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The Jobs Landscape Is Changing

“Employers estimate that 44% of workers’ skills will be disrupted in the next five years. Cognitive skills are reported to be growing importance most quickly, reflecting the increasing importance of complex problem-solving in the workplace.”

—“The Future of Jobs Report 2023” by the World Economic Forum

I must admit—it feels quite daunting to hear people talk about the “Future of Work.” Teachers feel the weight of their students’ unknowable futures every time someone quips, “It will be here before you know it,” or “It’ll be wildly different than anything we’ve ever seen before!” “Future of Work” workshops try to lure teachers in with promises of being let into the secrets, although sometimes these promises lack novelty, substance, or both. Educators are left with a riddle to solve—here’s an unknown timeline with unknown characteristics, and it’s up to you. Better get your students ready!

No one was referring to this phenomenon as the “Future of Work” when I was little, but I remember being inundated with promises of the future and how it would be the total opposite of the present day. I grew up watching reruns of *The Jetsons*—a classic cartoon from the 1960s about a family living in the distant future, enjoying the benefits promised by technological advancement. Recently, I learned that George Jetson’s birthday was July 31, 2022. According to the show, flying cars, robot maids, and motorized “slidewalks” were just around the corner, ready to transform our daily lives. While the world is still waiting for those innovations to become everyday items, there have been both incremental and monumental shifts that have made and will continue to make an impact, shifts that we need to be ready for today and tomorrow.

So, what are these shifts? What can we, as educators, do now so that our students are not left behind? How can we make the classroom look more like the world our students will enter? What are the skills that artificial intelligence (AI) and robots cannot perform that our students can? How can we teach the skills that employers are already asking for now (let alone for the future)?

To answer these questions and myriad others, let's first ground our thinking in recent workplace trends and changes before looking to the future.

Change Is the Only Constant

Just a casual exploration into the text-generating world of ChatGPT is enough to send your imagination running. ChatGPT, if you have yet to explore it, is an AI chatbot developed by OpenAI. It allows you to have human-like conversations, including generated suggestions, ideas, and even original compositions. If computers can write poetry, give relationship advice, and program their own Java code, what will be left for us humans to do? This application of AI might not be a robot maid, but it does feel like George Jetson would know exactly how to respond to it.

But technological advancements like this are at once cutting edge and a tale as old as time. The technology itself is new, but humans living through a season of disruptive innovation is not. While sustaining innovation improves existing models, machines, and systems, disruptive innovation changes the entire situation. Consider agricultural practices before the advent of modern machines. Quite likely, farmers were constantly looking for unbreakable tools, or better timelines for sowing seed and harvesting plants. Stronger plows, deeper water wells, birthing more children to secure future farmhands—these enhancements all helped increase outcomes . . . marginally. Then came modern machinery. The cotton gin, the mechanical reaper, and tractors with combustion engines are just a few of the disruptive innovations that dramatically changed the face of modern farming.

Where sustaining innovations improve on ways of doing and being that are familiar and comfortable, disruptive innovations can feel like you're swimming in a whole new ocean, unsure which way is up.

The good news is disruptive innovation isn't new. Collectively, our ancestors endured disruption after disruption to bring each of us to the present moment.

- There was a time when humans subsisted as hunters and gathers. Then came agriculture.
- There was a time when most humans lived, worked, and died on farms. Then came industrialization.
- There was a time when transportation was powered by animals alone. Then came planes, trains, and automobiles.
- There was a time when women had precious few options for work outside their home. Then came the late-20th century.

I don't share this to diminish the tremendous and disruptive changes we're living through today. To be sure, we are living through interesting times, and the unknowns are many. I share this here to remind myself and others that the human race has adapted before, and we'll do it again. And, our ability to demonstrate adaptability and resilience during times of change is worth more than half the battle.

In fact, we've already been adapting as the world of work has been actively evolving in our lifetimes. Even the most veteran of educators still teaching today likely has little memory of life before there were computers in every school—a reality that would have been unthinkable to educators 10 or 20 years more senior. When we shift our default reaction to disruptive innovation away from fear and anxiety and toward curiosity and optimism, new possibilities can emerge that can change lives for the better.

Even before the impact of the global pandemic that began in 2020, technological revolution was unfolding in the labor market before our eyes.

- Manufacturing jobs have steadily declined since the early 1980s. Dropping from a peak of 19.4 million jobs in 1979, a mere 11.5 million such jobs were on record in early 2010. This coincides with a drop in manufacturing's share of the overall workforce. Where almost a third (32.1%) of American workers were in the manufacturing sector in 1953, only 8.5% still are today. Despite output growing due to technological advancements, the decreased opportunities in this type of work can be felt acutely by job hunters looking for entry level options (DeSilver, 2020).
- In the 1970s, the word processor changed offices everywhere. Its successor, the personal computer, wasn't far behind in the 1980s. As the affordability of computers improved in the decades

that followed, modern computing was at everyone's fingertips. Offices gladly gave up manual edits on typewritten pages and bulky filing cabinets filled with documents in need of meticulous organization.

- The internet changed everything. From commerce to research to social connections, the internet is one of most disruptive innovations in recent history. It has enabled workers to work remotely and virtually, creating distributed, even global, teams and organizations that could not have existed this easily in the 20th century. The number of workers who were able to work from home increased by 173% between 2003 and 2018—well before the pandemic upended so many lives (Global Workplace Analytics, n.d.).

Technology has never stopped advancing; we should expect the rest of our lives to be no different. Some jobs will fade away, some will grow, and some will emerge brand-new to us all. Figure 1.1 shows which roles are expected to trend up and down in the coming years.

From Figure 1.1, we see job growth on the left fueled by the same disruptive technologies that are driving decline in the roles to the right.

Fastest growing versus fastest declining jobs		WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM	
Top 10 fastest growing jobs		Top 10 fastest declining jobs	
1.	AI and Machine Learning Specialists	1.	Bank Tellers and Related Clerks
2.	Sustainability Specialists	2.	Postal Service Clerks
3.	Business Intelligence Analysts	3.	Cashiers and Ticket Clerks
4.	Information Security Analysts	4.	Data Entry Clerks
5.	Fintech Engineers	5.	Administrative and Executive Secretaries
6.	Data Analysts and Scientists	6.	Material-Recording and Stock-Keeping Clerks
7.	Robotics Engineers	7.	Accounting, Bookkeeping and Payroll clerks
8.	Electrotechnology Engineers	8.	Legislators and Officials
9.	Agricultural Equipment Operators	9.	Statistical, Finance and Insurance Clerks
10.	Digital Transformation Specialists	10.	Door-To-Door Sales Workers, News and Street Vendors, and Related Workers
Note The jobs which survey respondents expect to grow most quickly from 2023 to 2027 as a fraction of present employment figures			

Figure 1.1: Fastest growing versus fastest declining jobs.

Source: World Economic Forum.

As an educator, looking at this information can help us in a variety of ways, such as handing an interested student a book or website on the fast-growing topics or inviting community members within the roles or sector into the classroom. You will find out about more strategies within this book and also some of the employability or 21st-century skills that are essential in virtually any workplace.

The Pandemic and Everything After

No conversation about the changing jobs landscape is complete with acknowledging the profound impact of the Covid-19 global pandemic. The massive disruption to daily life was a new and utterly unwelcome experience for millions of people worldwide, let alone the pain and suffering endured by those who lost loved ones or continue to endure the virus's physical effects.

Layoffs abounded, and restructuring and reorganizations did, too. How we did our work shifted, as did who did the work.

- Industries everywhere shifted to remote work. Employees and teams met goals and stayed connected via video conferences, messaging apps, and collaborative documents. In some industries and companies, this proved viable in the long term; employees now remain either fully remote or working in a hybrid situation (some days in the office, some days at home). Some industries proved how critically important it was to be in person for work—K–12 education leading the list.
- The need to stay physically distant from each other while conducting core functions of life accelerated existing trends toward automation. Banks, grocery stores, entertainment venues, and more all adapted to increase safety and keep doors open.
- Women were disproportionately harmed by the pandemic's impact on the economy and jobs market. Many women were forced to stay home with children whose schooling happened remotely, and some of those women have not yet returned to the workforce—despite schools resuming (mostly) normal functions. Regarding job loss between February 2020 and February 2022, women account for 68.5% of that statistic (National Women's Law Center, 2022).

We're still not out of the woods. Collectively, social scientists and economists will continue to investigate and analyze the pandemic's impact on our economies for decades. In the meantime, educators and trainers will continue to do the work of preparing flexible, adaptable, and desirable talent for the workforce of tomorrow.

Understanding the Future of Work

Ask three professional peers to define the *Future of Work*, and you'll likely get three different answers. And that's okay. For our purposes together, I define the *Future of Work* as follows:

The Future of Work refers to the changes we expect to see in the global workforce in upcoming years—changes like how people work, where they work, and, of course, the work itself. It considers current and expected advancements in technology, in globalization, and in what we expect from employees and employers. It acknowledges the disruptions we anticipate from artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, digitization, and automation; it also acknowledges the pressing need to rethink how we prepare people for employment and transform education systems to respond to rapid change.

It is impossible for educators to have a deep understanding of all factors influencing the Future of Work—just think about all job sectors our students may one day pursue! A deep understanding of common human skills that empower a student to thrive, however, is essential: resilience, adaptability, problem solving, adaptive communication, and judgment, for example, are indispensable in the ever-changing workplace of today and tomorrow.

Jamie Casap, Google's Educational Evangelist, works with school districts and other educational organizations to leverage technology to drive innovation for learning. He notes that education needs to be "Preparing students for jobs that don't exist and to use technologies, sciences, and methods that we haven't even discovered yet, to solve problems that we haven't identified" (Gaulden & Gottlieb, 2017). That's a tall order—perhaps impossible—if it weren't for the essential human skills that run constant through that intense list of unknowns.

Who does the work	How the work is done	When and where the work is done
■ Full-time/part-time employees ■ Crowdsourcing ■ Gig workers	■ AI ■ Robotics ■ Automation	■ Fluid work schedules ■ Remote workers ■ Collocated workspace

Figure 1.2: The Future of Work.

Source: "What is Meant by 'the Future of Work'?" SHRM, 2022, <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/hr-qa/pages/what-is-meant-by-the-future-of-work.aspx>

Before tackling those essential human skills, let's aim to understand the elements involved in the Future of Work. Figure 1.2 uses simple language and straightforward concepts to help demystify the topic. Visualizations like this level the playing field and combat the feeling that only those who are expert in emerging technology and artificial intelligence can unlock career secrets for students. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), an organization whose publications and website have helped me much in navigating all things human resources through the years, has a helpful framework for considering the Future of Work (SHRM, 2022).

They categorize the Future of Work in three ways: (1) who does the work, (2) how the work is done, and (3) when and where the work is done. This framework is helpful when trying to understand something vague and unknown—like a particular role or industry that is of interest to a learner, educator, or trainer. Figure 1.2 outlines the three categories and the components each contains.

Breaking the Future of Work into these categories helps us think about the skills that students might need to be successful within these ways of working. It also can encourage us to verbalize these connections with students. For example, during the pandemic, many families felt the pain of children and teens taking classes online that were designed to be delivered in person. Endless screen time, decreased engagement, and general frustrations led to many unsatisfied learners and educators. But even as my own children stayed home and our family adapted to this form of school, I used this visual to remind myself that my kids were building muscles that could one day serve them well if they work remotely and need to manage fluid work schedules.

Who Does the Work

SHRM notes three categories to describe who does the work of the future: full-time/part-time employees, crowdsourcing, and gig workers. Some educators may be surprised to see employees categorized this way. They may see employment as a dichotomy that's either full time or part time, or perhaps salaried or hourly. Those differences still exist, but now, the expansion of crowdsourcing and gig workers cannot be ignored.

Gig workers may complete small, discrete tasks or bigger, more complex jobs. With crowdsourcing, companies can get inputs, data, or ideas from large groups of people who gather in one place virtually—for example, consider a traffic app that uses data from thousands of drivers to update traffic conditions in real time. Freelancers or gig workers complete a specific task or body of work, often known as deliverables, on a part-time or full-time, contractual basis.

A 2021 report by MBO Partners, an independent talent contracting firm, shared a surprising statistic. “The number of independent workers grew to over 51 million in 2021, an unprecedented 34% growth in a single year” (MBO Partners, 2021). The report explained some core reasons for the sharp increase: respondents referenced their need to supplement income, the scheduling flexibility that this arrangement brings, the inability to rely on full-time job security, and the digital tools available to make remote work more accessible (MBO Partners, 2021). These drivers are no surprise to anyone who managed daily life during the pandemic and is currently living with inflation.

Moreover, according to a 2019 CNBC report, “Freelancers doing skilled services earn a median rate of \$28 an hour, earning more per hour than 70% of workers in the overall U.S. economy” (Booth, 2019). More than half of freelancers say, “No amount of money would entice them to take a traditional job” (Booth, 2019). The trend toward freelancing is not going away anytime soon. Educators tasked with preparing young people for careers must understand what gig work is and how it can be a viable and appealing option.

According to Edelman Intelligence, 90 million Americans will be freelancing by 2028. Does 90 million seem like a lot? It should; it constitutes the majority of the American workforce (Stahl, 2022). As you can imagine, hiring freelancers on an as-needed basis or even crowdsourcing work brings benefits to employers. By hiring talent this way,

employers are only paying for the time needed to complete a project or task. They are not paying benefits or granting sick leave, and they can readily access a wide pool of individuals who are experts in a variety of discrete tasks. They do not need to find so many skills and capabilities in one person. According to *Forbes*, “Companies are increasingly thinking of work as project-based rather than role-based” (Lau, 2021). Of course, there are potential downsides like a lack of consistent team cohesion, company culture issues, missing institutional knowledge, and additional time needed for training, selecting, and onboarding each time a new project starts. Time will tell if the speculation around the volume of freelancers will come to fruition.

If the Future of Work is project-based, what does this mean for our students? To start, it means that following their passions and interests can still be a viable path if they can situate themselves successfully for project-based work. It means they can still win by being highly specialized in one area. It also means that they need a wide range of skills to find and maintain many clients and keep their finances in check without a singular, reliable paycheck from one employer.

Here are a few skills and mindsets students might need to develop over time to thrive as freelance, project-based, gig workers:

- Developing and maintaining the motivation to self-start when no one is setting a schedule for them.
- Working backwards from a deliverable to achieve a goal using backwards planning and execution skills.
- Knowing themselves and being able to reflect and capitalize on their strengths—for example, do they work best in the morning or evening, need to set a daily goal to get the work done over time, and so on.
- Time management skills—for example, planning mealtimes and breaks, self-care, taking meetings, responding to emails, and so on.
- Personal responsibility—for example, arriving to meetings on time, completing tasks, and so on.
- Client-facing communication skills.
- Money management and financial literacy—for example, in the United States, additional tax planning may be needed when working without a W-2 form.
- Knowledge of digital tools and digital literacy.

- Prospecting and sales skills—for example, finding new clients and closing the deal for each engagement.
- Customer experience skills—for example, building and maintaining a client base so that the same employers keep coming back.

It's easy to feel bogged down by isolating the specific skills when they are unsure of exactly what the job environment entails. One teacher recently said to me, without any hesitation, "I have been teaching for 25 years, and this is my only job. I do not have the first idea of what happens in other professions." In a future chapter, I will break down how we can examine an activity on-the-job and consider the skills necessary to complete that activity.

But as the preceding list highlights, it is possible to predict meaningful skills based on who, how, and where the work will get done—even without deep expertise in a particular role. The goal of this chapter is not to discretely cover and conquer each skill needed for the Future of Work, but instead to start to think about the implications of the Future of Work—to begin making connections to what's already happening within the classroom that will support students in being successful in these new ways of working.

Try to put yourself in the shoes of a worker and brainstorm with your students: "What do you think you will need to do in order to do a good job as a freelancer?" Their answers, and yours, may surprise you. Also, many schools have access to business partners and employment programs within the school that can lend support in this area.

Again, the concept of gig work or crowdsourcing may be unappealing to you or your learners. It might feel less stable and therefore less appropriate to pursue. It certainly feels different than how our own generation, or that of our parents, saw success at work. My father, for example, worked at the same company my entire life and often reveled in the sense of security and reliability that came from the steady work. He left every day at 8 a.m. and returned at 5:15 p.m. My own values were highly influenced by seeing him wake up every day, put on a suit, and commute to work. Given that the majority of the American workforce is expected to freelance by 2028, this reality is simply not available for most future employees.

By anchoring in this description of "a good job," we run the risk of turning our learners off to an increasingly viable way of working. It could lead us to respond negatively to a student if they say they want

this job arrangement or a career in an industry known to hire talent this way. Knowing that it is becoming the norm can help us construct a more supportive response. We can even be the first to tell them that this is an upward trend in the world of work.

Knowing that freelancing is viable in the present and future can help us to reframe our thinking. The knowledge of the skills needed to be successful can help us integrate important elements into our teaching and highlight to students that what they are doing in the classroom will set them up for success on the job.

How the Work Is Done

SHRM categorized how work of the future is done into three categories:

- AI—this includes tasks normally accomplished by intelligent beings (namely, humans) being done by digital computers or other technologies.
- Robotics—this includes work accomplished by machines that has been traditionally completed by human beings. It includes the design, construction, and maintenance of the robots in question, both the hardware and software required.
- Automation—this includes the use of computers and machines to accomplish tasks once performed by human beings as well as tasks that were previously impossible based on human limitations.

Right away, the common thread running through these definitions is glaringly obvious: the replacement of tasks once done by human beings. Educator or not, you and everyone around you has encountered at least some of these technologies directly in your day-to-day life. Others may not be directly experienced, but you benefit from their existence less directly.

- Chatbots for customer service on websites.
- Meeting schedulers.
- Price forecasting tools that impact an item's final retail price.
- Inventory management software.
- Customer order-taking in restaurant, entertainment, or hospital-ity settings.

- Novel robots and cobots performing inspections, deliveries, and factory work for goods we use and purchase.
- Drug compounding robots mixing drugs in a pharmacy.
- Automotive robots performing a variety of tasks on assembly lines (painting, welding, counting, assembling, quality control).

Most students today have little memory of living life before automation and AI were integrated into daily life. Helping them reflect on the presence of this technology can lead them to greater curiosity about this most disruptive innovation. Consider reflection on the following questions, both on your own and with your learners.

- What kinds of tasks might AI complete that were previously performed by humans?
- What skills might I need in a workplace where AI is present?
- What aspects of a role or industry are beyond the influence that AI, robotics, and automation might have?

These forces that drive automation are not all bad. They can replace mundane tasks that many workers did not like doing and can improve productivity for employers. When the disruption of AI looms over any discussion about or preparation for the workplace, it is critically important to remind students of the need to be a lifelong learner. These changes are here and will continue to expand and impact how work gets done and our role in it. The human skills that our students will need, like being adaptable and open to being re-skilled, are evergreen and the best antidote to any anxieties around automation and AI disrupting their targeted industry.

Yes, it is easy to feel uncomfortable here—to feel as though the stability of the jobs market is weak and getting weaker. But these fears are not new. As early as the 16th century, but more popularized in the 19th and 20th century, some people have stoked fear that automation will cost us jobs—even as other voices have hailed automation as transformative for the workforce, wages, and labor market. The truth is, both sides are telling the truth.

I remember reading education articles in 2012 with titles such as “Will MOOCs replace the role of the teacher?” My colleagues and I felt nervous that teaching jobs could become obsolete. If you are not familiar, *MOOC* means “massive open online course” and popular examples

such as Coursera, EdX, or Khan Academy are used widely in a variety of contexts. We quickly learned that independent online courses, while holding a specific value in select learning journeys, could not fully replace the noncognitive skills instruction as readily as some of the teaching components for the “hard” skills. Also, other important components that contribute to overall academic success, like mentorship and social supports, were essential to short-term and long-term impact—and unlikely to be accomplished with a set of log-in credentials to an otherwise successful MOOC.

While automation and robots in the workplace may have not come as fast as we might have imagined and have not replaced jobs in the way many predicted, they have had an impact. Importantly, and not surprisingly, the impact of this shift toward automation, robotic technology, and AI has been vastly different for different populations, geographic areas, and job sectors. So, it will impact our students at different rates.

For example, the automobile industry has been an early adopter of robots in the manufacturing of vehicles. Robots, as a specific example of technological automation, have a measurably negative effect on the labor market and wages. A 2020 study found that in 19 industries and 722 commuting zones, there was a “negative relationship between a commuting zone’s exposure to robots and its post-1990 labor market outcomes” (Brown, 2020). In other words, robots have replaced jobs within the automobile industry in certain geographies.

In some ways, our worst fears are coming true. The study also noted that “adding one robot to an area reduces employment in that area by about six workers.” With robots deployed at a rate of two to five per thousand workers in some of America’s manufacturing and industrial zones—Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Texas, Virginia, and Detroit, specifically—and with those rates expected to double or quadruple by 2025, the impact on the labor market, workforce, and wages will be significant.

But a closer look reveals something else: researchers differentiate between displacement effect and productivity effect. Displacement effect is about literally displacing jobs (see earlier), often for the benefit of industry and the business owners and stakeholders. A robot on the shop floor means fewer humans on the shop’s payroll. But productivity effect reflects a more robust shift in the nature of work, allowing for easier job and task completion for existing human roles. This effect also captures the creation of new jobs and tasks that did not previously exist.

Yes, this level of automation continues to benefit industry, business owners, and stakeholders, but it also presents an opportunity to train, reskill, and upskill generations of learners for jobs that continue to emerge. We as educators and trainers can't influence whether a business or industry embraces productivity effect in equal proportion to displacement effect. But it's important to be comprehensive in our understanding of these forces.

That's not to bury the lead. Yes, robots are taking some of our jobs. Daron Acemoglu finds that, "In the U.S., especially in the industrial heartland, we find that the displacement effect is large (Brown, 2020)." Robots are replacing the jobs that we are often quite worried about—entry-level manufacturing and industrial jobs that pay decent wages and provide benefits without requiring advanced education or degrees. These are the jobs that have the potential to lead to careers and shift generational wealth, lifting families out of poverty. "When those jobs disappear," Acemoglu states, "those workers go and take other jobs from lower wage workers. It has a negative effect, and demand goes down for some of the retail jobs and other service jobs." In other words, changes toward robotics and automation impact more than the immediate business experiencing displacement effect.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) published its "The Future of Jobs Report 2023," drawing findings from a data set of over 673 million jobs. The report found that within the next five years, the global economy is expected to see job growth of 69 million jobs and a decline of 83 million jobs. This means a net decrease of 14 million jobs, or 2% of current employment ("The Future of Jobs 2023," April 2023). This hard reality requires educators to support students in new ways—by developing skills needed for success across multiple contexts and environments, by equipping them with the knowledge about the ever-changing workforce, and by fostering a thirst to be lifelong learners who can follow their passions and interests through continuous learning toward self-fulfillment.

All hope is not lost. Students can make themselves relevant, even in times of intense change. No man is an island; neither is any robot, computer program, or data set. Each technological asset is a part of a system designed to deliver an outcome. And the systems do still require humans. Specific software, hardware, robots, and data-driven AI tools are so far defined systems that meet a specific need or solve a specific problem. Companies invest in specific technology for specific purposes,

and no one technological asset as, “The ability to adapt to entirely novel situations is still an enormous challenge for AI and robotics and a key reason why companies continue to rely on human workers for a variety of tasks. Humans still excel at social interaction, unpredictable physical skills, common sense, and, of course, general intelligence” (Brown, 2020). Educators can’t train students to process data at the speed of light, but we can teach, practice, and assess the ability to interact with others, to respond to surprising circumstances, to apply good judgment, and to make good on baseline knowledge and skills.

The MIT researchers note that these systems are task-oriented and rarely would replace the full set of activities that make up a specific job. For an individual worker, this can result in a decrease in some tasks and an increase in time spent on other tasks—maybe even those they like better. In reporting for the Brookings Institution, a public policy research organization, Harry Holzer notes, “More broadly, workers who can complement the new automation, and perform tasks beyond the abilities of machines, often enjoy rising compensation. However, workers performing similar tasks, for whom the machines can substitute, are left worse off” (Holzer, 2022). As humans and technology have no choice but to coexist, the advantage is clear for job seekers who are more comfortable interacting with technical systems and processes.

To this end, consider in your own practice embracing a new focus—one that shifts classroom activities from mundane, transactional, or recall-based experiences to those that are authentic and promote critical thinking skills and decision-making. Instead of asking students to recall information or telling them something that they will regurgitate later, ask them to tackle a real-world task by using their judgment and a variety of other tasks to solve the problem. Ask them to brainstorm a solution to a problem that includes a wild, fantastical technological component—as well as the human side to bring that outlandish idea to life. In doing so, you’ll be fostering many of the essential skills the WEF captured in its 2023 report, as noted in Figure 1.3.

Here, the beauty of education comes in, and educators shine. I have had the absolute privilege of hiring and observing countless teachers and have seen such incredible skill in providing problem-solving and critical-thinking prompts, all setting up students for success in their careers and their lives. In future chapters, we will dig into authentic problem solving as a classroom activity, including a Spotlight Story that shines a practical and encouraging light on the topic.

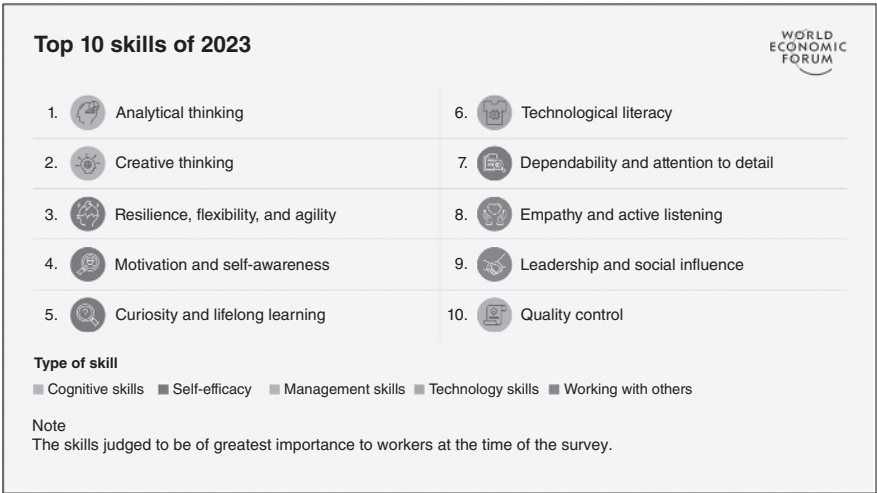


Figure 1.3: Top 10 skills of 2023.

Source: World Economic Forum.

FROM THE PERSONAL ARCHIVE

I’ve worked remotely for seven years and have experienced remote working benefits and drawbacks firsthand. Since the Future of Work involves remote work for more and more people, a peek behind the curtain of my working experience could prove helpful for those new to it.

At first, it was quite an adjustment period for me. I felt like every waking minute needed to be productive since I was not commuting to a workplace. This led to working long hours with few breaks. I had “work from home guilt” even though I put in even more hours and was meeting my employer’s expectations. It turned unhealthy relatively quickly.

Through trial and error, and some deep reflection, I avoided the impending downward spiral of overwork that leads to burnout. I learned how to balance my workdays and build in breaks. The more I learned about myself in that new work environment, the better I could employ strategies to support myself.

At the end of the day, the lack of commute allows me to be present more with my family, and I appreciate the option to move to other

parts of the country without losing my job if I so choose. But even with those perks, it wasn't a totally easy adjustment to make. I had well over a decade of work experience under my belt, and being in my thirties, I'd developed some self-awareness and reflection skills, and a regular yoga and meditation practice that helped me handle the highs and lows. Not everyone will be in the same situation or come to remote work with the same toolbox as me. It's important, then, that educators lay the foundation for healthy remote working practices for our students.

On the flip side, I have also supervised some people who have felt lonely in the remote work environment and had to create ways to feel more connected socially while working remotely. I share this experience to help others understand the realities of remote work and think about how we can support and guide students who might go this route. Of course, there are some roles where hybrid or remote work is not possible. For example, many healthcare roles and roles within the food and beverage industry cannot be done remotely. However, it is important to understand this trend and identify how our classrooms can lay the foundation for successful hybrid work.

Giving Students the Advantage

There are many opportunities for educators to structure student activities to mimic some of the workplace realities we covered in this chapter. Group projects, independent explorations, digesting asynchronous online materials—possibilities abound, and expert educators will find new ways to give learners autonomy and agency in the classroom. Yet doing so leaves a lot up to chance, and chance feels risky. After all, being prescriptive about where, when, and how the work gets done in a classroom or training setting is usually most efficient. Given that teachers never have enough time to get through everything they need to cover, efficiency is a top priority.

Yet, innovation is an iterative and vibrant process. It doesn't have to be perfect, and there will always be wins and losses when you try something new. The rest of *Shift Teaching Forward* aims to equip and inspire you to innovate with your students in relation to the knowledge, skills, and aptitudes they need to thrive at work. By bringing the

Future of Work into your classroom, even in small ways, you give your students an advantage—an advantage rooted in a frank, honest, and curious understanding of how their world is changing.

We want our students to develop a sense of personal responsibility for themselves. The world is changing, and they have the power to change along with it—with your help, if they choose. By exposing them to what’s here and what’s about to come, you’re helping them look ahead with open eyes. And when it comes to enhancing employability, that’s a great place to start.

Reflections and Intentions

- What are you doing in your classroom already that will help students thrive in the workplace environments described in this chapter?
- What are the job sectors that your students are interested in, and how might the elements described in this chapter impact those sectors? If you’re not sure, how can you and your students find out together?
- What else will you do to continue to remain knowledgeable about the shifts coming with the Future of Work?