But what if AI at upper corporate levels squashes that idea and recommends cutting costs rather than creating new jobs?

Our children or grandchildren could lose valuable opportunities to enter their chosen professions.

I closely follow the warnings I continue to read:

Be careful what you wish for... or allow to happen!



In the World of Product Protests

Renowned philosopher **Stephen Stills** (OK, he's a songwriter/singer, but he still likes to philosophize) wrote the song, "For What It's Worth" and he performed it as a member of **Buffalo Springfield**.

Among the lyrics are:

Paranoia strikes deep
Into your life, it will creep
It starts when you're always afraid...

You better stop
Children, what's that sound?
Everybody look, what's going down?

When will all the protests slow down? Or come close to stopping? To rephrase Stephen Stills and amplify it with the "Shark Tank" icon, **Kevin "Mr. Wonderful" O'Leary**, "Everybody, look what's going down!"

Perhaps the better question is: **"When will companies stop risking their economic future by taking a stand that violates its core customer base?"**

Last month's edition of Monthly Musings featured Shark Tank's O'Leary sharing how **Anheuser-Busch** ignored its core customer base by taking a risk to benefit a segment that hardly drinks its product. Bud Light sales remain close to 30% below previous levels and now Dylan Mulvaney has taken to social media and blamed and shamed Anheuser-Busch for not taking a stronger stand. As I shared last month, the brand is in a no-win situation.

"Everybody look what's going down!"

Now, what will be the end result with **CMT** (Country Music TV), which removed **Jason Aldean's** video, "Try That in a Small Town"?

Following the playbook of Bud Light, this video platform has enraged its most loyal users – conservative country music fans. I question if CMT could face its own "Bud Light Moment" for taking a stand that speaks directly against its core audience.

The sad reality is that anyone can go back in time and uncover performances that were acceptable at that time but are offensive now. Movies such as "Gone with the Wind" (slavery), "Breakfast at Tiffany's" (shows Mickey Rooney cast as a Japanese man), "Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure" (Keanu Reeves' character Ted calls Satan a "fag"), "Bonnie and Clyde" (violence), and the list goes on. And let's not even talk about the classic slapstick western, "Blazing Saddles."

I can find songs from my just a few decades ago that would offend me but I have better use for my time. I choose to learn from the past, live in the present, and prepare for the future.

You and I can find a reason to protest every product or retailer if we look hard enough. The Bible invites us to learn from the past and live in the present. That's far better than trying to demonize our past and anyone who had anything to do with it.



In The Entertainment World

Actor **Tom Cruise** continues to be bankable at the box office with films ranging from the original to the latest "**Top Gun**", as well as the "**Mission: Impossible**" franchise and "**Jerry Maguire**."



What makes him so attractive to audiences?

- We are fascinated at how he performs his own stunts
- He never talks down to – or dumbs down his roles for – his American viewing audience
- He sees himself as an actor rather than an agent of change in society – he recognizes he is an entertainer and nothing more



Targeted Advertising

To quote the lyrics from the old **Monkees** song, "**I'm a Believer**" I understand the exceptional value of highly targeted radio and TV programming.

"**Wheels**" with **Ed Wallace** on KLIF-570 AM on Sunday mornings and "**The Car Pro Show**" with **Jerry Reynolds** and **Kevin McCarthy** on WBAP-820 on Saturday mornings draw relatively small audiences – as does "**Neil Sperry Texas Gardening**" on KLIF on Saturday afternoons and WBAP on Sunday morning, and Ag-focus programming runs in early mornings.

However, those programs aim at **micro-targets** who are exponentially more focused on those programs than are traditional mainstream viewers and listeners.

The benefit to the advertisers is simple: **EVERY SINGLE LISTENER** to each of those programs is in the market for the products being discussed, so each of these programs offers a target-rich audience.

One of the most essential rules of advertising is that you don't just want a bus full of radio listeners who hear all available programming (60 radio stations in DFW plus Sirius/XM, Pandora, Spotify, etc.); you will often prefer a smaller bus where EVERYONE is interested in your product.

Smart Promotions

- **Chick-fil-A** distributed free iced coffee to beat the heat in Fort Worth-Dallas locations July 10-15
- **7-Eleven** held its annual "Free Slurpee" promotion on its namesake date, 7/11



And, of course, our Tiebreaker:

I was impressed this past week when **Sam Jordan, COO/CFO of Electro Acoustics**, shared strategic planning insights for the Southlake Chamber of Commerce board of directors retreat.

He said that elite-performing companies choose among three options for their primary focus:

- Relationships
- Product
- Process

While every company will want to master each of the three, **the elite companies plant a flag in the ONE that means the most to them**. In the case of Electro Acoustics and chambers of commerce – as well as my own business at Fletcher Consulting PR – the main focus is on **relationships**.

Growing your business through clients who want to work with you, again and again, is essential in a service-driven industry.

Apple chose the **product** option because the company is recognized for innovation. At the same time, Apple creates strong connections through its service model, but a manufacturer will choose the product focus.

Accounting firms most likely choose the **process** option whether they may be on the tax or audit side. **Law firms** most likely choose the **process** option.

These three focuses (OK, foci, to please the Latin scholars!) are not mutually exclusive. It's **essential** for you to be **skilled** in all three: relationships, product, and process.

It's up to you to choose which focus works best for you – and then to be relentless in that pursuit!

- **Coming in the August edition: “The Power of Disruption in Business”**

