

The Hidden Fear of Becoming Irrelevant

Why more and more people are experiencing it – and why it is leading us in the wrong direction.



The Switch Column by Monica Deters

There is an underlying feeling that hardly anyone talks about. And yet, for many people, it sits with them at the breakfast table, follows them to work and keeps them awake at night. It is the fear of becoming irrelevant.

Perhaps this fear has always been there. But in our AI-driven world, it seems to be growing stronger than ever. Suddenly, many of the things people have used to define their worth are being shaken: success, achievement, recognition and visibility. And perhaps that is why. Because few things affect us more deeply than the feeling that we are no longer needed.

Irrelevance Has Many Faces

Every day, we see people who appear more successful, more attractive, more popular, wealthier or who seem to be living more exciting lives. Social media has turned everyday life into a constant competition of comparison. When people are no longer seen, they can quickly begin to feel as though they no longer exist.

But this is no longer just about influencers or celebrities. The fear of becoming irrelevant is everywhere:

- The employee who, after twenty years, is suddenly replaced by artificial intelligence.
- The mother whose children leave home and who begins to wonder who she is now.



- The entrepreneur whose products suddenly no longer sell.
- The artist whose work barely receives any attention.
- The retiree who, after their last day at work, feels that nobody needs them anymore.
- The university graduate who suddenly finds themselves working as a delivery driver just to avoid becoming homeless.

Many people are experiencing exactly this right now.

What We Are Really Afraid Of

Our world is changing rapidly. Jobs are disappearing. Business models are losing their relevance. Knowledge that was once valuable can now be accessed within seconds. Even experience sometimes seems to matter less than speed. And that hurts. Because feeling that we matter is a fundamental human and social need. We want to be needed. To be heard. To be seen. To be loved. To feel that our existence makes a difference. **That we have value.**

The Greatest Trap of Our Time

And this is precisely where one of the great misconceptions lies. Many people look for their sense of significance entirely in the outside world. In praise from the boss. In applause. In clicks and views. In revenue. In the title on their business card. In the recognition of others. All of that can be wonderful. But all of it can also be taken away from us at any time.

When our entire identity depends on these things, every change becomes a threat. Perhaps now is exactly the time to redefine what it means to matter.
Not through reach.
Not through status.
Not through achievement.
But through the difference we make.

What Really Makes Us Matter

Perhaps a kind conversation can change more than a thousand likes. Perhaps a sincere hug will be remembered longer than the most successful social media post. Perhaps the person who gives someone else hope again matters more than someone with a million followers.

The New Currency Is Humanity

With artificial intelligence and humanoid robots, this development is likely to accelerate even further in the years ahead. But there is one thing that, to this day, cannot truly be manufactured artificially: **genuine human connection.**

Perhaps that is the real liberation of our time. No longer having to become bigger and bigger. No longer constantly having to prove that we are important. But simply allowing ourselves to be human again. Because at the end of our lives, probably no one will remember how many followers we had. But they may very well remember how we made them feel. And perhaps that is where the greatest meaning of all can be found.

Our significance lies within our humanity – not in how the outside world judges our worth.

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Humanly felt. Independently thought. AI-assisted writing.