**Is your job under threat from ROBOTS? Expert warns that office jobs could vanish by 2018**

Many of us already rely heavily on technology for everyday tasks, but the very technology we need to get through the day could soon be after our jobs - and the shift could happen much faster than we think. Claims made by an expert in artificial intelligence predict that in less than five years, office jobs will disappear completely to the point where machines will replace humans.

The idea that robots will one day be able to do all low-skilled jobs is not new, but Andrew Anderson, CEO of UK artificial intelligence company, Celaton, said the pace of advance is much faster than originally thought. ‘I'm afraid it’s now a reality that most clerical workers will disappear. This has profound implications for jobs of course, but huge technological advancements are being made all the time and artificial intelligence (AI) has now become very sophisticated to the extent that it can think and learn like a human,’ he said.

AI, for example, can carry out labour intensive clerical tasks quickly and automatically, while the latest models are also capable of making decision that would traditionally be made by humans. Anderson said his company had been assessing the industry and found that the pace of change was accelerating more rapidly than Government bodies and others had prepared for. [AI] can read and understand the meaning of entire documents by learning the patterns of words and phrases in context. It’s this ability to learn - and learn from the natural consequence of processing documents - that is minimising the need for clerical workers to carry out these repetitive tasks.

‘The fact that a machine can not only carry out these tasks, but constantly learn how to do it better and faster, means clerical workers are no longer needed in the vast quantities they once were. For example, a machine can recognise duplicate claims filed to insurance companies by knowing it has seen a phone number or an address before.

More importantly, whenever human intervention is required, AI learns from this and therefore further reduces the dependency on clerical workers. The case is already being seen with many online retailers using automated customer service agents. Earlier this year, technology firm IBM turned its supercomputer Watson into a robot call centre. The artificially intelligent computer system took on the role of a customer service manager called the Watson Engagement Advisor.

Mr Anderson continued: ‘AI is sophisticated enough to know if a correspondence is a complaint and then how important it is. For some people this is difficult to believe which is why we have to demonstrate it live. Seeing is believing after all.‘The perception of ‘too good to be true’ is diminishing as more companies adopt AI to accelerate and improve profitability, customer service and shareholder value.

Anderson added that AI was a ‘game changer’ and although it could affect jobs, there were much greater benefits for the customers.

Machines can significantly increase productivity and therefore reduce costs. They can improve customer service, compliance, scale and efficiency. Independent AI expert, Massimo Barbato - who wrote Thinking Beyond Limitation which explores the impact of technologies on everyday life - agreed.

‘While it was once mainly lower-skilled jobs squeezed by new technology, AI could undercut the ‘knowledge’ professional.

‘By 2025, machines will be able to learn, adjust, exercise judgement, and re-programme themselves.

‘The hardest hit would be professionals working in sales, education, healthcare, IT, management, finance and law – knowledge-based jobs, where analytics tools, mobile internet devices, apps or web-based services such as the cloud can be developed to outperform humans.’