



WITH SO MANY OPTIONS AVAILABLE, THE HARD PART IS CHOOSING ONE

FOUR SKILLS NEEDED IN THE FUTURE WORKPLACE

You don't have to be a futurist to see the impact that shifts in technology and culture will have on the future of work. Consider the obvious: The Internet is ubiquitous, social media is a permanent channel in our lives, and we live in a world of increasing complexity.

These three realities are changing how we work and learn. Online friends, public sharing and virtual discussions have become a way of life. As this spills into the workplace, employees desire transparency from their leaders and the global community has become more connected than ever.

With a steady stream of new media available, employees often learn informally in quick snippets at the moment of need. With so many options available, the only hard part is choosing one.

Also, rapid changes in technology have pushed us to become participants rather than observers. We contribute to communities of practice, engage in crowdsourcing and generate content. Participation helps people become leaders.

This convergence of global connectivity and the 21st century mindset creates a more independent and resourceful workforce, yet greater challenges lie ahead. Employees will have to deal with rapid change, solve complex problems, lead and innovate. Forward-thinking organizations will encourage and support these characteristics.

In "The Future of Work," Thomas Malone writes, "We need to shift our thinking from command and control to coordinate and cultivate." Through this shift, we can meet the changing needs of the future workforce. It means adapting our focus from one that "pushes" learning events to the masses into one that helps learners "pull" the learning experiences they need.

FOUR CENTERS OF FOCUS

We can organize around four types of knowledge and skills that will help employees thrive in the future workplace: access and tools, collaboration, innovation and creativity, and leadership.

- **Access and Tools:** Now more than ever, employees need to develop their own personal learning environment (PLE) of online tools. The PLE will provide an individualized content flow that keeps learners up to date and informed. It also encourages workers to become independent learners.

But there are risks. Users must learn to organize and filter complex information into something meaningful. They will need to consider the benefits and risks of public participation.

- **Collaboration and Contribution:** In the knowledge economy, expertise often resides in our connected network rather than in one individual. An important attribute of success is the ability to collaborate. Important skills will include working with diverse people who may have different values, the ability to compromise, and learning from failures.

- **Innovation and Creativity:** Autonomous and engaged employees are more likely to feel ownership in an organization than the disengaged. Smart managers will encourage staff to innovate and make decisions on their own. To reinvent the future, employees will need to learn creativity techniques and problem-solving skills.

- **Leadership:** As organizational hierarchies become flatter, many workers will become temporary leaders of short-lived projects or initiatives. Progressive organizations will need to develop leadership skills across the board. The 21st century worker will need to think strategically, make quick decisions and replace outdated workflows with more efficient ones.

These are exciting times with complex challenges ahead. The key to meeting these challenges is having a cadre of agile employees who can find information when they need it, learn independently and cooperate with others.

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