

Why 2020 should be the year we stop fearing 'the robots'

 By [Tanja Lategan](#)

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As artificial intelligence (AI) become increasingly pervasive, so have headlines about robots taking people's jobs. While there's undoubtedly truth in that (in as much as new technologies have always rendered some jobs obsolete), the societal impact of these new technologies is frequently misunderstood.



Image source: Gallo/Getty Images.

As such, I believe that 2020 should be the year we learn to stop fearing AI and robotics and rather focus our attention on how technology can augment humanity.

AI to create more jobs

Certain jobs are being, and will continue to be, replaced. But on the whole, new jobs will also be created and humans are likely to remain central to the workplace for a long time to come. In fact, it is predicted that by 2020, artificial intelligence will be a [positive net job motivator](#), creating 2.3 million jobs worldwide while only eliminating 1.8 million jobs.



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While there have been plenty of predictions about the industries that'll be most affected by these new technologies, Lategan believes it's a more complex task than many believe.

Industries likely to be affected by AI and robots include [agriculture](#), [call centres](#), [banking](#) and [retail](#). Within these industries, some companies will thrive and others will fail. Which one any given company falls into will largely depend on their attitude to technology.

The companies that will be most resilient are those which embrace digital transformation, adapt to the changing world, and take advantage of the opportunities offered by new technology.

Technology can also enhance the abilities of humans

It's also important to reiterate that in most industries, technology could enhance the abilities of human employees rather than replacing them. But in order for that to happen, human workers will have to develop skills outside of their traditional remit.

But what do these skills look like?

The simplest answer is to be better at being human. Robots and automation typically take on repetitive work. What they struggle with is creative and abstract thinking.

A look at the [World Economic Forum's top 10 skills for 2020](#) -- which includes complex problem solving, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence -- shows exactly how important "human" skills are.



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The reality is that AI is much less of a threat to human employees than is sometimes presented. But companies and industries need to take a long-term view and understand that AI is most effective when combined with human talent and not when it's just used as a replacement.

ABOUT TANJA LATEGAN

Tanja is the CEO and co-founder of Enlight Strategic. She has more than a decade's worth of experience as a senior executive in the digital publishing and agency space and is passionate about the role technology can play in transforming businesses.

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