

Introduction

Surviving in the New Economy: Sharecroppers in the Ownership Society

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For many Americans, the promise of thriving in the new economy has been replaced with the realities of survival. The dot-com boom of the late 1990s marked the coming of age of the much-heralded *new economy*, an economic, technological, and social transformation that had been in progress for decades. The same entrepreneurial spirit that characterized the stock market frenzy is still expected of high-tech employees. A highly mobile and in many cases highly compensated workforce face a multitude of new risks: Jobs are no longer secure nor insulated from global competition, employer-provided health benefits are drying up, and retirement planning is almost entirely the responsibility of employees themselves. These changes are not restricted to the high-tech elite. American workers now face a restructured labor market that asks individuals to bear more responsibility for their jobs, training, and benefits; a global labor market that pushes real wages down; and a broken social contract that replaces the promise of security with the hollow rhetoric of ownership. This book brings together people who are thinking about the challenges that workers face in this new economic environment. While this collection focuses primarily on work in high-tech industries, the implications of these economic changes reach workers at all pay levels and in all sectors, as more Americans find themselves struggling to survive in the new economy.

Several writers have addressed the financial changes of the dot-com era and its aftermath (Cassidy, 2002; Brenner, 2002; Henwood, 2003), but there have been few opportunities for activists and academics to debate how these financial changes affect the people who must work within them and what strategies in general will be effective for organizing. The chapters in this book begin that conversation by describing people's efforts to survive in the new economy through traditional union organizing and, perhaps more importantly, through innovative forms of collective action, political mobilization, community organizing, and social support.

American workers must now navigate changes to the relationship between working people and the economy itself. Initially, the dot-com revolution and the new economy were touted as a new era of personal and economic freedom. The Internet, wireless computers, and cell phones were supposed to free white-collar workers from their nine-to-five routines, but instead have blurred the lines between home and office; leisure and work. After years of uncertainty, factory layoffs, and manufacturing jobs moving overseas, the American dream of the new economy promised jobs with stock options, humane workplaces, and creativity and autonomy for individual workers. Those bold enough to join Internet start-ups thought that they would not only own stock in their company, they would be able to act like company owners with increased power over the day-to-day decisions in their workplaces—in short, they felt like they *were* owners of their own companies. The dot-com bust showed how little power these dot-com “partners” actually wielded against the grip of financial capital and how much the Internet's liberating changes also wrought a darker side of surveillance and overwork.

The term *new economy* has been with us since the early 1990s, and, although it has already lost much of the hope and excitement that it conveyed before the dot-com bubble burst, it is still difficult to remember that the term was first used in the Democratic Party platform during Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign for president—years before the first dot-com stock was ever sold. In the “New Covenant with Americans,” the “new economy” meant that workers would accept “added responsibilities” and join in “cooperative efforts to increase productivity, flexibility and quality,” in exchange “for an increased voice and greater stake in the success of their enterprises.” Flexible adaptation was always at the heart of the new economy, and nowhere was this trade-off between increased flexibility and rewards made more explicit than in technology industries. It seemed that the new emphasis on high-

tech computer skills provided the antidote to the massive loss of industrial jobs that had once helped to create the American middle class.

The rise of the new economy marked other losses of the security workers enjoyed during the industrial era. With the stock market booming in the late 1990s, many employees did not mind the shift from traditional pension plans with their conservative investment strategies and government oversight to more flexible 401(k) and other individual savings plans. Individually managed risk—be it in a retirement plan or at the workplace—seemed somehow smarter, and certainly more lucrative, than old-fashioned collective approaches like Social Security. The rapid rise in technology stock prices fueled fantasies and myths of dot-com millionaires and luxurious early retirements funded by mushrooming mutual fund balances. Stock analysts became celebrities as investment gurus, like Peter Lynch of Fidelity who regularly appeared on Fidelity ads in the 1990s, assured us all that in the long run the market always outperformed other forms of investment. The risks of these investments became clear when historically high stock market valuations plummeted.

There also was an enduring social cost for this market euphoria in the form of a protoconservative, individualistic approach to social problems. This idea of individual responsibility for wealth creation and job security continues in the ownership society rhetoric favored by the political Right. Within the ownership society ethos of the new economy, though, many people feel less like the “CEO of Me, Inc.” (as quoted in Ross, 2003), with the empowerment and agency that being one’s own boss implies, than like sharecroppers who bear the burden of risks in exchange for the opportunity to work. The term *sharecropper society* might well describe the state of many Americans better than *ownership society* ever would, as many people lack company-provided job security, income security, retirement security, and health insurance. The reality of the ownership society may be nothing more than another attempt to throw the burden of social and economic security in the laps of individual employees already struggling to get by.

High-tech professionals have already faced difficult lessons in the vagaries of irrational exuberance. Once the darlings of the dot-com era, high-tech workers are not immune from global economic forces. As with their blue-collar counterparts, technology workers, too, must now contend with outsourcing, layoffs, age discrimination, and job insecurity. Many of them work as freelancers or contractors who are rarely with one employer for long. Technological change requires continual training and retraining. And since they rarely work in any one place for long, high-tech workers must develop elaborate networking

skills in order to get their next job (Batt et al., 2001). Many fear that there are only two possible futures: good jobs with promises of stock options and early retirement or bad ones in a de-skilled, high-tech Wal-Mart for increasingly lower wages and globally outsourced work.

THE ROAD TO THE NEW ECONOMY

The new economy did not come about simply because of a technological innovation. For twenty years before the rise of the new economy, the United States had already undergone a massive shift from an industrial to a service, or postindustrial, economy. Global economics, geopolitics, changes in corporate governance and political philosophy, and the decline of U.S. labor unions' strength and density conspired throughout the 1970s and 1980s to change the unwritten social compact that major corporations had with their employees (Harrison and Bluestone, 1988; Osterman et al., 2002). While many high-tech professionals do not belong to labor unions and may even see unions as vestiges of the old industrial economy, labor's decline wrought the cavalier relationship their companies have with them. The authors of an analysis of national longitudinal data show that young male college graduates in almost every occupational field in the United States now earn less in real dollars than young men with the same education a generation ago, and they attribute this decline in part to the loss of union density that pushes up wages across the economy (Bernhardt et al., 2001).

Transitions within the American economy have a powerful effect on the lives of workers and on the ability of unions to organize. In the mid-1970s European and Asian countries, recovered from the effects of World War II, began to flood the world market with less expensive but high-quality manufactured goods. American manufacturers had become so used to their hegemony in the marketplace that they could not easily respond to the jolt that the new competition gave them. Unable to recapture market share or unable to quickly produce higher-quality goods, many American corporations began looking to cost cutting in order to maintain profits. The massive armies of workers employed on the factory floor who had felt safe and comfortable in their jobs suddenly faced layoffs, plant closings, and moving factories. Initially, the American South with its historic animus toward labor unions and lower cost of living proved many manufacturers with an attractive alternative to the highly unionized Rust Belt of the Northeast and Midwest. Later, firms began building manufacturing plants outside the United States to take advantage of lower labor costs. Companies

began to downsize nonessential functions to subcontractors and to hire contingent or temporary workers to perform tasks once done by full-time employees (Harrison and Bluestone, 1988; Osterman et al., 2002; Stone, 2001).

High inflation and rising oil prices added to the economic difficulties of the late 1970s. Firms in industries like heavy manufacturing and steel production turned to unions for help through concessions in collective bargaining agreements. Unions agreed to wage freezes, two-tiered wage structures, benefits cuts, and other contract concessions to bolster struggling manufacturing firms. At Chrysler, for example, the combination of union concessions, government loans, and new management saved the corporation. Nonetheless, concession bargaining, which began to salvage firms that were in financial trouble, became the norm in major areas of collective bargaining. Even healthier firms could exact concessions simply by threatening to move unionized work to the South or outside the United States. Nonunion companies made similar veiled or direct threats to employees considering a union organizing drive. With manufacturing leaving the United States and the economy shifting from an industrial to a service economy, labor unions saw membership drop at a steady pace.

The deregulation of specific industries that began in Jimmy Carter's administration in the 1970s continued with a vengeance during the Reagan administration. Reagan did not see "big government" as the solution to the nation's economic problems, and the federal government began to entertain the more conservative economic theories of Milton Friedman. Instead of Keynesian economic strategies to increase macroeconomic demand, such as government spending to create employment Reagan cut taxes to corporations and individuals in an effort to stimulate the so-called supply side of the economy. Reagan believed that economic stimulus came through fewer restrictions on the private sector and that without government restrictions and with fewer taxes corporations would invest money in research and development, in infrastructure, and ultimately in their employees. As a consequence, even the government put on the appearance of becoming "lean and mean" (Harrison, 1994) with the loss of federally funded social programs and the privatization of government jobs. Unemployment increased during Reagan's first administration, but job losses were seen as part of the necessary adjustment to the changing economy, short-term pain in order to achieve long-term gain.

The 1980s proved to be an even more difficult decade for U.S. labor. Membership in labor unions continued to drop as did unions'

influence with lawmakers. Reagan's firing and replacement of striking air-traffic controllers during his first administration demonstrated that the federal government would not negotiate with the nation's labor unions, and the strike became the seminal event of the rapid decline of the U.S. labor movement (Harrison and Bluestone, 1988). In the twenty years that followed the air-traffic controllers' strike, organized labor continued to lose membership and influence. Democratic Party leaders, although grateful for the AFL-CIO's ability to walk precincts and get votes out for their candidates, failed to reward this work by putting labor issues at the top of their agenda. If anything, in the post-Reagan years Democrats leaned toward the right, as "moderate" centrist politicians replaced the party's old liberal leadership.

A number of academics and labor leaders argue that corporate and government leaders during this period abandoned a social contract with American workers (Osterman, et al., 2002). American workers during post-World War II economic expansion came to expect that profitable employers would pass on a part of profits as a reward for hard work and loyalty. While this social contract seemed like a fair deal, it could not withstand global competition, mainly because the contract never truly existed. The "old psychological contract" promised "long-term job security, orderly promotional opportunities, longevity-linked pay and benefits, and long-term pension vesting" in exchange for worker loyalty, but it was "psychological" in that workers and their employers perceived this implicit contract differently, the latter of whom simply changed the contract when worker loyalty was no longer required (Stone, 2001, 524). Industrial-era firms trained workers, provided them with job security, and negotiated with their unions simply because they needed them to do the work. When the old psychological contract was broken, American workers had limited options for securing social benefits. The American labor movement made no concerted effort to create the type of welfare state that exists in Western Europe, in part because American trade unionists favored government intervention only in ensuring the rights of workers to organize and providing mediation, and they argued instead that workers should secure health care and pensions through collective bargaining. With few laws to aid them and little willingness on the part of government to write new legislation that would, American workers found themselves handed a new psychological contract and facing the new economy with limited options.

THE PROMISE OF QUALITY JOBS AND HUMANE WORK

The expansion of the technology sector seemingly provided assurance that the American labor market would improve. For example, during the debates over the North American Free Trade Agreement, supporters claimed that the loss of manufacturing jobs to Mexico would be more than made up for by high-paying jobs in technology. Robert Reich argued that “symbolic analysts”—highly educated, globally oriented, and uniquely skilled—would be able to best navigate the challenges of the twenty-first century labor market (Reich, 1991). The rise of the World Wide Web and the dot-com boom that followed Netscape’s historic initial public stock offering seemed to provide a road to new economy riches for a risk-loving, smart, young, entrepreneurial workforce. The feverish growth of the prices of Internet-related stocks only fueled the frenzy. But when the Internet stock market bubble burst, thousands of Americans who thought they had solved the challenges of the new economy found themselves unemployed.

In his chapter, Derek Schultz debunks the pernicious and persistent myths about high-tech work that emerged out of the heady days of the dot-com boom. Schultz has worked for nearly three decades as a computer programmer and consultant, and in his chapter he richly describes from a first-hand perspective the economic realities facing high-tech professionals. The five myths that Schultz exposes promulgate “unrealistic visions of high-tech worker utopias” and, he argues, prevent high-tech workers from seeking collective voice and collective action to the ongoing problems within the industry.

Information technology continues to be an essential sector of the U.S. economy, and it clearly is the key to much of America’s economic future. However, the relatively freelance and entrepreneurial nature of the work provides, as Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1995) argued, a “new career model” for future professional work. Flexibility and contingency, though, are volatile forces in an economy that bases benefits on long-term, full-time, and permanent employment. What happens when workers must rely on relationships with a number of different employers as opposed to daily work in one workplace? In a nation that relied on the good will of corporations to provide social benefits like health insurance and pensions, what happens to the freelance professionals who are unable to work for any one employer long enough to obtain health insurance or vest in a pension plan?

The dot-com era also promised a new, humane workplace where employees were rewarded not merely for hard work, but for creativity, individualism, and boldness. Work in the new economy was

supposed to flatten the old hierarchies of boss versus worker and replace the *Organization Man* grind with meaningful work. Dot-com workers did not consider themselves employees as much as they considered themselves partners with the company owners in creating computer programs, software, games, and Web sites. People worked long hours, but were often paid well for their efforts. Compensation often included stock options, further signifying that they were partners in the Internet ventures they worked in, and not merely cogs in the corporate system. The history of Razorfish, the company that Andrew Ross profiled in *No-Collar*, shows the unique relationship that technology workers had with entrepreneurs during the tech boom. The people at Razorfish believed that they were not only creating a new business venture and developing a new form of media and communication, but that they were creating a new, more creative, more engaging, and more humane workplace. Work relations in the new economy were thought to be the antithesis of the old corporate culture, in which “the work rules, hierarchies, and rituals of corporate organization were condemned for stifling initiative and creativity and for stunting the appetite of employees for opportunity and meaningful self-application” (Ross, 2003). Dot-commers saw their companies and the industry that they were creating as the replacement for the old, stodgy corporations. Where the corporate world demanded conformity, the new economy world of dot-coms inspired individuality. Where the corporate world insisted on rigid hierarchies, the dot-com world purportedly broke down the barriers between company owners and the workforce. The willingness to drop formal hierarchies and communicate openly promised to make dot-com firms more productive, responsive, and efficient.

The relationship between creativity and a sense of workplace empowerment has long been linked to greater levels of productivity (Heckscher, 1996). In the case of the dot-com firms that Ross studied, creativity was essential to their allure for both workers and clients alike who expected dot-com consultants to appear a bit bohemian. In New York, for example, Internet companies often located themselves in downtown lofts, where workplaces “imitated all the attributes of artists—their habitats, lifestyles, clothing, work patterns and custom individuality” (Ross, 2003). In Manhattan’s trendiest bars and nightclubs, dot-coms sponsored parties that became key social networking events for people who worked in the industry (Neff, 2005). “Neo-bohemias” sprouted across the country, proving the lure of artistic cultural capital to high-tech firms (Lloyd, 2006) and ready access to the labor services of the “creative class” (Florida, 2004). This context, though, of creative, artistic, and relatively autonomous labor further

complicates technology professionals' abilities to understand themselves as employees, as work in creative industries merges artistic and entrepreneurial drives (Neff et al., 2005). How can professional workers ever find a home in traditional unions if they change jobs many times throughout their careers, think of themselves as full-fledged team members on par with their employers, and think of themselves as creative talent instead of employees? Does the classic industrial union structure even make sense in the context of the new economy?

WHAT SURVIVED THE CRASH

The new economy dream of the creative and humane workplace did not survive the dot-com crash. New technologies, rather than liberating employees from the office, allow employers to monitor employee behavior and productivity on a minute-to-minute basis (Head, 2003). In high-tech industries, countless professionals lost their jobs with little to show for their start-up experience but worthless stock options. Companies that did survive the crash adopted aspects of the corporate culture that they once derided. Many technology companies laid off employees, cut back salaries, and outsourced jobs overseas. In the few cases in which employees participated in union organizing drives, employers vehemently resisted.

In his chapter in this collection, Simon Head argues that despite the rhetoric of liberated workers, the information technology revolution has instead renewed industrial-era practices of Taylorism and scientific management. Corporations are using information technologies not to liberate the workforce, but to control workers—speeding up the work process and using advanced management tools for surveillance. Wal-Mart and Toyota, heralded as new economy models for their expansive use and profitable integration of information technology, both use a form of Taylorism that devalue workers' "skills, erodes their job security, and undermines their bargaining power in the workplace," as Head writes. The practice of scientific management reaches beyond the proletarian ghetto of Wal-Mart "associates" and auto assembly-line workers, and, as Head argues, now invades the gated, professional world of middle managers, administrators, and even doctors. In this way of thinking about the new economy as a continuation of the drive toward ever-greater efficiency, Head argues that the principles of the new system are "deeply embedded in the economic and business history of the United States."

The hope for quality jobs and human workplaces is fading as the economic recovery provides little evidence that average Americans are recovering. With rising health care costs and increased burdens for retirement savings, Americans are earning less in real expendable wages. In 2005, the *Financial Times* reported the fastest drop in real wages in fourteen years (Swann, 2005). Yet, as incomes are dropping, worker productivity in the United States continues to rise. The Economic Policy Institute reported in its April 2005 “Economic Snapshot” that there is a growing gap between worker productivity and the growth of real wages. These findings run counter to the long-held view that increased productivity leads to wage increases.

Benefits, too, as we have said, continue to be more, not less insecure in the new economy. Compared to traditional union pensions, individual retirement savings programs like 401(k) plans lack government protection and oversight. Recent reports have also shown that corporations increasingly underfund traditional pension plans or avoid pension obligations altogether when they file for bankruptcy protection. Even the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation (PBGC), which is responsible for meeting the responsibilities of failed pension plans, is itself \$30 million in the red.

Despite the fact that individual savings programs were never meant to entirely replace pensions, they do fit neatly with the neo-conservative ideology of personal responsibility within the economy. George W. Bush, in describing the “ownership society” in his 2005 inaugural speech, said that individuals should be the stewards of their economic destinies, and this rhetoric shored up his later attempts to begin privatizing Social Security. While neoconservative economists, pundits, and politicians applauded, the nation as a whole did not, and it soon became clear that the American public wants some measure of income stability into their old age. The Social Security battle was the latest skirmish in the ongoing ideological war about how individuals relate to the market in the new economy.

The entrepreneurial fervor of the dot-com era played a significant role in this ideological war. Most people working in Internet start-ups were not entrepreneurs, even if they were entrepreneurial. Entrepreneurship is fine if one actually has a modicum of control over a company’s destiny. It is quite another thing if entrepreneurship is imposed, when companies’ platitudes about ownership and partnership become means to avoid their responsibilities to their employees. As Gina Neff argues in her chapter, “The Lure of Risk,” the dot-com boom made taking economic risks more appealing and in turn provided ideological support for notions like the ownership society. Neff writes that

high-tech workers “willingly accepted and seemingly welcomed risk,” because risk “offered choices” as opposed to the “uncertainties” of the new economy that seem out of the control of ordinary employees. The attraction to personal economic risk that dot-com entrepreneurship inspired survived the dot-com crash all too well.

GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Clearly, work in the new economy is even more global in nature. American firms still dominate wide swaths of the world’s economy, but communication technologies have enabled them to outsource operations outside the United States. There is certainly nothing new about outsourcing, but one of the hopes of the 1990’s tech boom was that the United States would emerge as a vibrant center for knowledge work as “new forms of centrality” emerged in the coordination of business services (Sassen, 1996). Training in computer technology was supposed to be the ticket to job security, but American tech workers increasingly must compete with a global, often lower-paid workforce. Naive protectionist rhetoric, however, often misses the complexities of the global challenges that labor faces. Careful analyses of the labor market in countries that do outsourced work call into question images of a specter of low-wage labor in India and China.

In his contribution, Andrew Ross reminds us that it is too simplistic when American workers place blame on “the faceless foreigner for ‘taking’ their job” rather than holding “companies accountable for paying Third World wages and asking First World prices.” In fact, Ross’s research shows that recent increases in Chinese job loss are just as much the result of corporate globalization and neoliberal privatization as is U.S. job loss. Employers in Shanghai also use the same threats of lower-paid employees abroad (in this case, India) to encourage employees to work harder. These threats have long been a form of “intimidation to speed up the work rate, or win concessions, in labor-intensive industries,” and employers now apply them to white-collar work. China represents a threat to the income security in the West, not so much because of low wages, but because, Ross warns, “it is the biggest and weakest link in the communication network aimed at combating the trade in what economists euphemistically refer to as ‘global labor arbitrage,’ and what contrarians call ‘the race to the bottom.’” Only “if workers are able to communicate with the same ease, trust, and conviction that their employers do” will a network emerge of “workers and employees sharing knowledge, tactics, and goals across

national borders” who can respond to the challenges of corporate globalization.

Even international flows of capital within globalized direct investment are not exempt from some local influence. Seán Ó Riain in his chapter argues that the Irish case of information technology development is more than “a simple story of neo-liberal globalization” as foreign investment *and* indigenous industry, as well as local demand, were central to the creation of the “Celtic Tiger” information technology (IT) boom in the 1980s and 1990s. Although the institutional arrangements that supported rapid growth in Ireland were different from those in other high-tech regions, working conditions in the Irish tech boom converged toward a global standard, so that working in Dublin became a lot like working in Silicon Valley. As Ó Riain writes, “High turnover, individualized human resource management strategies, and non-union approaches to workers” dominated Irish high tech, making it look “a great deal like Silicon Valley for workers—perhaps not surprisingly given the massive influence of U.S. and Silicon Valley companies such as HP and Intel” in Ireland.

Even for workers who get the coveted jobs in the global labor market for high-tech workers, there is no guarantee of quick wealth or even steady incomes, as Immanuel Ness shows in his examination of the relationship between Indian H-1B visa holders in the United States and those who return to India. Quite simply, Ness contends that, in addition to workers in the United States, “foreign workers are also exploited while working for U.S. firms,” as often they work for companies that charge U.S. rates for products and services but pay foreign workers lower wages. Guest worker programs in this country can “evoke the essence of nonstandard contracting jobs: low-wage labor, social isolation from the general workforce, indentured servitude, and upon completion of the job, forced deportation to one’s home country.” Ness follows the movement of high-tech workers who are organizing against these conditions. High-tech workers are forming organizations across the country, especially in regions with large high-technology workforces, that are independent of labor unions; address global concerns by resisting crude protectionist rhetoric; and incorporate multiple political, technological, and social strategies for organizing.

LOCAL RESPONSES; LABOR REFORMS

There are many innovative responses to these challenges and models for future directions in maintaining good work in creative and high-tech

industries. In his chapter, Chris Benner looks to localized political power that the labor movement can have in high-tech regions. Through his examination of cooperative efforts among the local central labor council in Silicon Valley, community organizations, and local political initiatives, Benner describes one model of confronting the challenges of the new economy and reestablishing the political importance of place in a globalized world. Benner reminds us that globalization has led to one sort of recentralization, one that presents possibilities for organizing: production is increasingly “organized around smaller workplaces connected together in complex, constantly shifting networks operating at multiple spatial scales, from the local to the global” that supersede “the centralization of production in large enterprises that was the dominant feature of the industrial era.” These changing locations of production—from centralized factory to smaller, globally connected offices—reestablish the importance of local economic development initiatives, which can improve the quality of life in high-tech regions and the conditions for high-tech workers. In this landscape, unions and central labor councils can “improve the quality of jobs through engaging in a variety of community-based economic development strategies.” Although this social mobilization can improve the quality of jobs in the region, it is, Benner argues, no substitute for workers organizing within high-tech industries themselves. Still, Benner’s case study of Silicon Valley shows that labor movement can reinvent its role in improving the lives of workers through an approach that provides solutions for local problems.

Social mobilization brings up issues of the models for unions themselves. There have been several innovative approaches to solving workplace issues of the new economy—such as the “Freelancers Union” established by Working Today and other associations that address the specific concerns of the high-tech workforce. Danielle van Jaarsveld provides an in-depth look at one of these emerging models, WashTech, a union created by computer programmers and technicians working in Washington State. She compares WashTech with the case of unionized high-tech employees within Dow Jones. From these case studies van Jaarsveld finds “that new economy jobs are not so different from old economy jobs—the need for representation and protection in the workplace remains,” but that the multifaceted needs of tech workers and contingent workers require “an organizational structure that can deploy a variety of strategies to represent the demands of constituent employees.” Two of these strategies use models of organizing that are outside the traditional union structure that entails a collective bargaining agreement with one particular employer. WashTech gains support,

van Jaarsveld argues, by using the models of associational unionism (Heckscher, 1996) to “advocate on behalf of its constituents” and by using features of a “citizenship unionism” model (Stone, 2001) to address more global concerns.

There are other lessons to be learned from different representational structures. John Amman argues in his chapter that the high-tech workforce would be wise to closely examine how entertainment industry unions work, particularly those in film and television. Freelance television and film workers deal with many of the same issues as freelance high-tech workers. Both are “well-trained, highly skilled and largely freelance,” “rely heavily on similar types of networking relationships with employers and co-workers in order to maintain their careers,” and must adapt to ever-changing technologies. Credentialing, training, work schedules, and celebrating best practices are challenges that “old media” unions have addressed; Amman carefully describes the ways in which their strategies could be applied by “new media” workers. One “old media” tactic Amman identifies is organizing “employer members.” Organizing around the “profession, not the workplace,” means that some members will also occasionally be consultants or employers on jobs. Amman shows that the entertainment industries have actually increased their strength by including these employer-members into their constituencies.

“Freelancers can organize,” Tris Carpenter argues from his own experiences organizing film and television editors working on reality television shows, a format that had been considered difficult to organize. Carpenter offers advice for high-tech workers who “wish to move forward collectively,” and gives several examples of the models entertainment industry unions created for portable benefit systems that can be carried over during slow times, restrictions on long or unpaid hours, and assistance for people who wish to train on new and evolving technologies. Carpenter’s chapter reminds readers “rough coalition victories that provide some results may be the best way to begin” organizing, and he points out that trade guilds without legal standing had been doing that in periods of American history. While an agreement for collective bargaining is clearly the strongest protection American workers can earn, the obstacles to a full contract, Carpenter argues, should not stand in the way of making advances.

Surviving in the New Economy brings together these chapters in order to present the challenges and obstacles, the strategies and tactics, and the successes and shortcomings of providing for collective approaches to security for people who must now work in a vastly changed economic environment.