

Why Leadership Skills are Important in the Future of Work

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Leadership is the ability of an individual or an organisation to guide other individuals or teams or the whole organisation. It is both a research area and a practical skill which people should have. With the world becoming more transparent, more connected and more diverse, new leadership will definitely be needed for the future of work. This new leadership requires a new set of skills to lead organisations or teams in the future (Marcus, 2020). Unfortunately, currently, existing organisations are not offering the future leaders the scope of experience they will need in the near future that is already upon us.

The American Management Association carried out a study and they discovered that 48% of organisations believe that developing global capabilities in their leaders is a top priority. However, only 18% of multinational organisations claim they have a strong global leadership pipeline necessary to meet their future business challenge. [Deloitte](#) released a report last year that examines the future of a workplace given these changing dynamics. When organisations become social enterprises they are under increased public and stakeholder scrutiny. Social enterprises add sense back to the workforce and merge income creation with respect and support for workers, customers and the communities we live in. Leadership will represent principles of diversity and openness within these organisations.

Erica Volini, Deloitte's US Human Capital Leader, spoke about the changing work environment and the top three leadership skills required to fit and thrive which are:

1. **The ability to manage diverse and complex workforce:** Despite the workforce having diversity in terms of race, age and ethnicity, there is also diversity in the way they think about work. This is because the fastest-growing segment of the alternative workforce is the gig economy. This results in the different needs and lifestyles of working which also requires the leaders to be able to adapt and be able to lead such a workforce.
2. **The ability to manage stakeholders both internally and externally:** Currently, organisations are under the spotlight externally and they need to listen and actively manage what is happening in their external environment. This is a brand new skill which they have to play in driving that.
3. **The ability to adapt to the change in the future of work:** The issues facing organisations are now more complex than ever before. Everything about work is changing; the proliferation of technology, regional globalisation, an ever more dynamic global economy, increased government regulations.

What skills will leaders need in the future?

As more and more demanding jobs are coming in the picture which is mostly automated using technologies like artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics, etc. the professional landscape is constantly moving towards these rapid changes. The digital transformation is changing and affecting every industry which makes today's leaders and the future leaders require a constantly evolving skills

set (Insights, 2020). The following are the leadership skills leaders will need to thrive in the dynamic mid-market and stay competitive in the future of work in this Fourth Industrial Revolution (Thornton, 2020).

Identify, nurture and empower

According to Chaubey from Grant Thornton, “Today, talent and competition aren’t coming from where companies thought they would.” This is because the age of a job for life is gone and before you know it you might be moving from one role to another in a different organisation. With the advent of the gig economy, the greatest talent can be anywhere in the world. Generally, the lifespan of organisations is decreasing and economic power shifting to newer cultures (Thornton, 2020). Organisations will benefit from fostering a culture and building systems that decentralize authority, enable people to learn constantly, and motivate people to take responsibility for and respond to changing circumstances.

Over the coming years, the challenges faced by organisations and leaders are substantial and will probably require fundamental changes in both leadership practices and business models. With the global economy today worth over about \$80 trillion, you can either take a Star Wars mindset that says the way to win is by wiping out the competition and you just need to have the largest share possible, or you can claim it could rise to \$120-130 trillion over the next 10 years, and more than half of that will come from businesses and industries that don't really exist or have just been born out. This really sounds like a chance which you should leverage on as a future leader.

Adapting, engaging and revolving

Learning to think is crucial for the future of work leaders. Although many people enjoy less demanding tasks or roles, this will take them more time to adapt to the new reality of accepting more creative or higher-value activities already taking place. Imagine how tired people look after a one day workshop of using their brains (Thornton, 2020). The problem is that people are not trained or ready to be more adaptive and revolving. However, there will be more of this kind of work in the future of work were organisations will start to look to differentiate themselves so that they can go back to injecting people into roles.

In the coming years, this is going to happen therefore organisations should start training people to work with this technology and effective ways of using their time well and how to pace their time when it is on free tasks.

Strategy, direction and engagement

For one to be a good future leader, there are multiple stakeholders which require one to have a big-picture vision and be able to understand how each stakeholder will be impacted by any decision he makes. According to the Grant Thornton Australia partner and private advisory, Kirsten Taylor-Martin, there will still be a need for leaders of dynamic organisations to have a clear vision and be able to articulate that to the business. Therefore, the future leaders do not need to have all the answers but should be able to ask the right questions and have a great team surrounding them who are also

passionate about the vision. The leaders must be willing and agile enough to break down obstacles and processes which have traditionally slowed down transformation.

Having fewer structures allows ideas to be easily adapted to the changing environments thus organisations need to be willing to trial ideas with low cost to the market. In such environments, soft skills will also be important especially in the ability to engage staff and persuade them to follow a new vision. The soft skills include authenticity, honesty and direct conversations.

The cloud, AI and machine learning

According to a tech pioneer and venture partner at Deep Science Ventures, Inmaculada Martinez, new trends in technology will affect the way in which organisations operate with the Internet of Things, cloud-based infrastructure, AI and machine learning forcing organisations to rebuild their business models. An example was given in the healthcare sector, where photographic evidence has to be analysed by machines – everyone doesn't want a human telling them they have cancer, therefore, you allow the machine to analyse tens of thousands of photographs, your blood sample, CT scans or MRIs etc. because machines are efficient at delivering results.

This transformation of processes will definitely have implications for the activities done by humans. Some roles will be repositioned around elements which require creative thinking, tacit knowledge or social skills thus almost every industry will be affected.

Innovation and team collaboration

As future business leaders, there will be a need to engage in conversations and not just stay in a corner office. It is imperative that leaders in the future of work alongside their employees and get to know their weaknesses and strengths to help them acquire new skills and help drive their professional development. With the changing landscape, business leaders need to also adapt their own skills and their team's skills if they are to both remain competitive and take advantage of new opportunities in the market place. Current global mid-market executives, according to IBR data, assume that the most important attribute for a business leader in 2030 will be to be creative – cited by 20 per cent of respondents; compared to the 16 per cent who believe this is necessary today.

Elsewhere, 18 per cent say it will be necessary to adapt to change, compared with just 14 per cent who see this as a key requirement in 2019. It is also seen as necessary to be competitive, with 9 per cent of respondents emphasizing this, while 8 per cent point to the need for the courage to take risks. The future leaders will also need to be both more open to ideas and aware of their own limitations. They should create a safe space and be willing to be vulnerable. They should celebrate curiosity and experimentation in order to encourage their teams to think outside the box. However, this is not easy to achieve so it will require an ongoing shake-up.

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