



OKLAHOMA
CareerTech

HOW TO FUTURE3 -PROOF (YOUR) CAREER

A guide to help you
prepare for tomorrow TODAY



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education,
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Data Sources » Insights from a variety of expert sources form the foundation of this guide: Accenture, America Succeeds, Cognizant Center for the Future of Work, Deloitte LLC, Emsi Burning Glass, Korn Ferry, McKinsey Global Institute, MIT Task Force on the Work of the Future, World Economic Forum and others.

WHY THIS GUIDE?

I had two purposes in creating this guide. One purpose was to summarize the research and insights from the experts and authorities who were describing the future of work. Recent years have witnessed a greater focus on what work and the workplace will look like and how workers will need to prepare themselves for the future of work. A second purpose was to provide steps individuals could take to **future-proof** their careers.

I hope this guide achieves my purposes. Please let me know of any comments or questions you might have.

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INTRODUCTION

The jobs of tomorrow are changing today. The workplace has constantly been evolving, but the accelerated pace of change is new.

Several disruptors are now shaping the future of work. These disruptors can be organized broadly as technology-driven change and people-driven change.

Part 1 of this guide looks at how the workplace is changing and how individuals can prepare for it. Part 2 of the guide consists of five practices that everyone — whether they are educators, learners or business clients — can use to help **future-proof** their careers.

HOW TO
FUTURE
-PROOF
(YOUR)
CAREER

PART

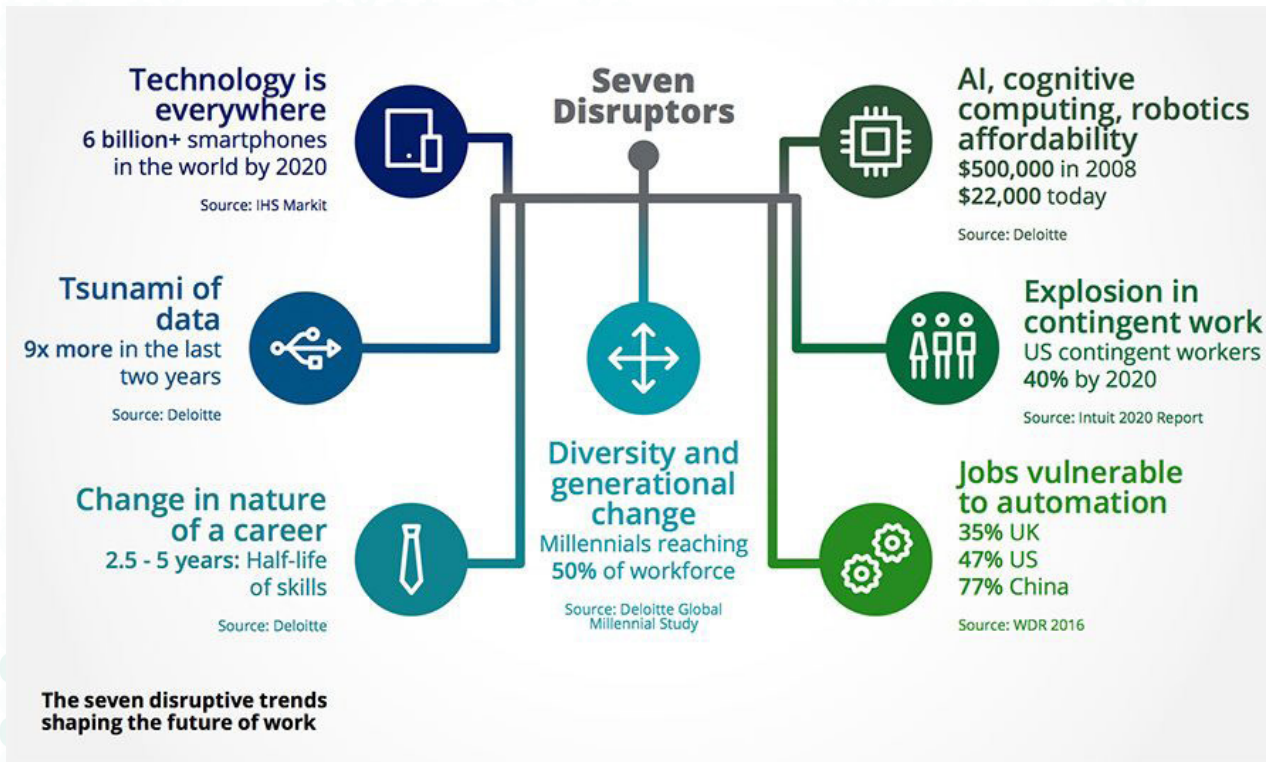
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CHANGE IN THE
WORKPLACE

The future of work is about disruption and how we respond to it. Disruption implies that the way things have been will change in significant ways after the disruption occurs.

Although experts agree that the future of work will look different than it did only a few years ago, they also agree that there is a future for workers as well if they prepare for the work to come.

Disruptors driving the future of work



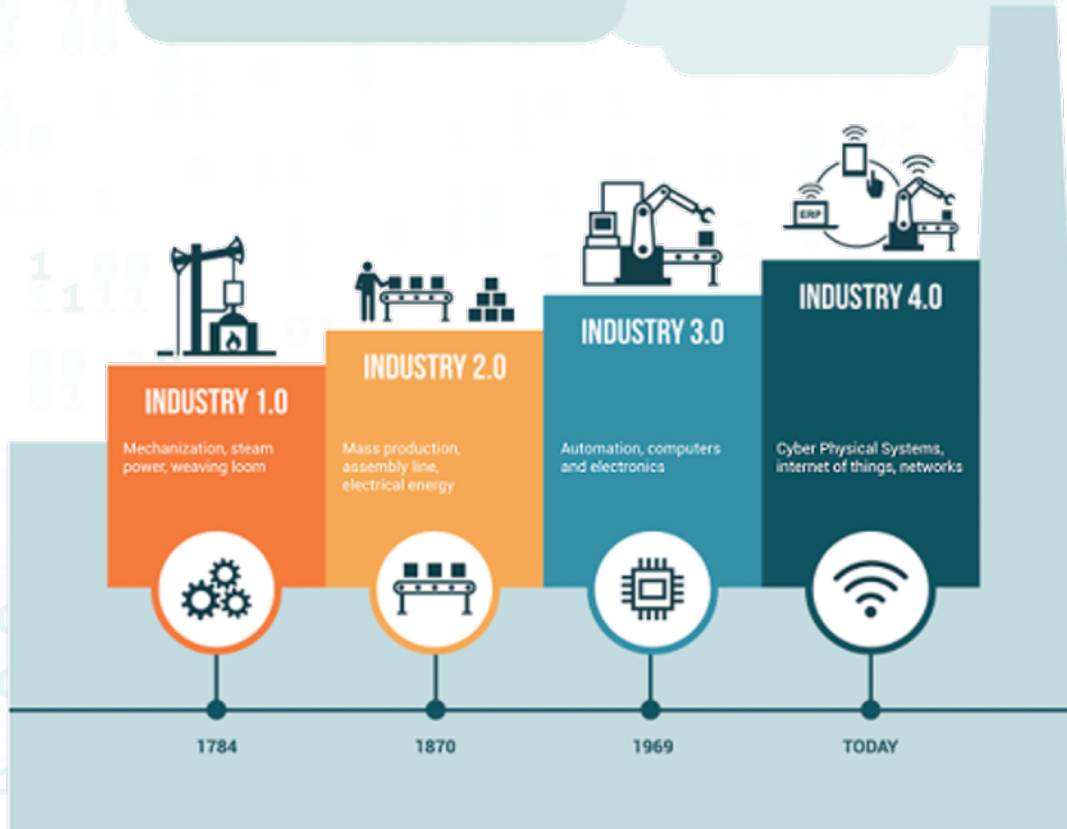
Disruption is not a new phenomenon. It is the accelerating frequency of disruption that poses a new challenge for organizations.

Researchers and futurists can identify several **disruptors** changing the workplace. While they don't agree on the number and types of disruptors or on the impact of any single disruptor, they do broadly agree that disruption, while not a new phenomenon, is happening more often.

Although there are several disruptors now shaping the future of work, they can be grouped under the categories of technology-driven change and people-driven change.

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

TRANSFORMING INDUSTRIES AND INNOVATION



Technology-driven change

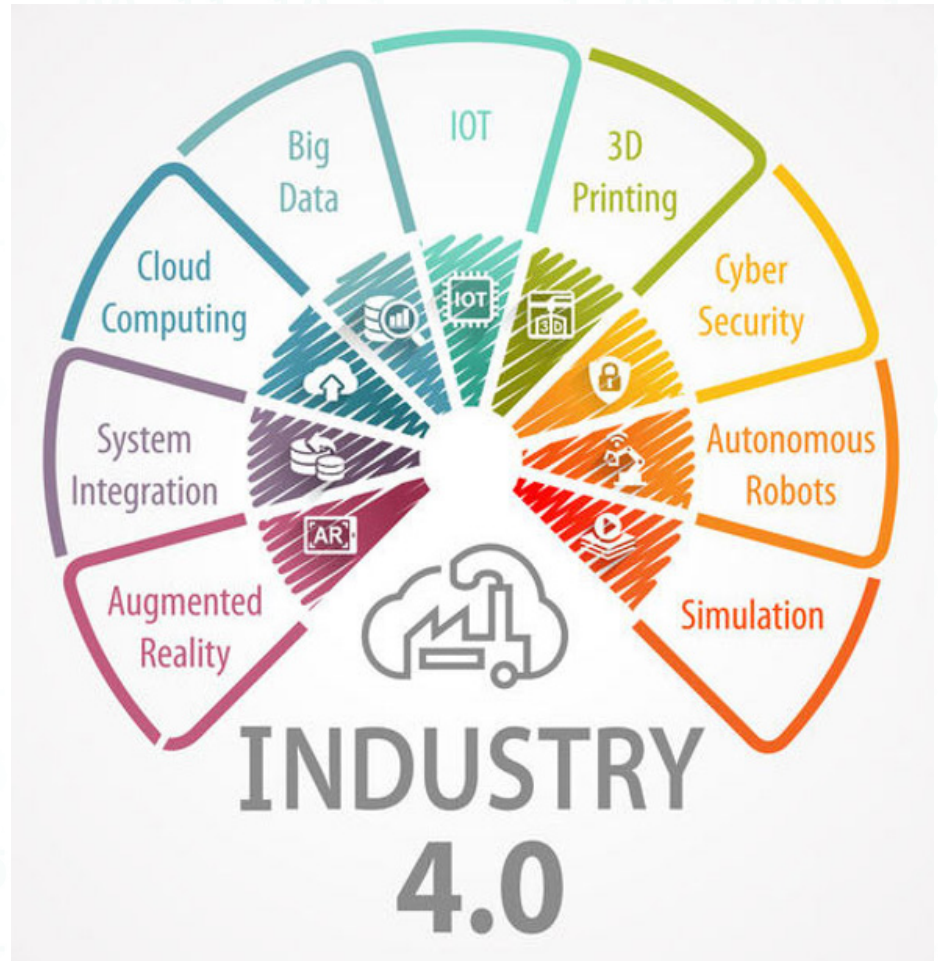
“Previous industrial revolutions liberated humankind from animal power, made mass production possible and brought digital capabilities to billions of people. This Fourth Industrial Revolution is, however, fundamentally different. It is characterized by a range of new technologies that are fusing the physical, digital and biological worlds, impacting all disciplines, economies and industries, and even challenging ideas about what it means to be human.”

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

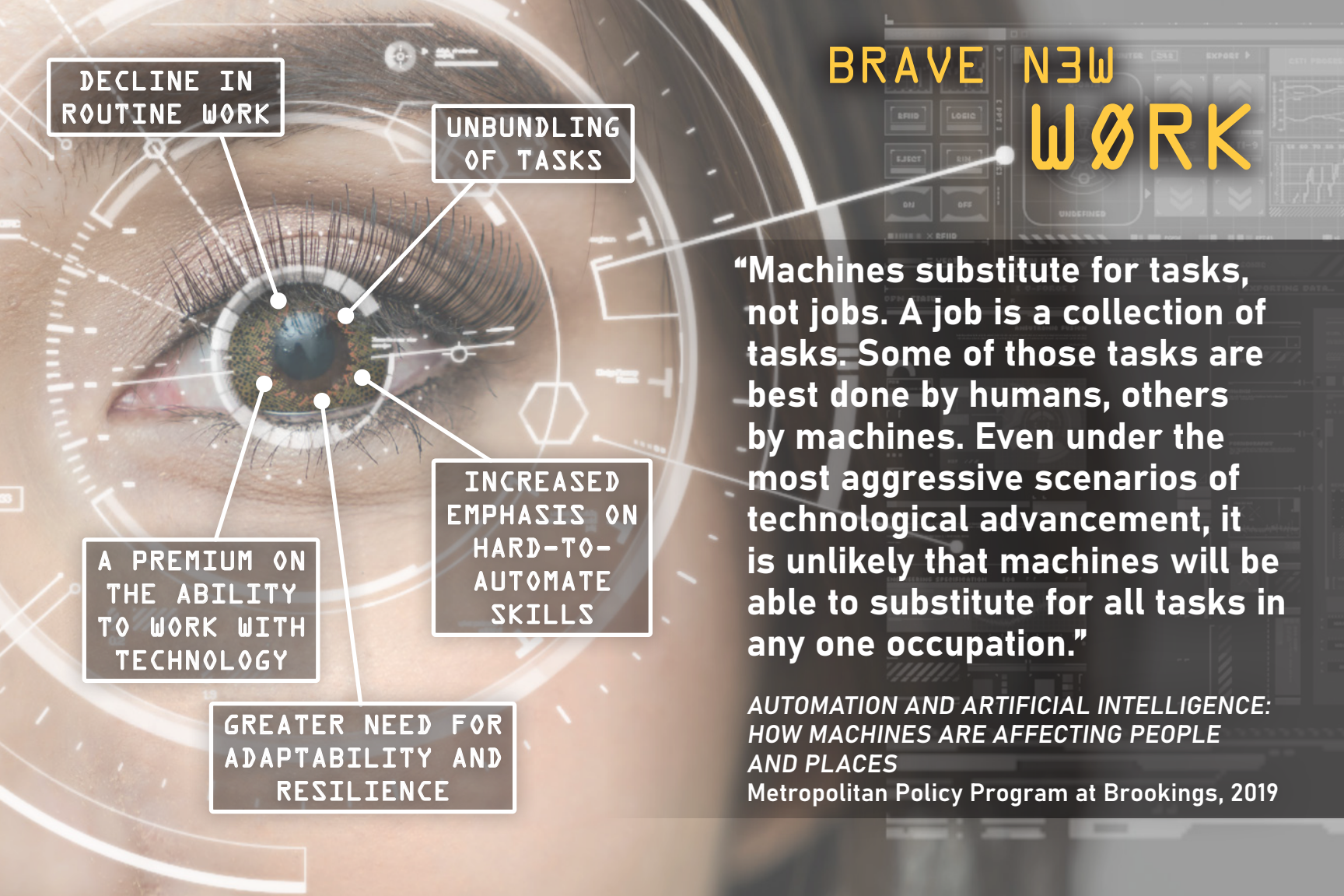
Like many people, you probably learned about the **industrial revolution** in school. You might not have learned that multiple industrial revolutions have taken place. Experts say we are now experiencing the Fourth Industrial Revolution, also called **Industry 4.0**.

Each industrial revolution had something to do with technology-driven change. What is different now is that technology is also breaking boundaries and reshaping the nature of work itself. Starting today, not only will the work be different, but how people work will also be different.

The advancements of Industry 4.0



Industry 4.0 represents multiple developments in technology. A simple online search produces many examples of developments in specific industries. Each of these developments has an impact on work and on the workplace.



DECLINE IN
ROUTINE WORK

UNBUNDLING
OF TASKS

BRAVE NEW WORK

A PREMIUM ON
THE ABILITY
TO WORK WITH
TECHNOLOGY

INCREASED
EMPHASIS ON
HARD-TO-
AUTOMATE
SKILLS

GREATER NEED FOR
ADAPTABILITY AND
RESILIENCE

“Machines substitute for tasks, not jobs. A job is a collection of tasks. Some of those tasks are best done by humans, others by machines. Even under the most aggressive scenarios of technological advancement, it is unlikely that machines will be able to substitute for all tasks in any one occupation.”

*AUTOMATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:
HOW MACHINES ARE AFFECTING PEOPLE
AND PLACES*

Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings, 2019

Experts paint different pictures of the future of work. Like artwork, some of the pictures are more abstract while others are more detailed. However, a common feature among the pictures painted by the experts is that work will resemble a collection of tasks. Instead of one person's job being a bowl of apples and another's job being a bowl of oranges, the future of work for each worker will look like a bowl of apples, oranges, bananas and ... you get the idea.

Rigid job descriptions will disappear. In most cases, say the experts, technology will replace individual tasks and not whole jobs. This will allow more routine work to be replaced with more creative work — work that people do better than machines. So envision a future of work that resembles *The Jetsons* more than *The Terminator*.

THE VIEW FRØM 1967

WORK IS NØT(!) DISAPPEARING

“Computing technology is helping technology in general to change very swiftly; professional skills are rapidly becoming obsolete, and large blocks of job openings disappear... Frequent retraining and re-education will almost certainly become the normal way of life.

“My personal feeling is that if you’re more than about five years from retirement, computing technology is going to influence your career markedly before you retire. Most of us are likely to face a retreading job at least once before we stop working.”

THE COMPUTER IN YOUR FUTURE

W.H. Ware, The RAND Corporation, 1967

Yesterday's disruptions did not eliminate the future of work. The nature of work changed, but workers adapted to those changes. Now as then, a **retreading** job is needed so workers can remain successful in their work — although today we might call it **reskilling**. Some jobs may disappear, but many new jobs are also expected to be created. Some of the new jobs could not have been imagined only a few years ago.

The disruptions shaping the future of work today may bring some uncertainty, but they will bring possibilities for professional growth and creativity as well.



Women and the future of work in the United States



INSTITUTE
FOR WOMEN'S
POLICY
RESEARCH



NATIONAL
WOMEN'S
LAW CENTER



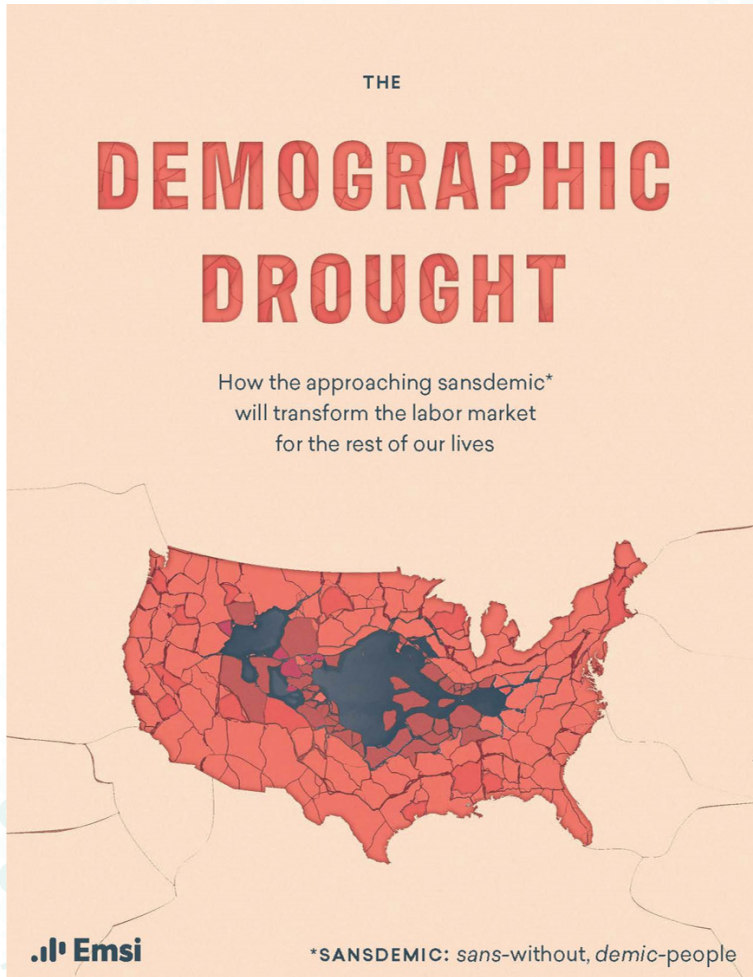
August 2020 By Susan Green

A future of work that works for women

“Employment projections not only show that many women-dominated fields are at particular risk of being replaced by technology in the coming years, but also that automation is especially likely to reduce employment in middle-income and well-paid occupations predominantly held by women.”

It's important to remember that changes in work affect the lives of people. Some of the jobs that may change most in the Fourth Industrial Revolution are jobs in which women are overrepresented in the workforce. This means that planning for the future of work needs to also account for the possible uneven impact of those changes on women.

Employers, educators and communities need to tailor their responses to the futures of the work represented in their diverse workplaces.



People-driven change

- » Baby Boomers exiting the labor force, not being replaced
- » U.S. annual population growth declining
- » Multigenerational living
- » Prime-age male workforce declining
 - × Boomer wealth, delayed responsibility
 - × Opioid epidemic
 - × Attitude shift

“...America’s population is graying rapidly, with 10,000 Baby Boomers reaching retirement age each day for the next 19 years.”

THE GLOBAL TALENT CRUNCH
Korn Ferry, 2018

In addition to technology-driven change, the future of work is being shaped by people-driven change. These demographic changes have different causes, but their impact adds up: There are simply fewer people to do the work.

One key change is that workers from the Baby Boom generation are leaving the workforce but are not being replaced. Workers in later generations may have a different attitude toward work than their parents or grandparents had. A long-term trend that has been visible for many decades is the decline in the growth of the population in America.

Why are some men opting for part-time work?



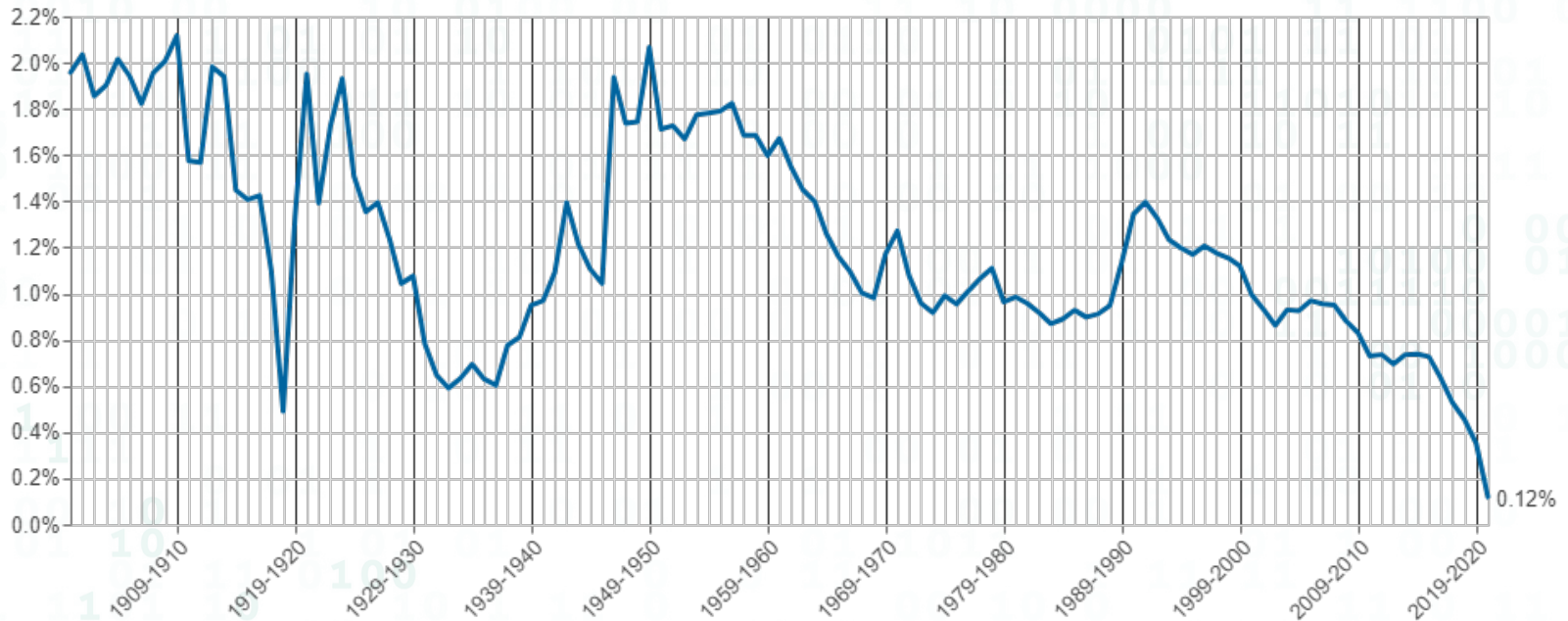
According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, the decrease in hours worked for men ages 21-30 exactly mirrored the increase in video game hours played. On average, they worked more than **200 fewer hours** in 2015 than they did in 2000.

At the same time, they upped their leisure hours, **75%** of which were spent **playing video and computer games**.

Some current workers want to work less. Their reasons vary with the individual. For example, research showed that some men in a key age group might prefer to spend time engaging in leisure activities such as playing computer games. Priorities may also have shifted due to the pandemic.

Fewer people may place the same priority on work today as they did before. No matter the reason, the result is that employers have a shallower pool of potential employees to draw upon.

Figure 1. US annual population growth, years 1900–01 to 2020–21



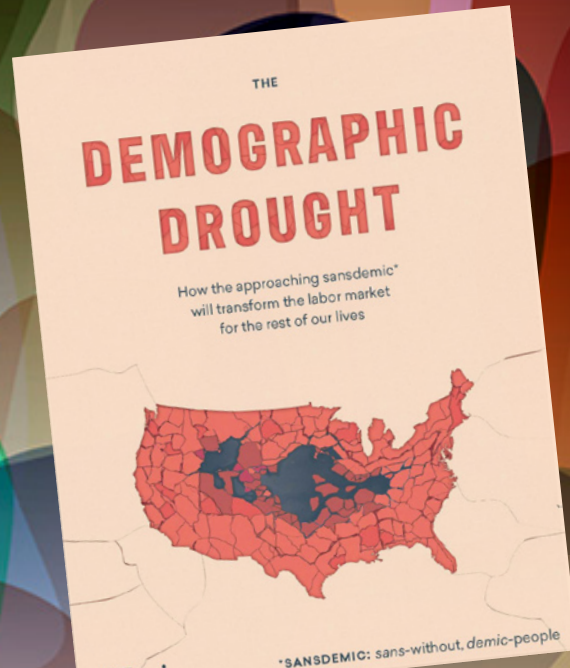
Source: William H. Frey analysis of US Census Bureau historical estimates, including 2010-2021 annual estimates, released 12/21/2021

B | Brookings Metro

The 2021 population growth rate of 0.12% is the slowest rate since the founding of the nation.

As the data shows, the growth rate of the population is at a historically low level.

A PREDICTED PEOPLE SHORTAGE



“Millions of Americans will be absent first from the classroom and then from the labor market because, to put it bluntly, they were never born.”

**THE DEMOGRAPHIC DROUGHT
2021**

The shortage of people is not a surprise. Experts had anticipated this situation for many years. Unlike the movie *It's A Wonderful Life*, we couldn't take a journey to the future to see the way things would be without the people who would not be born. Instead, the data had to reveal the trends.

The recent pandemic likely played a supporting role, but the current labor shortage resulted from multiple factors that played starring roles. In recent decades, more people were working, fewer people were starting families, and more people — with more debt — were delaying going back to school or continuing their education. In tough economic times, some students decided to stay in school longer rather than enter a difficult job market.

THE FUTURE OF WORK: DEFINING FEATURES



**DIGITAL &
HUMAN**



**COOPERATIVE &
COLLABORATIVE**



**KNOWLEDGE &
TASK-BASED**



**FLEXIBLE &
FLUID**

So what do the changes — whether driven by technology or people — mean for the future of work? Different experts offer different visions. However, some common features include the following:

- » Work will integrate people and digital tools.
- » Work will place a premium on cooperation and collaboration.
- » Work will focus more on flexible bundles of tasks and skills and less on rigid frameworks for jobs.
- » Work will demand more flexibility and openness in how people think about work.

THE WORKPLACE OF YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW

FROM

» TO

jobs

» tasks

8 to 5

» 10 to 4

hand

» voice

4G

» 5G

centralized » decentralized

the cloud » the edge

one (world) » many (realities)

FROM

» TO

suite

» sofa

suburb

» city

free wifi

» wifi-free

career

» careers

mass-produced » me-produced

retired

» re-tired

diversity

» belonging

Adapted from

***FROM/TO: THE FUTURE OF YOUR WORK — EVERYTHING
YOU WANTED TO KNOW BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK***

Cognizant, Center for the Future of Work, 2019

The defining features of the future of work are visible in these *From-To* comparisons.



BUILDING YOUR WeQ*

*The skills to interact, build relationships and show the self-awareness needed to work effectively with others in person and virtually.

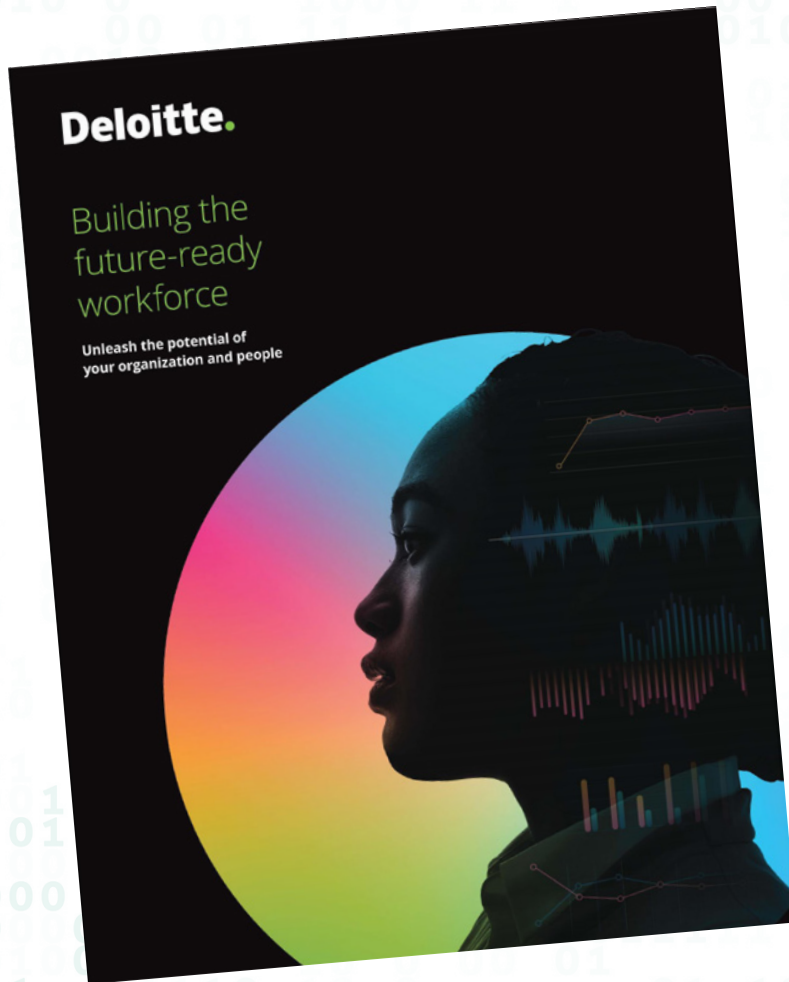
—Accenture,
"New Skills Now: Inclusion in the
Digital Economy", 2017

"The people who will be most successful in the workplace of the future will be those who cultivate soft skills that relate to how you think, work, and relate to other people."

BERNARD MARR
*Top 16 Essential Soft Skills
For The Future Of Work,*
September 2022

According to multiple experts, a key feature of the future of work — regardless of the field of work — is the need for people to cooperate and collaborate more. The people who succeed in the future of work will be those who develop and use their skills in engaging with other people. It will remain people who create the visions for organizations, who identify solutions to problems and who encourage their colleagues.

You may be familiar with measures such as IQ and EQ. An emerging measure important in the future of work could be **WeQ**. What kind of **WeQ** score would you give yourself today?



THE FUTURE-READY WORKFORCE

From employability to durability

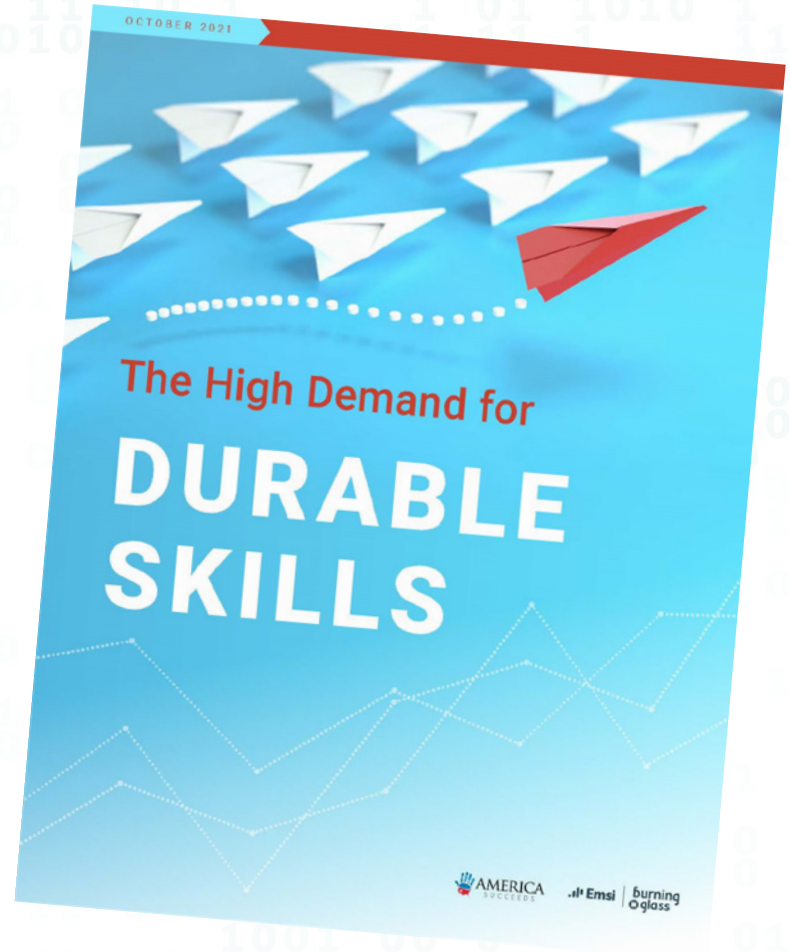
- » A hybrid workforce comprising **humans and machines**
- » A workforce that's **always learning** in the flow of work
- » A workforce built on **enduring capabilities** *first* and necessary skills *second*

The workplace of the future will need a workforce of the future. What does that workforce look like? According to organizations that study the future of work, employers will need people who have certain capabilities. These capabilities tend to support everything else that a person can do. They are referred to most often as ***durable skills***. Durable skills have long-term value in the future of work, regardless of the work or the workplace.

Durable skills

- » Leadership
- » Character
- » Collaboration
- » Communication
- » Creativity
- » Critical thinking
- » Metacognition
- » Mindfulness
- » Growth mindset
- » Fortitude

Source:
THE HIGH DEMAND FOR DURABLE SKILLS
America Succeeds and Emsi Burning Glass, 2021



Durable skills are not necessarily new. Some may look familiar as **life skills** or **basic skills** or **employability skills**. What has changed is the degree of focus needed on these skills. Because of the foundational nature of durable skills in the future of work, teaching and mastering these skills assume even greater importance. *Durable skills are emerging as being essential for securing a place in the future of work.*

Enduring human capabilities

- » Imagination
- » Empathy
- » Curiosity
- » Resilience
- » Creativity
- » Emotional intelligence
- » Teaming
- » Social intelligence
- » Sense-making
- » Critical thinking
- » Adaptive thinking

“In an economy that desperately needs more and more new skills, refreshed more and more often, what becomes most important are not the skills themselves but the enduring human capabilities that underlie the ability to learn, apply, and effectively adapt them.”

SKILLS CHANGE, BUT CAPABILITIES ENDURE
Deloitte Center for the Edge, 2019



The mix of skills in the experts' lists may vary. What stands out from the individual skills is the nature of the skills: Durable skills represent capabilities. These capabilities will help individuals remain flexible and adaptable — and employable — in the future of work.

Nurturing a skills tree

PERISHABLE SKILLS

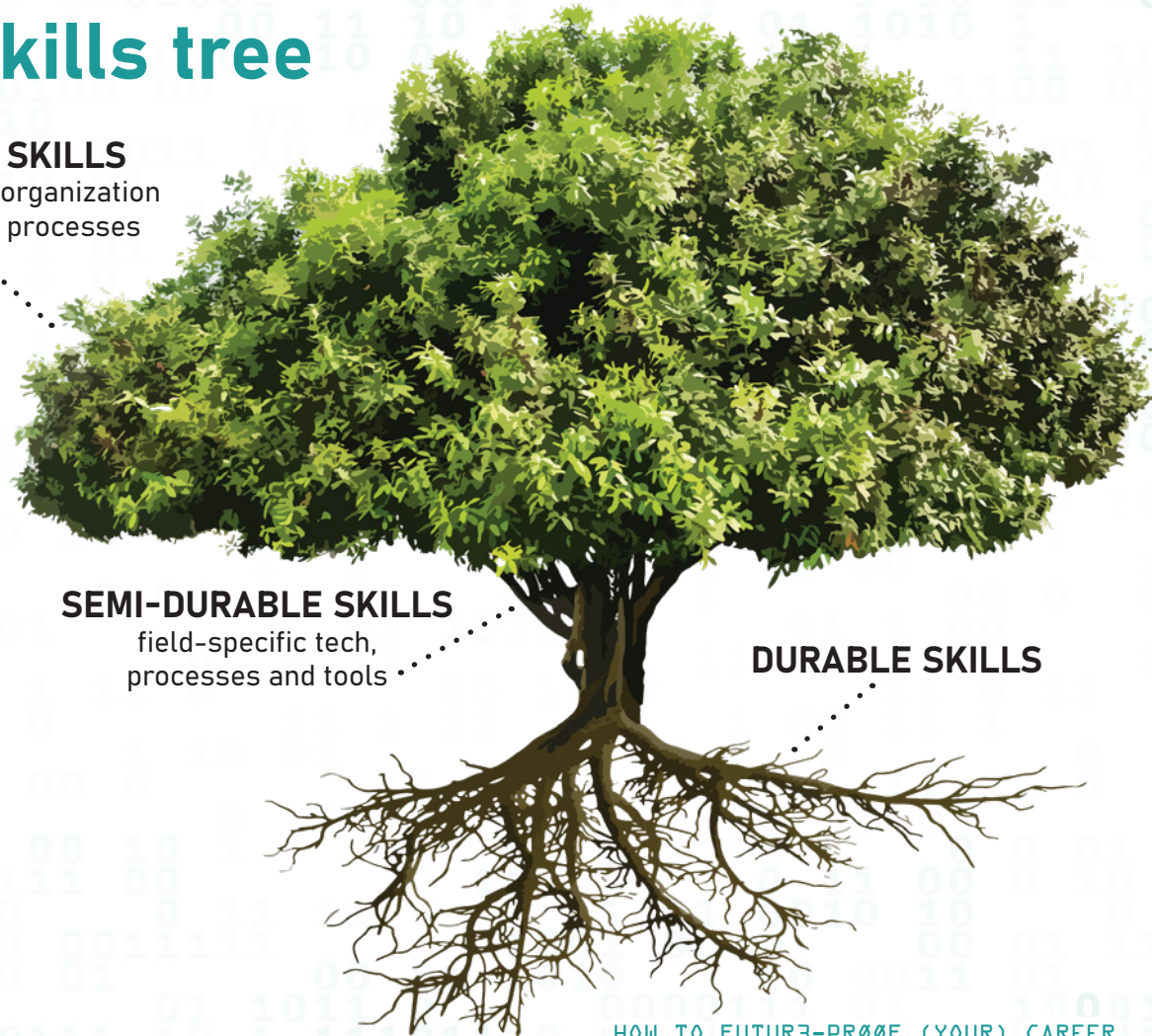
specific tech skills; organization policies, tools and processes

“Durable skills form the roots of the tree, with semi-durable frameworks forming the branches, and more perishable skills coming and going like the leaves with the changing seasons.”

SEMI-DURABLE SKILLS

field-specific tech, processes and tools

DURABLE SKILLS



SONIA MALIK

IBM Training and Skills Blog,
December 2020

Another way to think about durable skills is to imagine a tree. Durable skills are the roots of the tree; without the roots, the tree could not remain stable in the soil. No matter how the branches may grow or how the leaves may change with the seasons, the roots remain the anchor for the tree. Likewise, durable skills support the skills tree that each person must cultivate to thrive in the future of work.

How hot are durable skills?

Keyword frequency in Oklahoma job postings, percentage change, 2017-2022

Communications	+244%
Influencing Skills	+411%
Leadership	+235%
Mentorship	+320%
Critical Thinking	+358%
Willingness to Learn	+644%
Compassion	+511%
Enthusiasm	+501%
Teamwork	+259%
Detail-Oriented	+300%
Customer Service	+198%
Problem-Solving	+286%
Positivity	+312%
Multitasking	+303%
Self-Motivation	+358%
Verbal Communication	+301%

Data from Lightcast illustrates the growing importance of durable skills in the future of work.



“Today’s workers need to approach the workplace much like athletes preparing for the Olympics, with one difference. They have to prepare like someone who is training for the Olympics but doesn’t know what sport they are going to enter.”

THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN
The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century

This quote defines the task for every person who wants to succeed in the future of work. We need to prepare for an Olympics without knowing what sport we will compete in. If we fail to prepare, the sport won't matter — we won't be able to compete because we won't be equipped to compete.

Different expert sources say variations of the same thing: If workers develop their durable skills, then employers can teach them the rest. Another way to look at the challenge is to be more human because the robots can't.

Part 2 of the guide presents five practices that everyone can use to help **future-proof** their careers — whether they are educators, learners or business clients.

HOW TO FUTURE-PROOF (YOUR) CAREER

PART

FIVE PRACTICES
AND YOUR
ACTION PLAN

The technical analysis of the elements in the
tions produces unsatisfactory results. More
greater increase, the plastic materials produce
sustaining translations comparable to electrons.
me of the instrumental tests can be condensed
The unanimously accepted hypothesis supports
rentials of molecular apparatuses with variable



Five practices to future-proof your career



- » Strive to be open.
- » Learn for a living.
- » Assemble a diverse network.
- » Be greedy about experiences.
- » Build up your adaptability muscle.

Many organizations are studying the future of work. Several of these organizations have offered strategies for how employers and workers can prepare. These five practices are among those that are often recommended.

Anyone can begin today to act on these practices.

FIVE PRACTICES TO FUTURE-PROOF YOUR CAREER

Practice 1: Strive to be open

- » Open to change, opportunities, ideas
- » Open to feedback, honesty
- » Open to risk-taking
- » Open to...?



Being open may sound easy, but it is surprisingly tough for most people. However, it may be the key to preparing for the future of work. Because the future of work is all about change, being open to change is critical. Change involves taking risks.

For example, it can be risky to our self-perception to ask for and receive feedback. If a person fears risk or avoids constructive feedback, that person may find it more difficult to remain a valued team member in the workplace of the future, where frequent change will be a given.

BEING OPEN TO CHANGE

Trend-spotting

- » Trends can be a source of change.
- » Trends build like a wave, gathering momentum.
- » By spotting trends, you can prepare for change:
 - × Look for trends in what you read, watch and talk about.
 - × Pay attention to discussions in professional organizations and at conferences.
 - × Prepare yourself for opportunities related to trends.
- » Ask yourself:
 - × What trends are affecting your work today?
 - × What can you do to respond to these trends?



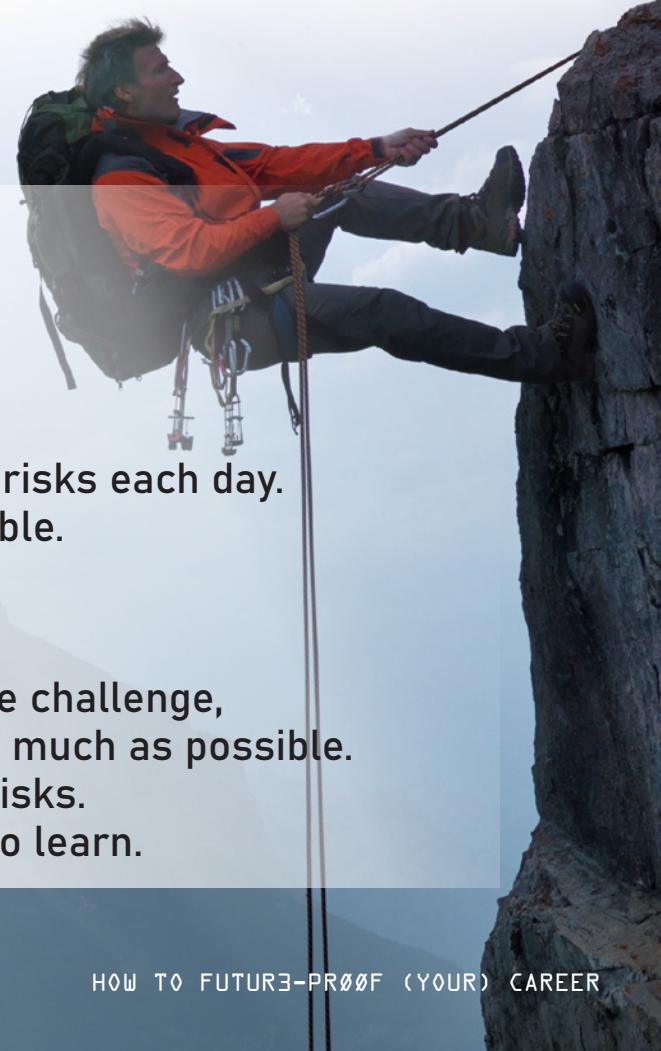
Fortunately, being open to change is something we can work on. One way to get better at confronting change without fear is to keep an eye on trends in our field. By spotting trends early — before they arrive and surprise us — we can identify ways to prepare for the change. For example, will we need to use a new program or machine? Will we need to deepen our skills by taking a course related to the trend? Can we learn from somebody who has dealt with the same trend successfully? What does our customer feedback data tell us?

Watching for trends also buys ourselves some time to get comfortable with the **idea** of change.

BEING OPEN TO RISK-TAKING

Some rules to risk by

- » Risks are unavoidable. Risk is important to personal growth.
- » Different people have different comfort levels when it comes to risk.
- » Build your capacity for risk-taking by taking small risks each day. Repeat each small risk until you become comfortable.
- » Try to control your response to change:
 - × Risk only what you are willing to lose.
 - × Limit the amount of risk through researching the challenge, building support and controlling the outcome as much as possible.
 - × Grow your confidence by practicing with small risks.
 - × View risks that did not pay off as opportunities to learn.



The future of work is about change. Change often involves risk — not a risk of danger, but a risk of failure. Avoiding taking risks because of the potential for failure can stop people from embracing the future of work.

A concept exists that has to do with *failing well* or *failing fast*. The idea is that we should take calculated risks, and when we fail — and we will all fail sometimes — we examine what didn't work and what we could do differently, and we try again.

Something anyone can do is to take small risks to limit the need for bigger ones. For example, before investing a lot of time, money and effort in developing a complete online course, we could create one complete lesson, get some feedback from potential users, then adjust and continue.

FIVE PRACTICES TO FUTURE-PROOF YOUR CAREER

Practice 2: Learn for a living

Be a better informal learner. Approach each project with a development (growth) mindset, not just a completion mindset.

“Learning is the new pension. It’s how you create future value every day.”

HEATHER MCGOWAN
Future of Work Strategist,
from the Steelcase article
“The Future of Work is Learning”

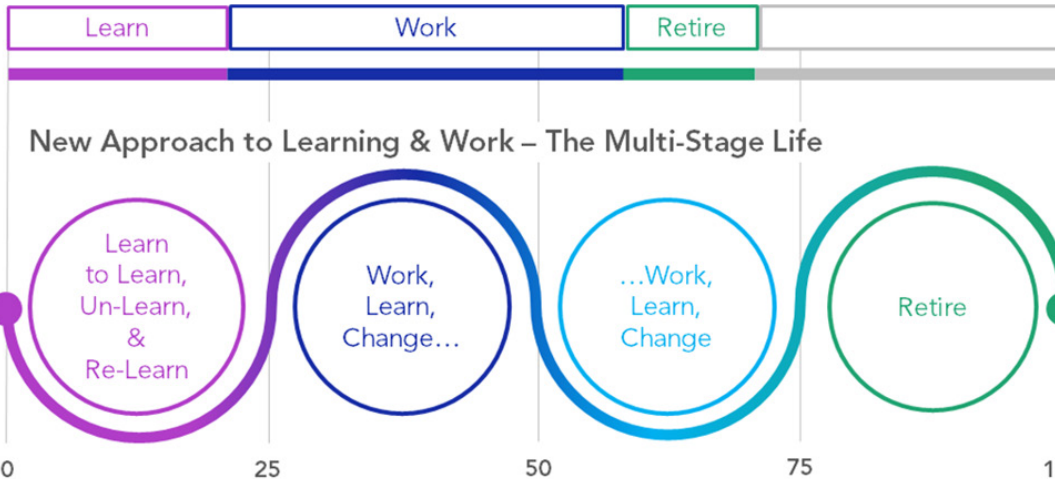
<https://www.steelcase.com/research/articles/the-future-of-work-is-learning/>

In the future of work, school is always in session. Success in our work means we must always be learning.

For most people working today, learning was about *learning to be*. We developed skills that would last us for a lifetime of work. In the future of work, learning must be about *learning to become*, over and over again. The only constant in the future of work will be change.

A NEW APPROACH TO LEARNING

Old Approach to Learning & Work – The 3 Stage Life



“These days, skills have become like mobile apps that need frequent upgrades, making multiple careers (rather than just jobs) the norm for a 60-year span of labor.”

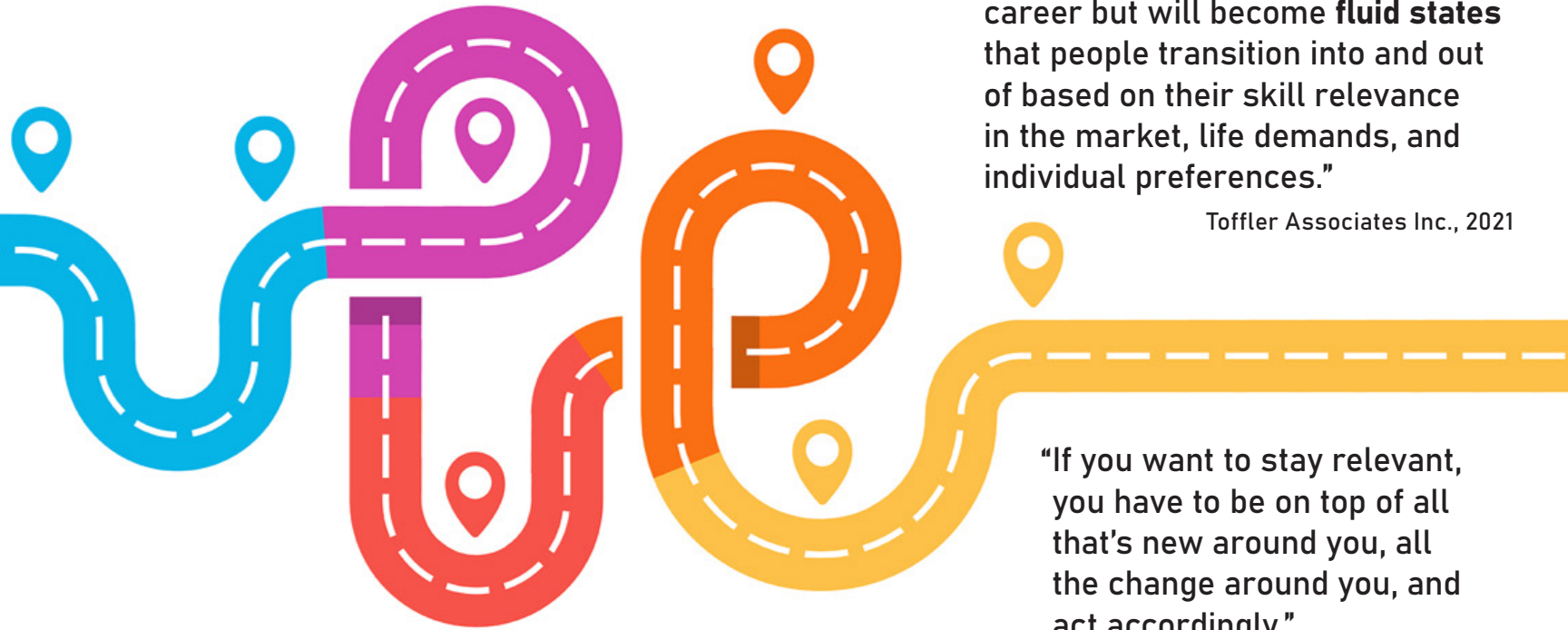
FROM/TO: THE FUTURE OF YOUR WORK – EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK

Cognizant, Center for the Future of Work, 2019

For most workers today, preparing for and entering the labor force followed a straight line. After a PK-12 education, graduates got a job or pursued more education before starting a career. The expectation for most workers was that what they had learned in school would allow them to work throughout their working lives. The skills acquired during the **education** period of people's lives enabled them to be employable for as long as they wanted to work.

The future of work demands that learning be a part of every stage of a worker's career. This means that people must learn how to learn, how to un-learn, and how to re-learn. In fact, learning must be a part of every worker's job.

Non-linear careers become common



“Concepts like ‘in school’ or ‘retirement’ will no longer be binary states that bookend a career but will become **fluid states** that people transition into and out of based on their skill relevance in the market, life demands, and individual preferences.”

Toffler Associates Inc., 2021

“If you want to stay relevant, you have to be on top of all that’s new around you, all the change around you, and act accordingly.”

RAVI KUMAR, Infosys president
Knowledge at Wharton, July 2, 2019

In the future of work, the tasks that occupy a person's workday will change more often. New tasks will require new skills. Instead of working on one team, a person could work on multiple teams at the same time, performing different roles. Employers may move workers around, offering training on the fly, to stay on top of constant change.

Just as work becomes a bundle of skills and tasks, the working life of a person becomes a journey with stops at multiple employment destinations along the way. Some people will stop working completely when they retire, but others will retire only long enough to decide where to go and what to do next.

Catch the skills wave



“...each of us should think about our career as a series of waves from post-education to pre-retirement: we’ll catch a wave and ride it until it crests, and then, as it calms on the beach, we paddle out and catch the next one. In each new wave, we gain new skills and new experiences, retraining and educating ourselves along the way.”

JOSH BERSIN

in “Navigating the future of work,”
Deloitte Review, Issue 21, July 2017

Learning to earn in the future of work must resemble riding a wave. As a wave begins to shrink and lose its power to propel us in our work, we need to spot the next wave, catch it and ride it. That next wave could be a new work task or assignment, a chance to learn how to operate a new machine or a training program for a technology that is becoming essential in our field.

New tricks for old (and not-so-old) dogs

- × Completing online courses
- × Accessing blogs, podcasts, videos
- × Participating in chat discussions, forums, social networks
- × Interacting with coaches, mentors, peers
- × Playing games
- × Seeking professional development opportunities, feedback
- × Volunteering
- × Reading, joining a book club
- × Taking on new work experiences, stretch assignments



“What does it mean to have a career today? More specifically, what does it mean in a world where careers span 60 years, even as the half-life of learned skills continues to fall to only about five years? In the past, employees learned to gain skills for a career; now, the career itself is a journey of learning.”

Deloitte Insights, February 2017

It's easier today than ever before to learn for a living. In fact, learning has likely already become a part of the workday for most people. A key for the future of work is to learn with purpose as well.

FIVE PRACTICES TO FUTURE-PROOF YOUR CAREER

Practice 3: Assemble a diverse network



Optimize your network so it serves as a **LEARNING HUB** to help you find opportunities and stay current.

Everyone has a network, by chance or by design. Your network might include friends, people you work with or people you spend leisure time with. Individuals often use their networks to learn about job opportunities. To succeed in the future of work, your network should play a larger role.

The term search engine optimization refers to improving a website to increase its visibility in search results. In the workplace, your network must also be optimized. Your network must be diversified with purpose to help you learn on the fly, stay on top of trends and look out for opportunities.

Your network and future-proofing

- » Spotting trends, opportunities
- » Developing durable skills and WeQ
- » Connecting for possible mentorship, sponsorship, apprenticeship
- » Building social capital
- » Sharing best practices
- » Elevating your profile, amplifying your accomplishments



Being purposeful about diversifying your network means identifying the people who can assist with your career journey in certain ways.

How diverse a network?

- × Gender
- × Job level
- × Age
- × Experiences
- × Skills
- × Perspective, outlook
- × Dog people, cat people
- × Etc.



Diversity should take many forms. People are drawn to surround themselves with people who resemble them in their thinking, in their interests and in their outlook. To encourage the flexibility and adaptability required in the future of work, people need to become more comfortable with the differences among others. Greater communication and collaboration among people is a key feature of the future of work, according to the experts.

Networking with people who are less like ourselves opens more opportunities for learning and personal growth. Remember the skills tree supported by durable skills?

GENDER AND NETWORKS

TRANSACTIONAL ALLIANCES for Men

- » Networks as alliances
- » Include higher-status contacts
- » Short-term relationships to help reach goals

FRIENDSHIP RELATIONSHIPS for Women

- » Networks as social groups
- » Connect with people who could also be potential friends
- » Form networks with others at the same or lower level professionally

**Women may feel uncomfortable with the exploitative nature of networking.*

According to researchers, men and women use their networks differently. In a nutshell, women might naturally form more diverse networks, but they might also feel reluctant to use their networks for advancement at work.

Mentoring to support a 'workforce of one'

Mentoring roles are becoming distributed across the organization: **mentorship** (guidance and support), **sponsorship** (creating opportunities) and **apprenticeship** (domain expertise to teach, model, transfer).

“The rapid pace of change in many occupations, driven in large part by advancing technologies, has made it extremely difficult for workers to obtain relevant skills. The evolution in job content has outstripped the capacity of traditional skills providers, such as education systems and other workforce intermediaries, to adapt. The perverse consequence is that developing the capabilities employers seek increasingly requires the candidate to be employed.”

HIDDEN WORKERS: UNTAPPED TALENT,
Harvard Business School Project on Managing the
Future of Work and Accenture, September 2021



One result of the people shortage is that organizations must prioritize their efforts to grow their own capabilities. One way to do this is through mentoring.

Individuals should seek out the people in the workplace who can perform specific mentoring roles. Traditionally, mentorship involved one, usually more experienced, employee advising another employee on all aspects of work performance and career advancement. The future of work demands more frequent change at a time when fewer people are in the labor force. As a result, individuals must seek to learn very specific things from multiple people. These people may or may not be longtime employees, but they can provide guidance in the more targeted roles of mentorship, sponsorship or apprenticeship.

By thinking about mentorship in terms of its separate elements or functions, organizations and individuals can realize more opportunities for learning within the workplace.

Women and networking: Finding a mentor or sponsor

According to the KPMG Women's Leadership Study (2015), seven in 10 working women feel a personal obligation to help more women advance in the workplace, but eight in 10 working women do not feel confident enough to ask for a **mentor** and nine in 10 do not feel confident asking for a **sponsor**.

“If you have your eye on someone who you want to mentor you, build your connection with them before you ask. If you've connected in a positive way in the past, how could you reconnect? If you see a manager who clearly advocates for their team, try to pursue projects and opportunities that will allow you to work more closely with them or their group.”

*MENTORING &
SPONSORING RESOURCES:
GUIDE & WORKBOOK*
Center for Creative
Leadership, 2019

As with networks in general, many women may not feel confident or comfortable about asking somebody to be a mentor or a sponsor. Organizations often focus on mentoring relationships as a part of a new employee's onboarding process. However, individuals can think about initiating mentorship, sponsorship or apprenticeship relationships for themselves at any time — including today.

FIVE TO THRIVE

**Who are the five people who can stretch you to be your best?
Set up at least four meetings per year with each person.**



Research about the average size of a person's social network (prior to social media) indicated a person averaged 125 people in a network. This became known as ***Dunbar's number*** after the name of one of the researchers. To help you thrive in the future of work, you can focus on a much more manageable number.

Although casual encounters take place in the workplace every day, whether in meetings or walking down the hall or while taking a break, assembling a diverse network involves being more intentional about your interactions with people. Identifying five to thrive means choosing five people to learn something from or build a skill alongside — people who could help you reach planned destinations along your future of work path. As you achieve a goal or reach a destination, you could identify new individuals to take the place of others.

Think of your five to thrive as the people who could support a workforce of one — you.

FIVE PRACTICES TO FUTURE-PROOF YOUR CAREER

Practice 4: Be greedy about experiences



Stock up on assignments and experiences to broaden your options for tomorrow.

Be a **SCRAPPY HAND-RAISER**.

One of the ways to learn for a living is to learn from diverse experiences at work. Toward this purpose, greed is good.

WHAT KIND OF EXPERIENCES?

**Ever feel like
you're in a little
bit over your
head?**

**Have this feeling
*at least every
three months.***



It's tempting to seek more of the kinds of workplace experiences we've found success with before or that we're already comfortable with. However, more of the same kinds of experiences will not help you to learn new things or to collaborate with other people.

The kinds of experiences to be greedy about are the ones that make you just a little bit uncomfortable. If an experience makes you feel like your head is just above water, you may have found a growth opportunity.



SEIZING STRETCH ASSIGNMENTS

- × Inefficient processes?
- × Others overwhelmed?
- × Project or need you've identified?
- × Event or meeting needs planning?
- × Project nobody loves?
- × Volunteer or intern needs supervision?
- × Crucial tasks unassigned?
- × Employer's priorities that align with your interests?

"How will people absorb new skills? Based on Korn Ferry's research, the most valuable development experiences (in decreasing order) are: rotational or stretch assignments, action learning, mentoring, relationships, 360° assessments, exposure to more senior leaders and formal classroom training."

<https://www.kornferry.com/insights/this-week-in-leadership/strategy-activation-planning-leadership-development-journey>

According to experts, the future of work requires that people learn how to learn for a living.

Being greedy about workplace experiences allows people to learn from their work every day.

It turns out that one of the ways that people learn best is by completing **stretch** assignments that challenge their skills. Stretch assignments can be found in a range of opportunities that exist in every workplace.

FIVE PRACTICES TO FUTURE-PROOF YOUR CAREER

Practice 5: Build up your adaptability muscle

Don't just
BOUNCE BACK
from difficult
situations.

Get to someplace
NEW by becoming
more adaptable.



The future of work requires workers to be more flexible and more adaptable. Adaptability is also something that people can develop.



ROOTED IN

RESILIENCE

“Resilience often involves responding well to an external event; *adaptability* moves us from enduring a challenge to thriving beyond it.”

FUTURE PROOF: SOLVING THE ‘ADAPTABILITY PARADOX’ FOR THE LONG TERM

McKinsey & Company, 2021

It's easy to think about resilience when thinking about adaptability. Both are attributes of value to employers in their workers. However, resilience usually has more to do with surviving; adaptability has more to do with thriving.

Because the future of work is about change, adaptability can take us from where we are today to where we need to be tomorrow. Adaptability can help us to succeed in a new place, rather than helping us to do well in the same place.

RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES



- » Grit, perseverance
- » Commitment to goals
- » Reframing
- » Mindset of bursts, not a marathon
(set short-term goals)
- » Positivity skills
- » Bias toward action (**fail well** in
search of the best solution)

“In the digital era, advances in technology call for new skills seemingly overnight. The ability to adapt quickly to changes is increasingly valued by the labor market. The sought-after trait is adaptability — the ability to respond to unexpected circumstances and to unlearn and relearn quickly.”

WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2019: THE CHANGING NATURE OF WORK
World Bank

Building up our adaptability muscle is all about responding positively to challenges or setbacks. Several strategies exist to help individuals and organizations respond to these challenges. Oklahoma's CareerTech System offers a range of resources for building up the adaptability muscle of an individual or an organization through its network of technology centers.



Getting it right when things go wrong

“Failing can lead to unexpected outcomes. ***Build on mistakes.*** Rather than start over after a failure or, worse, hiding it, consider incorporating failures and the learning from them into the next action. ***Starting with a clean slate loses the learning.***”

Adapting involves learning from missteps and trying again.

As Babe Ruth said, “Every strike brings me closer to the next home run.”

Failing well, or rapid cycles of P-D-C-A*

- » Recognize that setbacks are not avoidable.
- » Understand why a decision was made with the information available.
- » Determine whether you had all the information you needed.
- » Build and work from strengths.
- » ***Earn from your mistakes.***

|
|
+ PLAN
|
+ DO
|
+ CHECK
|
+ ACT
|
|
|
|

“Working in the digital age involves teams that break through traditional hierarchies, teams that bring together people with different educational backgrounds and experience. ... What will mark them is a more entrepreneurial spirit, where there is no fear of failure.”

LEARNING FROM FAILURE TO SUCCEED
Korn Ferry Institute, 2017

In the workplace, the PDCA four-step model is a familiar tool for implementing change. Following that model or a similar one can help anyone to fail well.



Experience as a failure foundry

“Good judgment comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment.”

WILL ROGERS

American humorist and columnist

Will Rogers had another way of talking about failing well. Our work lives are a combination of successes and setbacks. For as long as we work, we will produce some successes as well as some failures. The best thing we can do about our setbacks is to learn from them.

If you had to write a resume of your failures, what would you include on it? What did you learn from it?

Five practices in review

» Strive to be open.

- × Open to change, opportunities
- × Open to ideas, risk-taking
- × Open to feedback, honesty

» Learn for a living.

- × New sources of learning:
blogs, webinars, insights,
volunteer projects
- × Risk-taking
- × Growth mindset
- × Catching the wave

» Assemble a diverse network.

- × Diverse in multiple ways
- × Five to thrive (yours)
- × Learning hub for durable skills, WeQ

» Be greedy about experiences.

- × Stretch assignments
- × Broader and scarier tasks
- × *Be a scrappy hand-raiser.*
- × Showcase your uniqueness: *Results don't always speak for themselves.*

» Build up your adaptability muscle.

- × Mindsets and strategies
- × Bias for action, failing well
- × *Earn from your mistakes.*

YOUR ACTION PLAN

TO START NOW

1

Identify trends that relate to your work and assess your openness to confronting them.

2

Choose a project to approach with a development (growth) mindset.

3

Map your network and identify needs, including your *five to thrive*.

4

Locate a stretch assignment, such as a project nobody loves.

5

Work on your emotional intelligence (*EQ*).

A call to action

“In most of the country, education, employment, and economic reform remain isolated in both policy and practice. ... For the revolutionary changes that the future demands, we must move beyond this fragmented way of thinking and working and accept that history’s boundaries no longer apply. We must take a coherent approach to connecting education and the future of work.”

CARNEGIE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK
“Why We Must Connect Education and the Future of Work,” February 2022



Adaptation is possible!



You **can** secure a place
in the Future of Work.

Oklahoma's CareerTech System can help any person or employer prepare for the future of work. It is a great partner to help individuals and organizations to learn and to re-learn. Simply contact your nearest technology center.



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