

Is your business ready for the ICT skills needed for the future?

Disruptive business models will require new job specifications, which in turn will demand an element of upskilling to enable resources to move from mundane or labour-intensive tasks to higher level responsibilities.



Theresa Ackerman, manager of operational excellence at T-Systems SA

In its Futures of Work in South Africa report, NEDLAC states that to become and remain relevant, workers will need a higher quality education that integrates general knowledge in both the arts and sciences with emerging technologies.

However, the challenge that most companies face is that a number of the roles that digitalisation is giving rise to do not yet exist, meaning that businesses need to start gearing for a workforce with skills that aren't yet known, or currently required.

All industries will be affected

Many jobs, particularly those that require low-level professional qualifications, will be affected by automation and digitalisation, across all sectors of the industry. We are already witnessing this trend in sectors such as banking, where bank tellers are being replaced by banking apps and chatbots, as banks continue to shut down physical branches and increase their digital footprint.

Yet, this trend is not just restricted to low-level, or manual jobs. Emerging technologies are also making more highly qualified professionals obsolete, including financial analysts, accountants, lawyers and tax experts.

According to the World Economic Forum, in 2000, Goldman Sachs employed more than 600 traders. In 2017, only two equity traders were left, as algorithms handled by computer engineers could perform the same work.

The same holds true for the legal profession. It's not hard to imagine that bots will soon be dispensing legal advice, as they will be able to look up case law and legal precedents faster than any human.

Change your view of the workforce

Considering the sweeping changes that are looming for the labour market, organisations will have to change the way they view their workforce, as they try to cater to skills that don't exist today but may be required in the next few years.

As employers are faced with these unknowns, they should be focusing on what is required now and adopt an on-the-job or on-demand learning approach, that will see workers gain skills and expertise as the need for them arises.

This will also provide workers with the flexibility demanded by millennials, who prefer to work as freelancers, rather than to be tied down to one life-long profession. Research by Gartner reveals that gig or contingent workers represent approximately 15-25% of the global workforce today. By 2025, gig workers will account for 35-40% of the workforce.

This is where Temporary Employment Services (TES) can play a significant role across various industry sectors, as they provide workers with the flexibility to acquire wide-ranging skills and exposure to various roles, without being tied down to traditional HR processes.

On the other hand, organisations will also benefit from using a TES to source their workforce, as it will allow them to focus on their core business, while having access to skilled and experienced employees.

People must embrace flexibility and on-demand learning, as well as the reality of automation. Similarly, education will have to undergo drastic changes, bringing in an element of entrepreneurship that will equip people to create opportunities for themselves.

The 4IR forces us to think and act in new ways, particularly in terms of how we approach work.

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