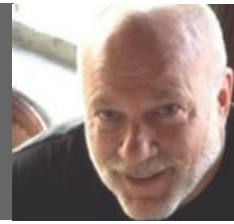


I've been **thinking**...



July 2015—Today's Impact on Tomorrow's World

I've been thinking about how the work we do today may impact the world we live in tomorrow.

This afternoon, I received an e-mail from my friend George Laurer (to my right), the inventor of the UPC bar code—the very same code scanned on the items I purchased this morning at Costco and Trader Joe's.

It arrived on the anniversary (June 26, 1974) of the first bar-coded product being scanned at a point of sale—a 10-pack of Wrigley's Juicy Fruit for a grand total of 67 cents—in Troy, Ohio.



This morning, I received an e-mail from George's pal and colleague back at IBM, Bill Selmeyer (to my left). Bill led the charge that resulted in grocery manufacturers voluntarily and universally printing the UPC bar code on their packaging.

Both e-mails were in response to mine:

Hi, George and Bill,

On this anniversary of the Troy bar-code scanning, I'm thinking of you two and how your work continues to make a difference in our world.

I was in the hospital with my 94-year-old dad the other day, and he was scanned at every point of identification and treatment.

I am happy to report that today more than 90 percent of hospitals are scanning patients and most medications at the point of care.

Grateful, Mark

George's response:

Hi, Mark, Nice to hear from you. I hope I don't have to experience hospital scanning firsthand :-). Certainly, scanning has saved lives...You have saved lives. Keep in touch, George

Bill's response:

Mark, You are the complete advocate. This past year I've been in hospitals probably more than my entire life previously. I always check for bar coding, and it has always been there on the patient and what medications the nurses administer. I let them know that I've met you, the person really driving the implementation of barcodes in medicine. Great to hear from you again, Bill

So what's to learn from these back-and-forths?

1. None of us wants to end up in a hospital, but sooner or later most of us will.

I'm with George, happy to stay out of buildings. But I'm also with Bill, grateful that the facility my dad is in uses bar-code patient safety technology at the point of care.

2. None of us can see far enough into the future to know how the good work we do today will impact our world tomorrow.

George and Bill were just putting in honest days of work, using their good minds and hands to make the grocery checkout process more time-and-cost efficient. Both tell me they had no idea their work was paving the way for a safer point of care.

3. Much of the meaningful work we do today is possible only because of the meaningful work done by those who have gone before us.

Many thanks to the Bills and Georges of our world. May all who come behind us, find us as faithful.

What do you think?

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Noosh
Mark Neuenschwander a.k.a. Noosh
mark@hospitalrx.com