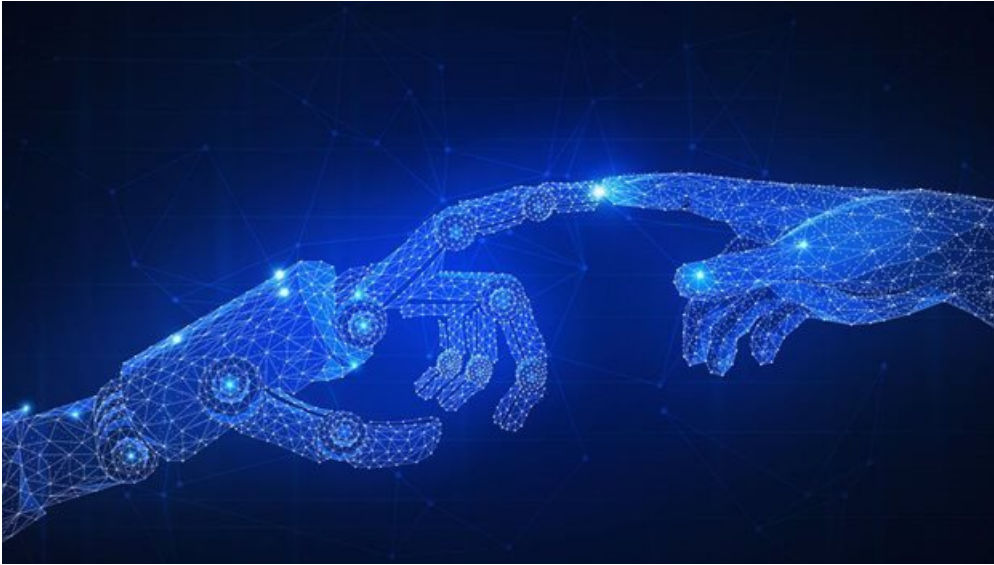


How 4IR is creating more jobs

With the world on the verge of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) that is set to fundamentally change how people engage and interact with each other and business, the focus now is on what the job market of the future will look like. In developing countries like South Africa, where high unemployment is a constant, this is even more critical to ensure people have the necessary skills to be employable in this fast-changing environment.



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“Despite research indicating that 4IR could displace 800 million workers in 42 countries as technology enables increased automation, it does unlock massive potential. By reducing the amount of administrative-heavy functions, employees can focus on more strategic roles inside the organisation. And while blue collar workers might feel threatened as sophisticated machinery takes over an increasing amount of labour-intensive jobs, they can work in unison with these systems resulting in new ways to access skill sets previously unavailable to them,” says Lisa Strydom, Channel Manager - Africa at Veeam.

This disruption can be used to create new opportunities for workers across industry sectors. Business should use this as a launchpad to upskill and reskill employees for the 4IR environment.

“Companies have to take responsibility for this if they are to have a skilled workforce that continues to meet market demands, but also us as individuals need to look at ways we can train ourselves, continue to add value to our businesses and remain relevant. It is not just manual jobs that are facing the pressure, but even traditional high-paying ones such as General Practitioners (GPs), lawyers, and accountants. However, it is all about harnessing the power of technology in new and innovative ways to add value and improve the services offered as well as be equipped for the challenges of a digital market.”

Strike out

While some misperceptions around automation might persist, its potential for positive change is too significant to ignore.

“Yes, automation helps eliminate human error, but there will always be a human element of interaction required especially when it comes to high cognitive skills. This is also why governments around the world are pushing students to focus on maths and science skills and, especially in South Africa, entrepreneurial skills. Unfortunately, most schools in the country still approach education in traditional ways. The education system must change to accommodate the 4IR age.”

She says government and private sectors need to work together to do more to empower learners with new, technology-led skills. In the channel, for example, companies value skills that are updated and kept relevant as technology changes. And in the ICT sector in general, the focus is on where the future of the job market is going.”

Evolving IT

Even IT departments are feeling pressure to evolve. More than adapting to technological change, personnel must also equip themselves with the skills required for the digital world. Part of this entails becoming more data-savvy. Given how the cloud has taken much of the focus away from delivering hardware and software support, IT teams can now deliver more strategic value.

“Already, data scientists are becoming more commonplace in organisations around the world. In South Africa, we are starting to see companies understand and strive for more effective ways of analysing and understanding the wealth of data they have at their disposal. Integral to this is acquiring analytical skills that combine technical knowledge with business understanding,” she says.

Data also goes closely together with business continuity and disaster recovery. Not only can its analysis help plan and prepare for potential outages, but it becomes indispensable for simulations and providing a vital test bed for organisations when it comes to business continuity.

“Companies must therefore ensure employees get the opportunity to upskill and reskill themselves for more data-focused positions. It is only a matter of time before white collar workers will solely focus on data analysis and combine that with their expertise in various areas.”

Data-driven future

All signs are therefore pointing to the importance of data analysis, management, and security. With the 4IR underpinned by the data explosion, the individuals who are adapted at understanding the complexities around this analysis and management will be the ones that are the most successful.

“The amount of data being generated will increase exponentially and the use of cloud to store data will rise. It is all about business intelligence (BI), understanding data, securing it, and ensuring its continued availability. And this is where automation and artificial intelligence (AI) also come in. By pairing the best of technology innovation with human skills, companies can accelerate their momentum in the 4IR world.”