



DRIVING PERFORMANCE FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

BY KATHRYN HUME



We need to develop competencies that are not easily replicated by computers.



WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF WORK?

Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairperson of the World Economic Forum, argues that the Fourth Industrial Revolution will see a paradigm shift in how we work, live and connect. Smart technologies, cognitive computing and connected systems will bring efficiencies in production that have the potential to improve our quality of life. However, we must remain cognisant of the risk of increasing inequalities between low and high skilled individuals.

Increasing automation will see intelligent machines performing cognitive tasks previously completed by humans. Horizontal and vertical business integration and formation of transdisciplinary teams will require workers to maintain networked connections to collaborate and find innovative solutions to complex problems.

Almost all industries will be disrupted in some way. The changing skill requirements will result in reduced

demand in some occupations and skills gaps in others.

MAXIMISING OUR POTENTIAL FOR PERFORMANCE?

Rather than being replaced, humans need to adapt to the ever-changing needs of the workplace. We need to develop competencies that are not easily replicated by computers. Competencies that complement technology rather than compete with it, allowing it to free up our time to innovate.

The greatest gains will be derived through collaboration between individuals, business, education and training, and governments working together to design a future that supports innovation whilst fully exploiting the benefits of emerging technologies.

We must forge connections to build and sustain a learning ecosystem that drives performance through continuous improvement and innovation, with each part working in

synchrony with the others through a shared vision for talent.

To keep pace with the increasing pace of change, we must ‘...*shift from a mindset of “learn, do, retire”, to “learn, do, learn, do, rest, learn... repeat”*’.

We need to leverage the proliferation of available data to predict future workforce needs and skill demands and implement plans to develop capability to be ready when the need arises.

To borrow the term from Charles Jennings, learning and development professionals must become ‘*performance architects*’ to design environments where learning can occur as part of work to drive business performance.

COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS

Learning agility, the ability and willingness to learn from all experiences to perform more effectively in new situations, will be a



necessity for continued performance. Individuals will require a growth mindset to provide the requisite motivation to engage in meaningful learning opportunities to meet future, often unknown, needs.

Predicting the competency needs in the future of work requires an understanding of how computers function to identify deficiencies where humans can add value. These competencies will be those that are difficult for computers to emulate, such as:

CURIOSITY to provide the desire to know or learn

PASSION to motivate individuals to learn

CREATIVITY to generate new ideas and translate complex concepts into action plans

EMPATHY to analyse situations from another's perspective
Intuition to listen to instinct when making decisions

SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE to build and navigate relationships with others to foster collaboration

DATA ANALYSIS to interpret data to inform decisions

CRITICAL THINKING to evaluate situations and form judgements to inform decisions

BUILDING THE FUTURE OF WORK COMMUNITY

As skill demands continue to evolve, developing a future-ready workforce will be the responsibility of all players in the ecosystem, sharing a common goal to support lifelong learning to drive future performance.

All must focus on enabling individuals to engage in meaningful learning opportunities that develop transferable skills that can add value when applied to real life situations.

Individuals

Individuals must be prepared to respond to the changing skill demands. They will increasingly need to reinvent themselves to be capable of adding value.

Self-directed individuals must take responsibility for their personal development by:

- Following their purpose and passion
- Determining the competencies to enable them to follow their purpose and passion
- Engaging with available resources and support tools
- Establishing and implementing an action plan to develop the

identified competencies

- Reflecting on the experience to support further development

But they cannot do this alone; learning to learn must become a lifelong process supported by all players in the ecosystem.

Education and training

To prepare individuals for the future of work, early years educators will be required to cultivate the growth mindset and basic literacies, such as communication and empathy, that will provide the requisite foundation for lifelong learning.

Secondary educators must build on these basic literacies to develop problem solving and critical thinking skills through inquiry-based learning. Educators can provide appropriate scaffolding to encourage divergent thinking to consider a range of solutions so students ask questions and learn from experiences. Education needs to be multidisciplinary to develop understanding of complex and interrelated concepts. Experiences should relate to real-world issues and provide opportunities to solve problems by building relationships and encouraging interconnectivity.



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Tertiary institutions should realign qualifications to job clusters, rather than specific roles, to enable individuals to apply skills and knowledge in a range of contexts.

Businesses

Businesses need to support a performance culture where learning is part of work and employees must feel safe to make mistakes while being supported to learn from them.

Leaders must actively analyse data to understand the needs of the future workforce and create plans that focus on attracting and retaining talent that is responsive to change.

They will need to work closely with education and training organisations to identify and predict future skill requirements and redesign qualifications so that they are more transferable and universally recognised, allowing individuals sufficient time to acquire the requisite skills to meet demand when it arises.

Governments

Governments need to direct resources to ensure the training system can support individuals to develop the anticipated competencies required.

BUILDING THE LEARNING COMMUNITY

The greatest gains will be achieved by building and sustaining a community of practice where participants contribute for the benefit of all. Participants will need to role model the expected behaviours of the wider ecosystem by asking questions, sharing ideas, testing theories and learning from experiences. Through these communities of practice, we will foster innovation to drive performance for the future of work.

THE COMMUNITY DRIVING PERFORMANCE FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK



INDIVIDUAL
Takes responsibility for own personal development



SCHOOL
Develops growth mindset and basic literacies



TERTIARY
Realigns qualifications to job clusters



BUSINESS
Builds culture for learning while working



GOVERNMENT
Directs resources to support lifelong learning



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FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

The Future of Human Work is Imagination, Creativity and Strategy (Joseph Pistrui, 2018, Harvard Business Review) <https://hbr.org/2018/01/the-future-of-human-work-is-imagination-creativity-and-strategy>

Strategies for the New Economy Skills as the Currency of the Labour Market (World Economic Forum, 2019) http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_2019_Strategies_for_the_New_Economy_Skills.pdf