

Future Firsts: Technology forces shaping the future workforce



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LIQUID SKILLS

The consumer increasingly understands both how to effortlessly and regularly re-skill, and how to harness and advertise their new knowledge to strengthen his or her position in any commercial setting.

As discussed in previous reports looking into artificial intelligence and automation, the emergence of new technology is changing the workforce, and it will be important for employees to use new technology to work more efficiently. Employees meanwhile will need to adopt a new mentality of working flexibly and learning quickly, re-skilling where necessary to stay relevant in an ever-changing working environment.

With a multitude of new tools and services to hand, consumers are developing a mercenary approach to the acquisition of new skills. Increasingly, knowledge can be acquired on-demand, effortlessly upgraded and, when obsolete, discarded without a moment's thought. We have entered the age of Liquid Skills.

The pressures of a volatile labour market, paired with the growing and universalising accessibility of knowledge, make constant personal upgrades a condition of life for the consumer-citizen of any age. Agile consumers are adopting a holistic approach to growing - and marketing - their own personal brand.

The value of one's education no longer lies in gaining necessary knowledge but in developing a dexterity for learning. Consumers can now pick up and drop new skills as they are required, empowered by a vast array of data-driven, personalised learning programmes which make the work of achieving competency in a particular subject field ever less onerous and time-consuming.



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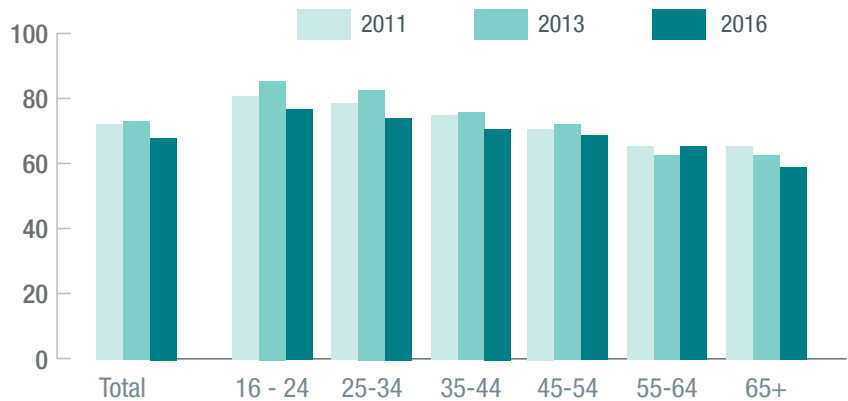
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Learning new skills and improving on existing ones remains a part of people's core career needs, but this desire has been decreasing over time. This is potentially due to the absolute availability of information. There are two schools of thought here; does the ubiquity of information negate the need to know it, or does its readily available nature mean that individuals are relying on this accessibility?

The desire to start a course of study differs somewhat between social grades. The AB group put more emphasis on going back to study. This may be down to having more access to the finance and time necessary to undertake study and re-skill.

I feel the need to continue learning in my career



37% of professionals surveyed have started a course of study two or more times



39% of millennials expect to start a course of study in the future



75% of millennials claim a strong to moderate 'need to know more'

"Clearly, continuous learning and career agility are going to be essential. Jobs are changing quickly, as technology starts to complement, redefine and potentially replace many existing jobs. Individuals will need to keep their eyes on potential career options and work proactively to develop the new skills and knowledge required; on-going proactive career management is likely to be essential for continued employability."

Corinne Mills, career coach, author and MD of Personal Career Management

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2013

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2019

2021

2023

2025

2027

2029

2030

INNOVATORS IN UP-SKILLING

Back to work

Different groups have different learning needs. Start-ups are focusing on specific segments or groups and run workshops which help to tailor specific skills that are useful to those individuals.

The Pregnancy Pause, launched by agency Mother New York in 2017 provides a toolkit for mothers to help them make the transition back into work after maternity leave. There is a strong focus on improving skills that will help individuals in this specific scenario, without the need to undertake courses which include other areas that may be less useful.

Nano-degrees

New learning methods can help retention and allow organisations to plug skills gaps. With the job market changing so rapidly, the skills that are useful in one role might be obsolete in a few years as new skill demands take over. Education start-up Udacity began offering courses in virtual reality (VR) in late 2016. They offer short 'nanodegrees' of a few months duration, specifically designed to meet labour market demands and spread knowledge of in-demand skills. New education methods such as this are allowing workers to quickly re-skill and stay up to pace with change in their industries.



Space to learn

While it may seem relatively straightforward to take an online course, watch an instructional video or practice new skills, learning requires practice and focus.

The office is rarely the most conducive place for this to take place. Study café chain Benkyo Café, based in Tokyo, allows adults to use its facilities on a membership basis and provides an environment more conducive with study and learning than a typical café. They plan to open six new cafes by summer 2019.

Hit the ground running

Online retailer Amazon has been one of the most innovative companies in recent generations and has transformed the retail industry as we know it. It isn't hard to imagine then that they are also innovators when it comes to training their staff. Dependent on the role, new hires undergo a month-long training and leadership programme prior to starting. They also pay for employees to undertake courses in in-demand fields. It all equips workers with everything they need to 'hit the ground running and take ownership of their career.'

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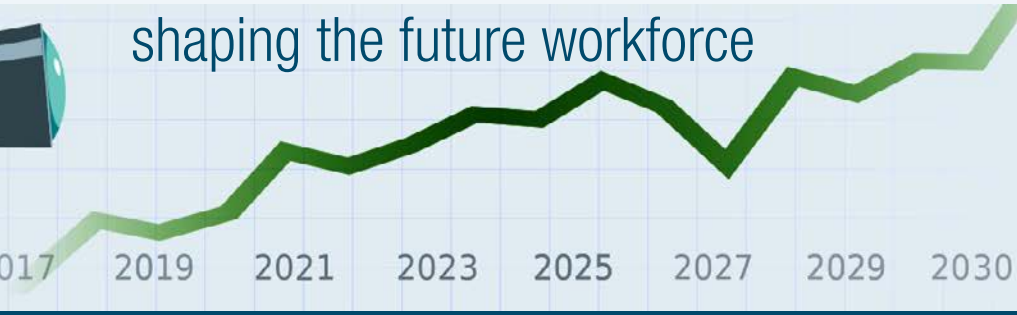
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KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE WORKFORCE

New educational tools

Technology is advancing at a faster and faster rate, and workers need to re-skill quickly.

Opportunities to do so are available, but the necessary time might not be. New educational tools can help workers re-skill effectively, while the proliferation of MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses) from organisations such as edX allow workers to learn for free.

Tailored re-skilling

The composition of the workforce is changing rapidly, with new mothers now able to re-skill quickly and find jobs, individuals able to travel across the world and share their skills, and new technologies making the transfer of information more and more efficient. Those professionals new to the workforce have different needs and may require different educational approaches.



Flexibility of utmost importance

The advance of automation and artificial intelligence heralds a future in which some skills will be done better by machines – regardless of the proficiency of the human being. It is therefore necessary that individuals develop new ways to learn skills, and very quickly. Technological developments have the potential to displace thousands of workers and in order to stay relevant those workers will need to re-skill rapidly to get back into the job market. Flexibility and adaptability will be fundamental character traits, and learning quickly on the job will be of paramount importance.

Employers need to support learning

Employers will be expected to provide methods of learning, and to facilitate the development of new skills. Training will need to be modular, cater to those who wish to undertake extensive training in a short period, and to those who wish to learn at a slower rate. Organisations who do not provide support for up-skilling, risk being left behind as employees favour those who do. The attraction and retention of talented workers may rest on this.

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