

# The Issue

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## The Future of Work

*What does it take to Succeed?*

**By Jodi Avina**

Director of Recruitment, CFOs2GO

Many futurists and analysts are sending out conflicting data about the future of work, in light of new options for robotics, artificial intelligence, automation and IoT innovations. Some rattle the saber about the loss of jobs for actual people. Others say, rather, the distribution of types of work will change. For instance, economist Charles Handy suggested: 1) fewer high-paying challenging jobs will be available and will be competitive to score, 2) menial work that most people do not want to do will be available but not appealing, and 3) talented professionals with a specialty will work in a contractor role for many companies rather than for one, provided they learn to peddle their gifts. Others still make the case that technology will not reduce jobs but will transform them instead. While traditional jobs that can be replaced with technology will go to machines, people will have new roles that can only be done by those with minds and hearts, so to say.

Ah, to know what will really happen. As the clever writer, Douglas Adams, once noted: "Trying to predict the future is a mug's game. But increasingly it's a game we all have to play because the world is changing so fast and we need to have some sort of idea of what the future's actually going to be like because we are going to have to live there, probably next week." As professionals dedicated to finding ideal talent for organizations in today's environment, we consider this an important challenge for companies. Taking the bet that work will transform, it is smart to consider what skills will be important for those roles that technology cannot meet. We need to both evaluate new hires and deepen the capabilities for people already at work for the impending transformation of work ahead.

Here are key skills we encourage you to consider in discerning if a person can be a sustainable contributor in your organization's future:

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• **Impactful** -- Is the person able to make results happen? That means not just making noise, but getting detailed results based on a clear vision of the potential future your company sets out to achieve. Does the person believe in taking initiative to get things done? Does your organization make it clear to people what is expected of everyone? Does the culture emphasize a balance between how to work and getting the work done? What value does the person place on results?



• **Integrative** – Is the person comfortable reaching across groups within the organization to bring people together to accomplish things? Does the person collaborate well with others? Is the person able to convene well with people diverse from him or her? The ability to overcome natural mistrust for strangers or those not like us is a result of disciplined thinking about how we socially relate. As work is done more with cross-cultural teams, is the person competent to engage well with people of different cultural backgrounds? Is the person emotionally mature enough to understand what may be unconscious or conscious biases that may inhibit interpersonal relationships necessary for working together? Does your organization set expectations that this skill is vital to how work is accomplished?



• **Influential** – Can the person convince people to try what they otherwise might not without force or coercion? Does the person demonstrate a personal drive for higher aspirations? Is there evidence the person earns the trust of others? Does your organization define and reinforce cultural norms to encourage trust? Does your organization celebrate examples of people who do this well? Do others detect this person has natural charisma which helps to attract people to listen and respect him or her?



• **Diplomacy** – Is the person able to listen to the thoughts of others respectfully? Does the person ask three times more questions than he or she makes declarations? Does the person show skills in appreciative inquiry as a way to learn from others? Can the person address problems with an approach that balances differing views on the topic? Is the person able to propose ways to solve challenges with both the means and ends in mind to improve the long-term value of a decision?

Can the person listen to all sides of an issue that poses sometimes competing but equally important needs? Can he or she then propose an elegant solution that meets all the needs, conflicting or not?



• **Creativity** – Does the person use imagination in useful ways? Creativity is different than originality or innovation. It is the combining of unusual ideas for a useful purpose. Can the person invent new approaches to the way work is done or the results overall that is better than before? Does your organization offer ways to develop capability for

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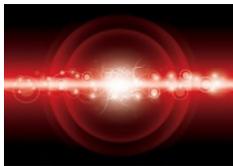
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creativity within teams and for individuals? Since many highly repetitive jobs will be automated with the help of technology, the roles for the future will be those that engage people with more creative problem-solving and vision. Does the person show a natural curiosity about topics? Is he or she open to experimentation and looking at new approaches? Do you hear the person explore new ways to look at topics and imagine a different scenario ahead? We know high churn and turnover in companies is often related to jobs people find boring. Does your company encourage role changes, professional development and new experiences to keep professionals engaged and permanently learning?



- **Moral Reasoning** – Does the person demonstrate ways of considering complex factors that lead to wise decisions beyond their personal interests? Does the person have the courage to say what is true and necessary under what may be political or stressful circumstances? Does the person understand how to effectively work or lead members within peer-based teams? Does your organization train people in how to have courageous conversations?



- **Committed Energy** – Does the person have the drive to make a difference? Do you see enthusiasm, excitement and passion for the mission your company has? Not every day brings smooth sailing in organizations. Positivity is a contributing quality for resiliency, which helps groups to rebound and move forward. Does the person demonstrate a positive attitude about both the cause and the challenges ahead?

Of course, there are many other competencies one must look for relative to each position, including technical proficiencies, qualifications and experiences.



Still, the attributes noted here differentiate people from machines. Technology today provides neural networking automation based on machines that learn tasks. “Artificial Intelligence” (AI) is a major focus of technology today. Yet, humans can and do more! The skills they need to mature and use will go well beyond what technology can provide. While people will learn to work with and along-side machines, the skills applied with minds and personalities will still be at the heart of organizational performance.

It seems the work of the future will not be for the faint of heart. As is said: “How much better is it to get wisdom than gold?”

Finding talented professional gifted in these ways is deeply valuable for the long-term of any business or organization. We believe these people are not only motivated and engaged assets, they create and maintain organizational cultures that succeed. If you do, too, we are here to find them for you.

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