

Automation and the Future of Work: Things you need to know

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It is time to start preparing for [the future of work](#) to those who had not yet started because we are now in the midst of a transformative impact of the 4th industrial revolution. This is becoming a reality for the majority of the workforce as organisations are embracing the upcoming digital disruption. According to the World Economic Forum's [Future of Jobs Report](#), trends to be expected in the 2018 – 2022 period in 20 economies and 12 industry sectors is likely to lead to a new age of good work, jobs and improved quality of life for everyone if managed wisely. However, if this is not managed wisely there is a high risk of widening skills gaps, increased inequality and a much broader polarisation. The future of work consists mostly of automation and technological breakthroughs shifting rapidly between borderline of the works done by humans to the works done by algorithms and machines.

We are already living in the era of massive change, with advancements in automation and artificial intelligence changing the way we work in every field including legal, energy etc. The job disruptions have already begun with over 50% of the companies automating the majority of their work tasks. William Gibson once said, “The future is already here — it’s just not very evenly distributed.” (Oppong, 2018). According to the [British Retail Consortium](#), a third of a million retail workers will be out of work in the coming years because of automation. The major shift happening will affect the skill set required in workers to make them relevant. Currently, creativity, entrepreneurialism, emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills are the top skills that make people more superior in any automated work. The report on the [Future of Jobs](#) provides tools that can support answers to the critical questions facing companies, governments and workers in the horizon up to 2022 in this transformation. However, adaptability is key to staying relevant in this era.

What are the skills needed in the future?

In 2019, [McKinsey](#) shared a 124 paged report on how automation and the workforce are changing the way we live and they highlighted that robots are coming to get office workers jobs. For example, customer services and their functions have since been replaced by software and artificial intelligence. McKinsey predicts that by 2030 almost 15 million jobs currently held by 18-34-year-olds can all be automated. This affects the concept of a job for life as it will not exist changing the workforce expectations. The ability to use technology in many sectors to do more project work and skill shortages have all changed the job market and the way people view their careers. All of this has brought with it greater expectations about the ability to move between ventures, organisations and positions and a radical shift in conventional talent recruitment and retention models. There is a need to adapt to change and stay relevant with the appropriate skills to fit and thrive in this new era.

According to [McKinsey](#), the demand for the skills that are technical, social and emotional, and higher cognitive, will increase by 2030. There are enterprise skills which are going to be critical and for one to remain relevant has to have them because employers are willing to pay more for people with these skills.

The enterprise skills include digital literacy, critical thinking and creativity. The future of work has brought about a change in which people no longer rely on technical skills but on enterprising skills. According to the [World Economic Forum](#), more than a third of the skills essential today will have changed in the next five years. Offices will be shared with bots and smart machines therefore adaptation of the future of work and automation is key if you want to survive. McKinsey modelled the skills shift up to 2030 and they found that they accelerated with an increase in the need for social and emotional skills. The image below shows the graph from their analysis of the skills modelled up to 2030:

Source: [McKinsey](#)

According to the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report, which looks at the employment, skills and workforce strategy for the future, the following are the top ten skills relevant in 2020:

The enterprise skills are included in the top ten of the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report. But how can you adapt and stay ahead with skills needed to succeed in the future of work? To stay relevant by 2030, we have listed some of the skills you require to stay relevant below:

- **Embracing change/Flexibility**

The change is happening very fast hence there is a need for humans to be more agile so that they can be able to adapt to the change and succeed. Our brains need to adapt quickly and be very flexible because there will be a constant shifting of skill-sets, expectations and workplaces. The ability to see change will be an opportunity to grow and innovate.

- **Creativity**

Creativity will be one of the top three skills needed to thrive. New technologies, products and ways of doing work will be a bonus for creative workers as they will fully realise the benefits of all the new things for the future. Currently, robots cannot compete with humans when it comes to creativity which makes it a skill that will be in demand.

- **Emotional Intelligence**

The ability of humans to understand, use and manage their emotions in positive ways to communicate effectively and overcome challenges will be critical. High emotional intelligence is shown when you have empathy, integrity and work well with others. All machines cannot replace human's ability to connect with other humans thus emotional intelligence will be a top skill.

- **Analytical/Critical Thinking**

Innovative solutions and ideas to solve problems only come from people with critical skills. These people use reasoning and logic to evaluate arguments. They have the ability to analyse the flow of information and are open-minded to the best solution available. These people will be of paramount importance to operating the human/machine division of labour.

- **A growth mind-set that gives room to active learning**

It is evident that in the future everyone needs to actively learn and grow. Someone who has a growth mindset has the ability to understand his/her abilities and intelligence to be developed and must know the effort needed to build the skills that will result in higher achievement. This skill will allow them to take on challenges without fear and learn from their mistakes while actively looking for new knowledge.

- **Decision making**

Machines can process information and provide insights impossible for humans to gather, however, humans will make decisions taking into consideration most of the implications their decision might have on other areas of the business, personnel and other people. Humans will have to do more high-level decision-making because it will become more complex in the future workplace.

- **Interpersonal communication skills**

A vital skill will be the ability to exchange information between people. Communicating effectively with each other will be important and it means that people should have the ability to say the right things, using the right tone of voice and body language to ensure the message is heard.

- **Leadership skills**

Being inspiring and helping others become their best versions will be critical for the future of work. In the future, individuals will take on leadership roles on project teams to tackle issues and develop better solutions.

- **Diversity and cultural intelligence**

The world and the workplaces are becoming more open and diverse therefore it is important for individuals to have skills to understand, respect and work with different people despite their culture, race, language, religious beliefs etc. This will improve interactions within the company and will likely make the company's products and services more inclusive and successful.

- **Technological Skills**

The future of work is fuelled with technological innovations e.g. big data, blockchains, artificial intelligence etc. Everyone will need to be comfortable around technological gadgets. At the very basic level, people should be able to access data and determine how to act on it which requires some technical skills.

Robots can help us where we want to be faster but they cannot replace us. The future of work is already upon us and we can see some of the jobs and skills as predicted are no longer needed whilst others have gained popularity. The change will not wait for us but we need to increase our pace and be involved in the Fourth Industrial Revolution to remain relevant. Since a skill's half-life has plummeted from 30 years to an average of 6 years, it's time for all of us to start developing skills that will make us valuable tools in the workplace to come. What skills do you plan to tackle first from the list we have provided?

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