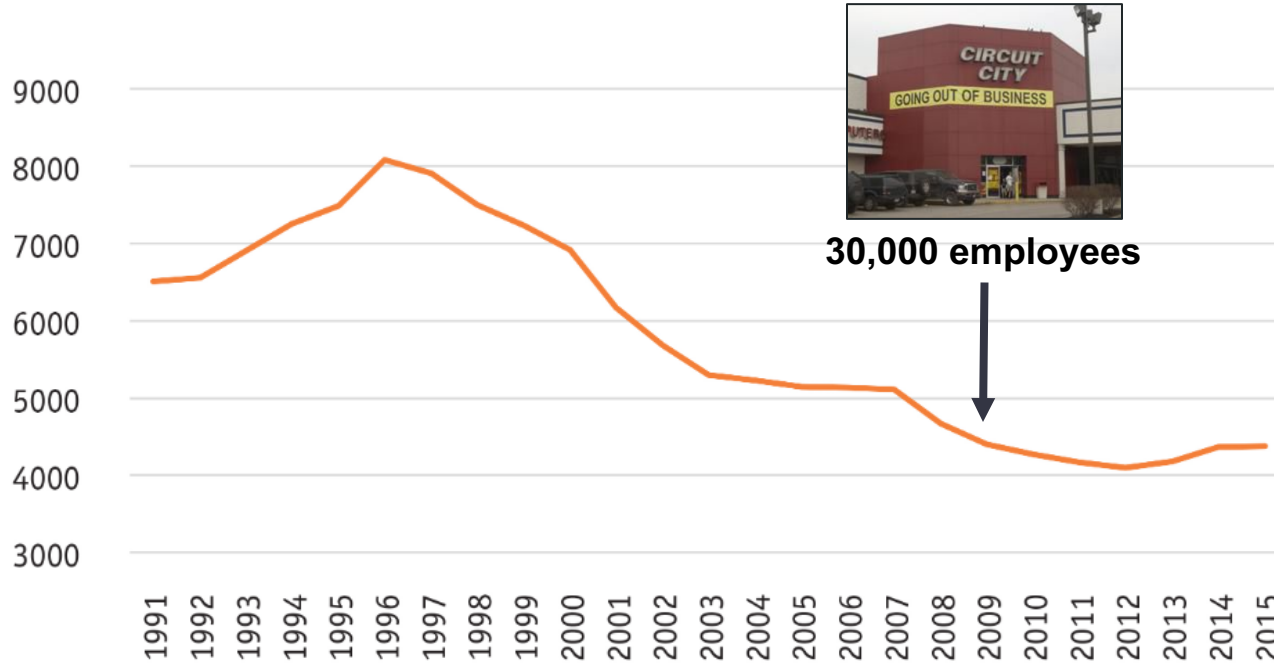# Future of White Collar Work
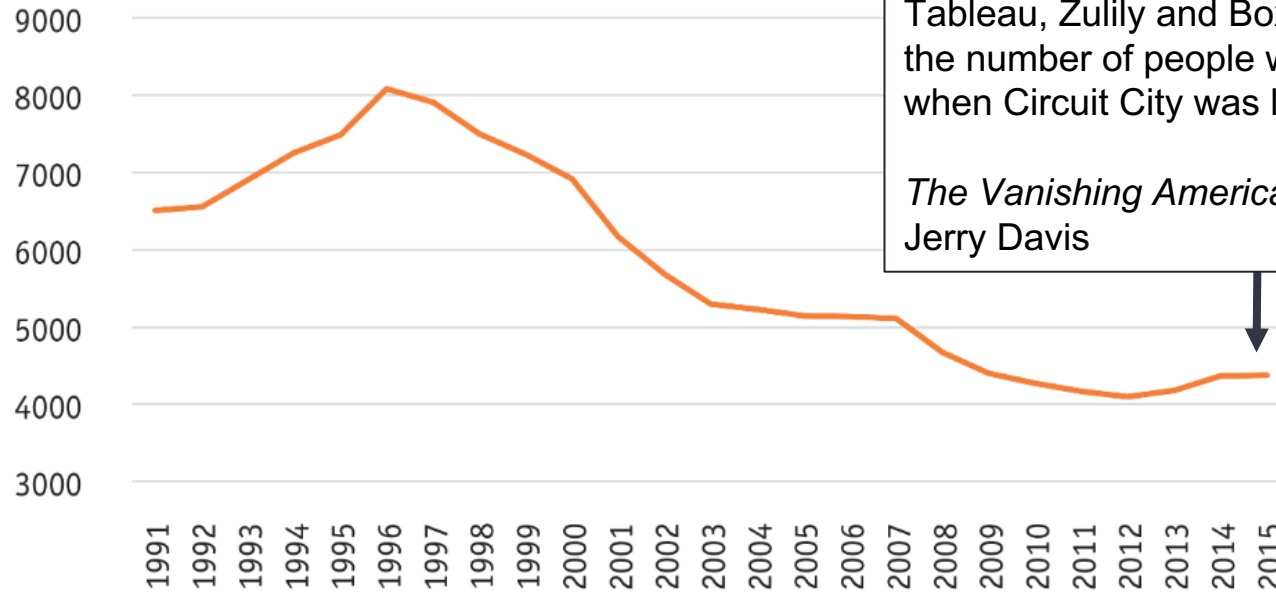
Melissa Valentine
Stanford University

Figure 1: American corporations listed on U.S. stock markets, 1991-2015

30,000 employees

Figure 1: American corporations listed on U.S. stock markets, 1991-2015

In 2015, the combined workforces of Facebook, Yelp, Zynga, LinkedIn, Zillow, Tableau, Zulily and Box were smaller than the number of people who lost their jobs when Circuit City was liquidated in 2009.

The Vanishing American Corporation
Jerry Davis

Gerald F. Davis, *The Vanishing American Corporation*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2016

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1. The corporation (organization) is an outdated way of organizing the economy

2. Technologies are a master trend underlying the decline of corporations (organizations)

3. From the perspective of (white collar) labor, this creates a precarious world

4. What can public policy do?

1. The corporation (organization) is an outdated way of organizing the economy

2. **Technologies are a master trend underlying the decline of corporations (organizations)**

3. From the perspective of (white collar) labor, this creates a precarious world

4. What can public policy do?

Organizing Technologies

1. Web page enterprise

2. Crowdsourcing, flash teams

3. Decision engines

4. Learning decision engines

Web page enterprise

In 2005, the whole thing exploded… Hardware? No, now you just put it on Amazon or Rackspace. Software? It's all open-source. **Distribution**? It's the App Store, it's Facebook. **Customer service**? It's Twitter -- just respond to your best customers on Twitter and Get Satisfaction. **Sales and marketing**? It's Google AdWords, AdSense. So the cost to build and launch a product went from five million…to one million…to five hundred thousand…and it's now to fifty thousand

Nathan Heller, The New Yorker, 14 October 2013.

Flash teams and crowdsourcing
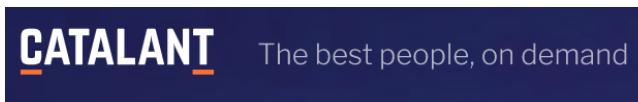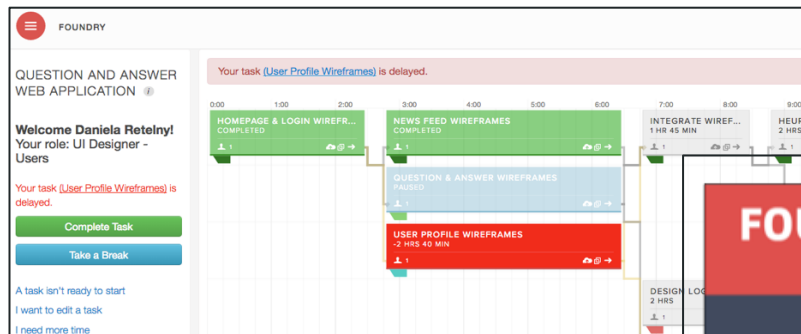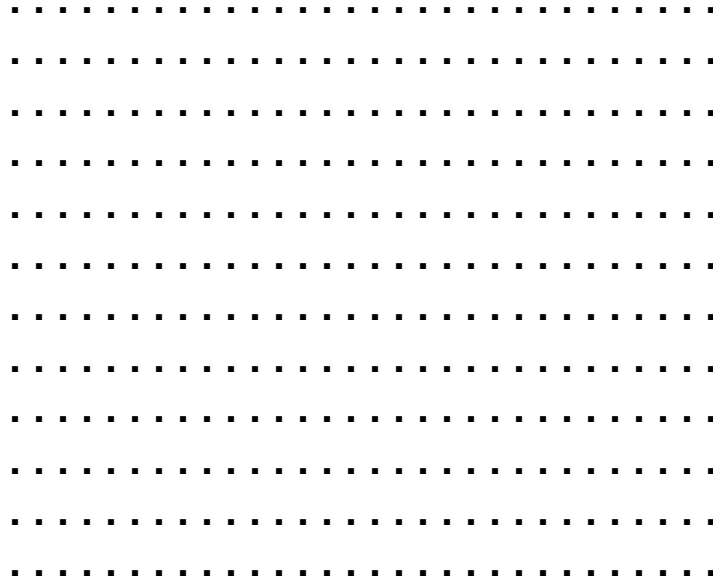
Decision engines

Human decision structures (org charts)

Learning decision engines
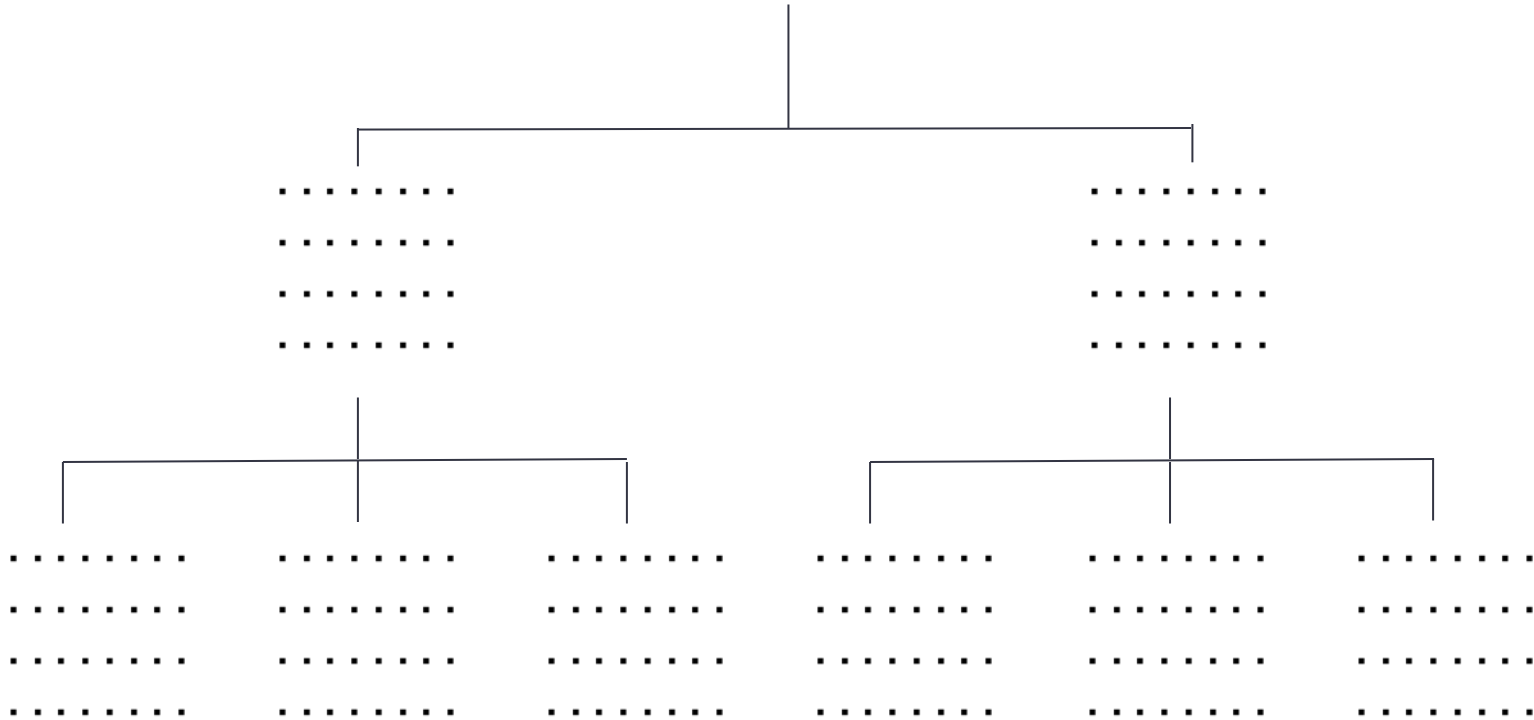
https://www.techslang.com/ai-in-manufacturing-the-age-of-cobots/

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3. **From the perspective of (white collar) labor, this creates a precarious world**

4. What can public policy do?

From the perspective of an **entrepreneur**, this means that the parts to create a business are like Lego blocks that can be snapped together and scaled up or down as needed.

From a **consumer's** perspective, this means that every day brings new products and services delivered in new ways.

But from the perspective of **labor**, this creates a precarious world of increasing inequality, lower mobility, and a ragged social safety net.

Corporations and organizations evolved to offer:

Consistent earnings

Long career ladders

On the job learning, professional apprenticeships
              (associate to partner, resident to attending)

Professional development

Human resources protections

Sexual harassment training, protection, policy

Health insurance for employees and retirees

Community, identity

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4. **What can public policy do?**

The underlying problem is not too few public corporations, but ensuring economic security.

Family farms were still central to the American economy at the turn of the 20th century, but it would have made little sense to address the emerging problems of industrialization by focusing on policies promoting family farms.

Similarly, large-scale corporations are a 20th century vehicle that may not be suited to the 21st century. **Policy should aim to promote economic security and mobility in a post-corporate economy.**

Lessons from history

The untold story of how America once created the most successful economy the world has ever seen and how we can do it again.

Beginning in 1940, **massive public investment generated breakthroughs in science** and technology that first helped win WWII and then created the most successful economy the world has ever seen. Private enterprise then built on these breakthroughs **to create new industries**…

Economic security, mobility in post-corporate economy

A new locus for:

        Consistent earnings

        Long career ladders

        On the job learning, professional apprenticeships

             (associate to partner, resident to attending)

        Professional development

        Human resources protections

        Sexual harassment training, protection, policy

        Health insurance for employees and retirees

        Community, identity

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