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Future of Collaborative Work 2025

Balancing the New Era of Workforce Expectations
and Technological Advancements

Contents

Executive Summary

This report provides comprehensive research into the major trends and developments impacting the future of collaborative work in 2025 and beyond, the evolving workplace and what organizations as well as employees can do to meet new workplace demands.

The following guide provides an overview of current and emerging workplace trends with a key focus on technology, including the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) and advancements in cloud-based communications technology.

Part of the discussion includes challenges and concerns that organizations and their workforces face as the nature of work evolves, including those related to the continued adoption of hybrid and remote work.

Finally, we provide some recommendations and strategies organizations and employees can use to future proof their workplace environments and support the changing dynamics of their workforce.

Key highlights of this guide include:

- An overview of pertinent drivers and current trends affecting the evolving workplace, including AI, communications technology, remote and hybrid work, changing workforce demographics and globalization.

- Critical challenges including managing a hybrid workforce and supporting employees during a time of swift technology changes.

- Opportunities for organizations to create an optimal work environment for their employees.

- Case studies of organizations that are using technology and innovative strategies to help meet the expectations and needs of the workforce of today and beyond.

- Recommendations for organizations, employees and policymakers on how to navigate not only shifts in technology but also the changing dynamic in the workforce going forward.

Introduction

The nature of work and the workplace has rapidly evolved over the last decade. Advances in technology and rapid changes in workforce demographics and employee expectations are creating both challenges and opportunities for today's organizations.

To remain competitive, organizations must keep pace with these changes and provide the type of workplace where their employees can thrive and stay productive. But a study from Accenture revealed that only 26% of CEOs have a "future-ready strategy that is holistically focused on changing how, why and where we work." The same study notes that when leaders aren't focused on a new future of work that delivers on worker expectations, they risk exacerbating existing problems, such as attrition. [1]

What steps can organizations take to support their current and future workforces? Our research on the future of collaborative work suggests that optimal solutions involve a combination of strategies – including adoption of new technologies as well as providing opportunities that can help their workforces and environments adapt to ongoing changes.

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1   *https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insightsnew/future-workforce-index*

Current Trends and Drivers

The Impact of AI on Work

Artificial intelligence is transforming work and will continue to rapidly advance how machines and humans collaborate side by side in every industry. AI offers the opportunity to increase efficiency and business workflow, while improving work quality and overall employee experiences, provided the company implements AI into the correct components of their business operations model.

With the rapid advancements in the quality of machine learning and subsequent AI output, employee skill sets will need to be improved and new processes learned to keep the workforce and major industries competing at these ever-advancing levels.

McKinsey & Company projects that by 2030, about 30% of hours worked across the U.S. economy today could be automated due to AI and other technologies.[2]

The ethics of AI and machine learning, and their effects on privacy and data protection will continue to drive governmental and ethical regulations to provide transparency and avoid bias and cybersecurity issues.

A lack of employable skills and resulting job losses are a very real threat to the economic landscape. By creating workflows that utilize AI for repetitive tasks, employees can concentrate on activities that demand critical thinking, creativity and complex decision-making. [3]

Along with the integration of AI comes the advancement of other workplace and industry technologies that are evolving very quickly, and human resources (HR) departments must be proactive to provide their employees with the best opportunities for job advancement and retention.

Collaboration and Communication

Integral business operations rely on extensive collaboration and communication tools that are safe, efficient and effective in a global network that must constantly be connected. Globalization continues to shape work practices and opportunities as communications are synchronized and more cohesive. Communications can be immediate, regardless of time zones, and restrictive language barriers are now gone as communication tools now translate in real-time.

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2   https://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/our-research/generative-ai-and-the-future-of-work-in-america

3   https://www.forbes.com/sites/committeeof200/2024/02/13/the-workforce-in-the-world-of-ai-hr-strategies-for-2024-and-beyond/?sh=2522a83a18d0

Automation with AI has already advanced phone, chat, email and voice bot interaction, allowing for communication without a human unless oversight is needed. Email is waning while platform communications such as Slack are advancing for more efficient project management and easier collaboration.

In fact, according to a survey by Wakefield Research for Slack, "collaboration platforms are quickly replacing traditional communication. Even though nearly half of companies had not used a collaboration platform before the pandemic, 78% of IT decision makers (ITDMs) now say they'll continue to use Slack and/or other solutions." [4]

When communication technologies such as instant chat and video messages are paired with project management platforms, information sharing and coordination are designed to ease management of the workflow. But employees are under increasing pressure to be connected to work in one form or another, 24/7.

For the current and future workforce, the stress associated with being always-on is a growing issue that needs to be addressed with work-life balance. Communication and collaboration should foster the ease of allowing tasks to be completed efficiently, freeing time for other more important priorities on the work front and allowing for restorative time for personal well-being. As Accenture notes, "It is critically important to understand what matters to your employees, because 9 times out of 10, your employee is also your customer." [5]

Unified communications-as-a-service (UCaaS) will continue to be a driving force in the future of work. Cloud-based communications, video collaboration and networking solutions that identify pain points for businesses and their customers will see more growth in the coming years, along with the cybersecurity infrastructure that supports these evolving collaboration platforms. According to Fortune Business Insights, "The global video conferencing market size … is projected to grow from USD 33.04 billion in 2024 to USD 60.17 billion by 2032, exhibiting a CAGR of 7.8%." [6]

Remote, Hybrid & Asynchronous Work

Remote and hybrid work will continue to accelerate, according to Upwork's Future of Remote Work Report. "As a result of their experiences during COVID-19, 61.9% of hiring managers say their workforce will be more remote going forward. The expected growth rate of full-time remote work over the next five years has doubled, from 30% to 65%."[7] Further, A recent Gallup poll revealed that 60% of remote-capable workers want a long-term hybrid work arrangement, while more than one-third want to work from home permanently. [8]

Technology advancements with collaboration tools, software platforms and the ability to work from anywhere, are quickly expanding the remote and hybrid work options for employees and companies. As internal organizations adopt more technology solutions such as next-gen video collaboration, they will be able to improve their remote work models.

4   https://slack.com/blog/transformation/future-collaborative-communication-platforms-shaping-way-we-work

5   https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/consulting/future-work

6   https://www.fortunebusinessinsights.com/industry-reports/video-conferencing-market-100293

7   https://content-static.upwork.com/blog/uploads/sites/6/2020/05/26131624/Upwork_EconomistReport_FWR_052020.pdf

8   https://www.gallup.com/workplace/397751/returning-office-current-preferred-future-state-remote-work.aspx

Key components of a remote/hybrid work model:

- Utilizing a robust technology infrastructure and cybersecurity measures to enable seamless remote collaboration and data security.

- Adjusting internal policies and defining employee guidelines for communication protocols, work hours and performance evaluation in a remote setting.

- Addressing challenges in fostering organizational culture, collaboration and relationship-building among remote employees.

- Managing real estate for 'brick-and-mortar' office locations, and the lessening need for these holdings.

- Integrating a strong communication, collaboration and inclusion culture for employees to have a sense of 'belonging' to a team, and being valued as a contributor.

Looking ahead: Ongoing benefits of adopting hybrid and remote working models:

- Improvements in work-life balance and job satisfaction for employees due to location, work-hour structure and reduced commute times.

- Environmental impacts, including less carbon emissions from commuting, as well as reduced energy consumption from diminishing office space requirements.

- Demonstrated increases in productivity, with 57% of PWC's Future of Work and Skills Survey respondents stating their organization performed better against workforce performance and productivity targets over the past 12 months.[9]

- Greater access to a larger and more diverse talent pool that's not dependent on geographical location.

Ability to increase operational hours when running a remote global workforce

Implementing a successful hybrid or remote work model relies on asynchronous collaboration, which refers to group work completed independently while team members communicate via email or a project platform. Asynchronous collaboration is revolutionizing how teams work together, especially in remote and distributed environments. It allows team members to record and share video messages, feedback and updates without always requiring real-time meetings, enabling more flexible and efficient communication.

Slack, Asana, Jira, Accenture and Loom are examples of technology tools that provide software platform workflows that integrate with real-time video conferencing and collaboration, when needed, to support a cohesive yet dispersed working environment.

Accenture refers to these experiences as "omni-connected" and says, "Omni-connected is the complete experience of work: of feeling connected, of being included, and knowing we belong, regardless of our physical location. When we are omni-connected, we use technology and human ingenuity to make sure we are seen, can fully contribute, and have equal quality of experience. This comes from the digital tools we use, our physical locations, our behaviors, and the culture we create…" [10]

9   https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/workforce/future-of-work-and-skills.html?icid=?fy22-fows-press-release

10   https://www.accenture.com/cr-en/case-studiesnew/about/accenture-future-work

Meanwhile, McKinsey & Company reports that the "broad embrace of videoconferencing and virtual collaboration tools" is boosting both productivity and the development of new ideas. [11]

As the future of work is dependent on global collaboration, advanced secure video conferencing will be a key driver in the progression of automated and human interactions for work efficiency and collaboration.

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Advantages of Asynchronous Tools & Synchronous Video Collaboration

- **Increased Productivity**
  Asynchronous video eliminates the need for scheduling meetings and allows team members to communicate and collaborate on their own time. This reduces interruptions and context-switching, leading to improved focus and productivity.

- **Better Collaboration Across Time Zones**
  With team members spread across different time zones, asynchronous tools and video makes it easier to collaborate without the constraints of finding a mutually convenient meeting time.

- **Improved Communication**
  Video and audio messages provide a more personal and engaging way to communicate compared to text-based methods. They allow for better expression of tone, body language and visual aids, leading to clearer and more effective communication.

- **Enhanced Knowledge Sharing**
  Asynchronous video enables easy recording and sharing of knowledge, best practices and training materials. This facilitates better knowledge transfer and onboarding of new team members.

- **Increased Inclusivity**
  Asynchronous collaboration allows team members to participate and contribute at their own pace, accommodating different communication styles and preferences.

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Changing Workforce Demographics

While rapid advancements in technology are altering the way we work, changing workforce demographics are having a significant impact on job and workplace expectations.

Gen Z has entered the workplace as many baby boomers are moving toward retirement. This influx of Gen Z workers is creating a generational remodeling in terms of how employees view their work and the future of business. For the younger population, balance in all aspects of their life is a high priority, and that demand for balance is driving the changes in the future of our workplaces.

What does Gen Z want in their work dynamic? Here are a few of the important drivers.

Prioritizing Flexibility and Work-Life Balance

Gen Z highly values flexible work arrangements and the ability to integrate work with their lifestyle. They prefer jobs that offer full flexibility over high salaries. Being raised on all things digital, they are comfortable with remote and hybrid work models. They tend to prefer the dynamics of remote work including social engagement, social equity and diversity and the balanced approach of teamwork. However, they will need to develop soft skills, such as adaptability, communication and collaboration to be fully engaged and satisfied in the workplace.

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Growth Opportunities and Career Development

Approximately 74% of Gen Z are ambitious when it comes to learning new skills and developing professionally. [12] They prioritize clear paths for career growth into management and senior roles, often favoring industries like technology and consulting where they can grow with flexible upskilling opportunities. With the increased automation and AI advancements, these digital natives are well-positioned to adapt, leverage and advance in the workplace.

They believe in utilizing the gig economy – freelancing and independent contracting – to their advantage, supplementing their income by using their specific skill sets on multiple projects while upskilling their knowledge via digital learning.

Higher Entry-Level Pay

Around 46% of Gen Z regard salary as a primary factor in their job choices. [13] They tend to gravitate toward higher-paying industries from entry-level positions. In fact, Gen Z are likely to expect a much higher living wage compared with other generations. According to a recent article in Yahoo Finance, "Gen Z says they require an average salary of $171,633 to feel financially healthy — the highest income compared to older generations — according to a 2022 survey from personal finance company Personal Capital and retirement plan provider Empower, conducted by The Harris Poll." [14]

However, their average pay is currently much lower, and Gen Z is not loyal to positions that impede their financial growth. They are adaptable and nimble, and the future of working for any corporation will require companies to be fair with this generation.

Gen Z workers also expect full salary disclosures, so there is no room for discrimination. Equity in all things is a large part of their generational motto.

Emphasis on Diversity, Ethics and Social Impact

Gen Z values diversity across multiple dimensions, including race, gender, identity and orientation. They are attracted to companies that demonstrate commitment to societal challenges like sustainability and climate change. A company's ethics and global citizenship efforts are important to Gen Z. Social impact and purpose-driven work matter to the incoming workforce.

Gen Z is highly aware of environmental issues and expects companies to act responsibly. Sustainable business practices will be a key factor in attracting and retaining Gen Z employees. Companies that demonstrate strong Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives will likely appeal more to Gen Z, who value social impact.

With women earning degrees at higher rates than men and the U.S. workforce becoming more diverse, Gen Z is in line and focused on driving inclusion and a diverse workplace. In fact, the Hispanic population is anticipated to account for 30% of the labor force by 2060 due to higher labor force participation and birth rates.

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12   https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/operations/our-insights/how-virtual-work-is-accelerating-innovation

13   https://www.forbes.com/sites/rachelwells/2023/10/29/is-gen-z-asking-for-too-much-how-gen-z-is-defining-the-future-of-jobs/

14   https://finance.yahoo.com/news/heres-average-salary-generation-says-140000949.html

The future of work for Generation Z is shaped by technological advancements such as AI and collaboration tools, a strong emphasis on continuous learning, diversity and inclusion and the desire for meaningful work and work-life balance. They are reshaping the future of work and forcing employers to evolve their talent strategies and workplace cultures.

As baby boomers retire, opportunities for leadership and innovation will open up, with Gen Z well-prepared to step into these roles due to their digital proficiency and adaptive capabilities.[15] [16]

HOW GEN Z
is Redefining Job Expectations
and the Future of Work

| Prioritizing Flexibility and Work-Life Balance | Valuing Growth Opportunities and Career Development | Requiring Higher Entry-Level Pay | Focusing on Diversity, Ethics, and Social Impact |

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Globalization

The ecosystem of a distributed workforce is rapidly gaining ground. Technology advances in data analysis, cybersecurity, AI, internet of things (IoT) devices and collaboration software are increasing the interconnectedness driven by globalization. Opportunity abounds for workers and companies, especially those in the technology sectors, as the geographical barriers are lifted, and finding the top talent and top career offerings are fueling rapid shifts in work opportunities.

The adoption of remote and hybrid work models across industries has given organizations access to a larger and more diverse global talent pool while also allowing for cost savings on corporate real estate holdings. However, this shift also brings management challenges that companies will have to address as they adopt a more open and flexible work schedule across time zones, cultures and diversified global dynamics.

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15   https://imagine.jhu.edu/blog/2023/04/18/gen-z-in-the-workplace-how-should-companies-adapt/

16   https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/consumer-business/articles/understanding-generation-z-in-the-workplace.html

Further, the rapid pace of technological change will also require continuous upskilling and reskilling of the workforce. Demand is growing for skills in areas like data analysis, AI and cybersecurity as well as soft skills like communication and problem-solving. Globalization will require organizations to adopt technology including data platforms, AI and video conferencing and collaboration into their daily business processes.

The gig economy is another offshoot sector rapidly advancing as a workforce demographic that has evolved from globalization. Workforce mobility has increased as contract workers are able to move across cities, states, countries and borders. Meanwhile, job opportunities will advance for workers who are mobile and who continue to reskill and upskill. According to the World Economic Forum, 680+ million people will improve their education, skills and economic opportunities by 2030. [17]

Globalization is also driving a transition toward more sustainable and environmentally friendly practices, leading to the creation of new "green jobs" in sectors like renewable energy, sustainable agriculture and eco-tourism.

According to the National Intelligence Council -Global Trends 2040, "the effects of climate change and environmental degradation are likely to exacerbate food and water insecurity for poor countries, increase migration, precipitate new health challenges, and contribute to biodiversity losses. Novel technologies will appear and diffuse faster and faster, disrupting jobs, industries, communities, the nature of power, and what it means to be human." [18]

> ## Novel technologies will appear and diffuse faster and faster, disrupting jobs, industries, communities, the nature of power, and what it means to be human.

Employees today are becoming more focused on jobs within sustainable and eco-friendly workplaces that share their values and offer opportunities across the globe, which are driving an advancement of initiatives and workplace sustainable practices for the future of work. Successful business practices for companies will be those that move toward 2030 with an increased focus on cost reductions, eco-initiatives and a distributed workforce.

Disruptions to Workforce Skills

Advancements in artificial intelligence, robotics and automation are reshaping work tasks and job roles across various industries. While increasing efficiency, these technologies also pose challenges to certain traditional jobs, necessitating reskilling and adaptation.

According to the World Economic Forum in Davos, by 2027, businesses predict that almost half (44%) of workers' core skills will be disrupted.

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17 *https://initiatives.weforum.org/reskilling-revolution/home*

18 *https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/GlobalTrends_2040.pdf*

"Technology is moving faster than companies can design and scale up their training programmes, according to the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report.

AI is widely reported to be a key disrupter, but other factors, including the green transition and geo-economic conditions, will also see "churn" for almost a quarter of jobs by 2027 – a measure of disruption that includes both emerging and declining jobs." [19]

However, 74% of employed persons are ready to learn new skills or re-train to remain employable in the future, according to the PWC report on "Workforce of the future: The competing forces shaping 2030." [20]

The U.S. workforce is undergoing demographic changes, with an increasing share of older workers and a declining proportion of prime-age workers. This shift is driven by aging baby boomers and lower birth rates. However, the labor force is becoming more diverse due to continued immigration, which has the potential to even the distributed workforce across all socio-economic groups. [21]

Upskilling and reskilling will be paramount to job security for those already in the workforce. Incoming workers will need to adapt quickly and continue their education and training to keep up with the shifting job market demands that will be driven by AI automation. Technological change will continue to outpace the availability of skilled labor, creating a skills gap in certain fields.

There has been notable growth in gig work and the gig economy workforce will continue to rapidly advance. This trend can result in higher incomes, but along with it comes the lack of health benefits, job security and the rights of workers.
Remote work will continue to level the playing field for those who can work from anywhere. The disparities will arise for the less developed countries and underserved communities who need access to technology, such as internet and computer products, to work in an ever-growing technology-based society.

With the adoption of remote work, global talent acquisition and competition for certain roles will advance in the coming decade. This trend can balance wage disparities and job accessibility across borders as we look to the future of work.

Economic Cycles and Labor Market Conditions

Strong economic growth and low unemployment rates generally indicate a robust job market and increased job opportunities. However, economic downturns and high unemployment signal a slowing job market and potential job losses that can often become a 'hard landing' and result in major job opportunity shifts.

To safeguard workers and ensure robust job opportunities in a future increasingly shaped by AI and automation, policymakers must develop effective strategies to support workers and promote economic resilience. These concerns are paramount for both policymakers and corporate leaders. Achieving a stable workforce and economy will require a balance of foresight and upskilling in a rapidly evolving work environment.

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19 https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2024/02/work-and-workplace-trends-to-watch-2024/

20 https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/services/workforce/publications/workforce-of-the-future.html

21 https://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecopro.nr0.htm

Where Emerging Trends are Impacting Workplaces

Organizations are adapting their workplaces and environments to reflect the needs of all of their employees – whether they are hybrid, remote or in-office. This includes changes in physical work environments as well as new approaches aimed at benefiting employees on a more holistic level.

Workplace Structure and Environment

The workplace continues to evolve thanks to the integration of advanced technology, fluid work arrangements, prioritization of employee well-being and the need to collaborate and stay connected. This is true for both physical and virtual work environments.

Physical workspaces

Brick-and-mortar offices are becoming more flexible and adaptive to reflect today's need for collaborative spaces, smart technology and comfortable work environments. [22] Today, companies are implementing these key trends in their offices:

- **Smart technology**
  IoT and smart devices are making offices more comfortable, secure and eco-friendly spaces to work. Companies can now automate lighting, temperature control and air quality to provide employees a healthy working climate. They can also add sensors to monitor office occupancy and optimize space utilization. By implementing smart technology, workplaces are more energy efficient, elevate employee comfort and reduce costs while helping the environment.

- **Activity-based working (ABW)**
  Offices that employ an ABW approach provide dedicated spaces specific to each project, purpose or task. For example, employees can use quiet zones for focused work and private pods for confidential meetings and phone calls. Collaborative spaces and breakout areas are ideal to host brainstorming sessions and impromptu meetings, while huddle rooms are equipped with video conferencing tools. When they need a break from working, employees use Zen rooms to unplug, relax and meditate.

- **Ergonomic furniture**
  Today's offices feature ergonomic furniture and active workstations including treadmill desks, standing desks and ergonomic chairs. These healthier furniture choices eliminate sedentary work habits and promote physical activity and strong posture throughout the workday.

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22   https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9136218/

- **Well-being and sustainability**
  Workplaces are increasingly focusing on the well-being of employees and sustainability by incorporating biophilic design elements like plants, natural light and outdoor views to make indoor spaces feel comfortable and aid in productivity. Eco-friendly building materials and furniture can reduce environmental impact while fitness centers, yoga classes and healthy food options promote a healthy lifestyle among employees.

Virtual workspaces

Approximately one third of all employees who have the option to work from home have elected to do so. [23] The rise of remote and hybrid work has fueled the development of advanced virtual workspaces to include:

- **Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) collaboration tools**
  VR and AR tools amplify virtual training sessions, online product demos and employee and client onboarding while also enabling immersive meetings and collaboration experiences.

- **Digital whiteboards**
  This tool gives users a central hub where they can sketch out ideas, brainstorm and collaborate as a team in real-time, no matter their location.

- **Cloud-based platforms**
  These also play an integral part in virtual workspaces by allowing employees to share files, manage projects and collaborate in real time.

The purpose of these evolving workspaces is to enhance creativity, innovation and employee engagement while supporting the changing needs of today's workforce. Striking the appropriate balance between technology and employee needs is integral to stimulate productivity, collaboration and employee satisfaction.

Skills and Education

Development of skills and continuing education and training are critical for all employees. Technological proficiency, soft skills, leadership and problem solving are all key competencies that can be attained through continuous learning and reskilling. [24]

Continuous learning

Employees must keep an open mind and commit to continuous learning to stay relevant and be successful in their chosen careers. For instance, using data analytics to make informed decisions is a key emerging skill in virtually all industry sectors. Cybersecurity awareness is necessary to protect personal data, proprietary information and intellectual property (IP). [25]

AI solutions are transforming the workplace and industries, and when employees are skilled or upskilled in all aspects of cloud computing, companies can more easily achieve flexibility and scalability.

23 https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/03/30/about-a-third-of-us-workers-who-can-work-from-home-do-so-all-the-time/

24 https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-02/Australia%E2%80%99s%20emerging%20skills.pdf

25 https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/redefining-the-role-of-the-leader-in-the-reskilling-era

Soft skills

In addition to technological proficiency, soft skills are becoming increasingly valuable for employees as workplaces transform. One recent survey showed that '89% of talent acquisition professionals stated that when a new hire doesn't work out, it's because they lacked essential soft skills'. [26] Meanwhile, a British Council survey revealed that '35% of organisations reported prioritising soft skills over technical skills training'. [27] Having excellent verbal and written communication skills are essential for clear and effective interactions, especially for employees working in remote or hybrid environments.

Leadership skills

Demonstrating strong leadership and management skills is vital when navigating the emerging workplace landscape. Managers must work to foster a culture of innovation that inspires and empowers their team to share ideas and consider diverse perspectives. Once an organization has adopted a growth mindset, it can respond quickly to change and benefit from shifting market demands.

Adaptability and Resilience

Adaptability, continuous learning and skills development are important ways for employees to keep up with the rapid pace of technological advancement. In today's workplace, professionals who maintain a lifelong learning outlook and keep updating their skills are less likely to become obsolete. Leaders play a crucial role in creating environments that encourage innovation, taking risks and learning from failures to remain competitive in the market.

Employee Mental Health and Well-being

Employee well-being, especially mental health, plays a significant role when it comes to the productivity and sustainability of the future workplace. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 'an estimated 12 billion working days are lost every year to depression and anxiety at a cost of US\$ 1 trillion per year in lost productivity.'[28]

Addressing mental health and well-being in the workplace can result in many benefits including increased employee retention, reduced health risks, improved employee engagement and morale. These benefits can result in a more productive, innovative and loyal workforce that's better prepared to brave the challenges that arise as work evolves.

Some strategies organizations are using to promote mental health and well-being include implementing mental health programs, such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), counseling services and meditation apps. In addition, organizations should provide training and education for managers and employees on empathic leadership and stress management. Encouraging a sense of community through Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), and performing regular mental health check-ins and surveys to gauge employee well-being, and potential room for improvement are also effective approaches.

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26   https://www.hiringbranch.com/blog/key-soft-skills-to-focus-at-modern-workplace-after-covid

27   https://corporate.britishcouncil.org/insights/why-your-organisation-needs-develop-soft-skills

28   https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-at-work

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives make a crucial impact on modern work cultures. They aim to increase representation of marginalized groups such as women, racial and ethnic groups, people with disabilities and LGBTQ+ individuals. Supporting a diverse workplace can result in unique experiences, perspectives and ideas that drive innovation, creativity and improved decision-making.

Improving Reputation and Talent Attraction

Another benefit of having a strong DEI program in place is the ability for companies to bolster their reputation by projecting a positive brand image. This helps organizations appeal to a wider audience of prospects, customers and investors. It also helps companies attract and retain top talent as many job seekers, especially from younger generations, factor a potential employer's commitment to diversity and inclusion into their career decision. [29]

Driving Business Performance

DEI initiatives provide an inclusive culture that makes employees feel respected and valued. It empowers them to bring their A-game to work by fostering a more collaborative environment. Research has shown that companies with more diverse and inclusive workforces tend to outperform their less diverse counterparts by driving innovation, productivity and better business outcomes. [30]

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29 https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/05/17/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-in-the-workplace/

30 https://www.sap.com/resources/workplace-diversity-statistics

Implementing effective DEI initiatives begins with a commitment from the top of the organization, down. Leaders must set the tone for an inclusive culture and develop and enforce strategic work-place policies that reinforce fair hiring and equitable compensation for a diversified workforce.

They must also build awareness by providing training on managing workplace bias, microaggression and cultural and religious sensitivity. These tactics must be measured and recalibrated, as needed to ensure sustained progress. By adopting this strategy, organizations can create a more equitable environment that unlocks the full potential of their workforce and positions them for long-term success. [31]

Leadership Styles and Management Practices

Historically, company decisions were made by top executives and passed down the chain of command. Modern leaders are adopting a more collaborative style that empowers team members at all levels to share their input and become involved in the decision-making process. This collaborative approach helps foster innovation and engagement while augmenting transparency and trust within the organization. [32]

Emphasis on Emotional Intelligence and Empathy in Leadership

In today's work environment, leaders must prioritize emotional intelligence and empathy. Those with high emotional intelligence can communicate better, resolve conflicts and cultivate positive team dynamics. An empathetic approach also creates a supportive and inclusive environment that encourages engagement and loyalty. In terms of the future of work, where remote collaboration and rapid change are becoming the norm, emotional intelligence and empathy are essential for navigating complex situations and leading teams effectively. [33]

Adaptability and Evolving Leadership Roles

Rather than adopting one leadership style, today's executives must remain agile and change their approach to address new circumstances and the needs of the organization and its team members. Leaders must also be ready to respond quickly to dynamic environments by embracing change and championing innovation. In this regard, leaders are considered more as coaches and mentors rather than commanders. This may require a more hands-on approach for less experienced employees and increased autonomy for individuals who are more skilled and proactive.

Adaptive leaders also emphasize the importance of continuous learning and professional development, for themselves and their teams. This enables the workforce to tackle future challenges and thrive in a rapidly changing environment. [34]

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31   https://www.weforum.org/impact/shaping-an-inclusive-global-economy-by-scaling-impactful-corporate-dei-initiatives/

32   https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/new-leadership-for-a-new-era-of-thriving-organizations

33   https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2019/10/17/emotional-intelligence-at-work-becoming-the-leader-of-the-future/

34   https://hbr.org/2020/05/the-agile-c-suite

BENEFITS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN LEADERSHIP

Leaders with high emotional intelligence can address conflicts calmly and constructively, ensuring fair outcomes.

EFFECTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION

SELF-AWARENESS

SELF-REGULATION

COMPONENTS OF
Emotional Intelligence

SOCIAL SKILLS

MOTIVATION

EMPATHY

IMPROVED TEAM COMMUNICATION

POSITIVE TEAM DYNAMICS

Empathetic leaders listen actively and understand team members' perspectives, leading to more effective communication.

An empathetic approach creates a trusting environment, boosting morale and collaboration among team members.

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Data-Driven Decision Making

Leaders must leverage analytics and data-driven insights to foresee and understand trends, measure performance and make educated decisions. Using real-time metrics and feedback mechanisms allows leadership to remain in tune with their company's progress and continue to forge ahead or recalibrate, as necessary. This helps organizations gain a competitive edge even in the most volatile markets. [35]

Ethical and Purpose-Driven Leadership

With the new generation of workers, there is an increased expectation for leaders to uphold high ethical standards and act with integrity to foster a culture of trust and accountability within their company. The goal of purpose-driven leadership is to ensure business goals and social and environmental responsibilities are aligned. Having an ethical and purpose-driven outlook helps leaders inspire goodwill and loyalty among their teams, attract and retain top-notch talent and accommodate stakeholders, while contributing to the greater good.

As companies and individuals navigate the complexities of the future of work, it is essential to keep these key areas of impact top of mind. Embracing change, investing in continuous learning, focusing on diversity, well-being and inclusivity and prioritizing agile and purpose-driven leadership, will go a long way in cultivating a work environment that is sustainable, equitable and fulfilling for all.

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35   https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/leading-agile-transformation-the-new-capabilities-leaders-need-to-build-21st-century-organizations

Case Studies

Let's explore some organizations that have taken steps to move the needle forward on future-proofing their workplaces and adapting to the recent dramatic shifts in both the workplace and employee expectations.

Case Study 1: Salesforce's Strategic Initiatives for Future-Ready Workforce by 2025 and Beyond

Salesforce is proactively preparing for the future of work with several strategic initiatives and advances to adapt and prepare its workforce for 2025 and beyond. They are focusing on remote work capabilities and a culture of continued learning and upskilling while integrating advanced technologies and prioritizing the well-being of employees. Salesforce is showing it is capable of successfully adapting to future work trends.

Salesforce is applying several approaches to support the evolving workplace and create a stronger work environment for its employees. They include:

Hybrid Work

Salesforce is promoting the concept of a digital HQ, leveraging its own platform, Salesforce Customer 360, to create a virtual workspace. Leadership believes that adopting flexible work arrangements allows many employees to work from anywhere. So much so they have a "Work from Anywhere" policy that promotes a hybrid work model for remote and in-office work, combining both or either. The firm's 2021 purchase of Slack has been instrumental in fostering real-time communication, productivity and knowledge sharing among distributed teams. Supporting work-life balance helps foster an inclusive and innovative culture for employees. [36]

Focus on Well-Being

In order to focus on the importance of mental health and well-being, Salesforce has introduced various initiatives to support its employees. This includes wellness programs, mental health resources and policies that encourage work-life balance. The company is also investing in creating a supportive workplace culture where employees feel valued and heard.

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36   https://www.salesforce.com/news/stories/return-remote-how-salesforce-brings-employees-together-for-modern-work/

Upskilling

Salesforce emphasizes the need for continuous learning and upskilling to keep pace with rapid technological advancements. Through platforms like Trailhead, employees have access to a wide range of training modules and certifications. This commitment to learning ensures that the workforce remains competitive and proficient in the latest technologies and methodologies. [37]

Sustainability

The company is actively working toward reducing its carbon footprint and achieving net-zero emissions. By integrating sustainability into its business strategy, Salesforce not only addresses environmental concerns but also attracts employees who prioritize working for socially responsible companies. The future workforce, especially Gen Z, is more drawn to companies that prioritize environmental consciousness.

Technology Integration

Salesforce continues to integrate cutting-edge technologies such as Einstein AI, for example, to enhance CRM capabilities by providing predictive analytics and personalized recommendations. These technologies help Salesforce maintain a competitive edge. [38]

Diversity & Inclusion

Salesforce continues to foster a diverse and inclusive workplace, by implementing various programs and policies to ensure representation and equity across all levels of the organization. This focus on diversity and inclusion has enhanced the company culture and helps to drive innovation and better business outcomes.

Leadership of the future

Salesforce is investing in developing future-ready leaders who can navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing business landscape. The "Great Leader Pathways" leadership development program is focused on equal opportunity for all, resilience and the ability to lead distributed teams effectively. This prepares Salesforce's leaders to drive the company's vision and foresee the future of work. [39]

By leveraging this multi-pronged approach, Salesforce is well-positioned to navigate future work trends with agility and inclusiveness, thus fostering a supportive and dynamic work environment for its employees.

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37   https://trailhead.salesforce.com/

38   https://www.salesforce.com/artificial-intelligence/

39   https://www.salesforce.com/blog/leadership-development/

Case Study 2: Navigating the Future of Work and the Impact of AI

Workers have differing views on how their jobs will be impacted by AI. A recent study from Pew Research notes that many workers whose jobs will involve more exposure to AI don't necessarily feel their jobs are at risk. [40] However, the study noted that analytical skills, including science, mathematics and programming, are critical in jobs that have high exposure to AI.

A cohort of leading technology firms are moving to study the impact of AI on the workforce while finding ways to ensure workers are equipped to navigate future work. The AI-Enabled ICT Workforce Consortium, led by Cisco and joined by Accenture, Eightfold, Google, IBM, Indeed, Intel, Microsoft and SAP, will assess AI's impact on technology jobs and identify skills development pathways for the roles most likely to be affected by artificial intelligence.

"AI is accelerating the pace of change for the global workforce, presenting a powerful opportunity for the private sector to help upskill and reskill workers for the future," said Francine Katsoudas, Executive Vice President and Chief People, Policy & Purpose Officer at Cisco. "The mission of our newly unveiled AI-Enabled Workforce Consortium is to provide organizations with knowledge about the impact of AI on the workforce and equip workers with relevant skills. We look forward to engaging other stakeholders—including governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the academic community—as we take this important first step toward ensuring that the AI revolution leaves no one behind." [41]

While the consortium is aimed at helping businesses retain their workforce, it appears the tech layoffs keep coming.

As of June 2024, numbers indicate tech layoffs will continue:

- Accenture- 2.5% in next 18 months [42]
- Cisco- 5% of workforce 2024 [43]
- Google layed off 200- Alphabet plans to lay off 6% [44]
- Indeed - 8% [45]
- Intel- Undisclosed layoff rounds [46]
- Microsoft- several thousand and expected to continue [47]
- SAP -about 7% [48]
- IBM-Krishna said he "could easily see" 30% of those roles — roughly 8,000 employees—replaced by AI and automation over the next five years [49]
- Overall, 60,000 tech layoffs – 250+ companies [50]

40 https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/07/26/which-u-s-workers-are-more-exposed-to-ai-on-their-jobs/
41 https://newsroom.ibm.com/2024-04-04-Leading-Companies-Launch-Consortium-to-Address-AIs-Impact-on-the-Technology-Workforce
42 https://www.reuters.com/technology/accenture-cuts-annual-revenue-forecast-2024-03-21/
43 https://www.cnbc.com/2024/02/14/cisco-cutting-5percent-of-global-workforce-in-restructuring-move.html
44 https://www.cnbc.com/2024/05/01/google-cuts-hundreds-of-core-workers-moves-jobs-to-india-mexico.html
45 https://www.hrdive.com/news/indeed-layoffs-job-market/716166/
46 https://www.crn.com/news/components-peripherals/2024/intel-layoffs-april-2024
47 https://www.theregister.com/2024/06/04/microsoft_plans_to_cut_about/
48 https://siliconangle.com/2024/01/24/sap-announces-major-restructuring-plan-impacting-8000-jobs/
49 https://www.crn.com/news/cloud/2024/ibm-layoffs-hit-marketing-communications-staff-as-ai-charge-continues-report
50 https://techcrunch.com/2024/09/17/tech-layoffs-2024-list/

Will any initiative keep workers in their jobs, or will AI advance so rapidly that there are mass layoffs? It seems that companies working on internal initiatives will fare better for workers than other companies. IBM, Accenture and others are working on balancing the impact of AI and the value of the human worker internally. It remains to be seen if programs such as Accenture's Syn-Ops or IBM's New Collar initiative will be enough to slow the job loss to AI and automation.

KPMG suggests that continual upskilling while working is critical to the future of work.[51] They recommend organizations initiate a "learning in the flow of work" program.[52] Such programs will require investment in new technologies and instructional design but will better prepare the workforce for the rapid changes brought by AI and automation. KPMG notes that by 2025, "more than 60 percent of the global workforce will comprise millennial and Gen Z employees who prioritize continuous skills development and meaningful growth opportunities at work."

Adopting these programs and adapting the workforce will be critical to job creation, growth and its balance with the automation of the future – which is now.

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51   https://kpmg.com/us/en/articles/2022/companies-upskill-workforce.html

52   https://kpmg.com/kpmg-us/content/dam/kpmg/pdf/2020/future-of-learning.pdf

Challenges
and Opportunities

Challenges

There are various challenges related to the future of work including managing a hybrid workforce, reskilling and upskilling employees, prioritizing well-being and work-life balance, embracing organizational agility and adaptability and adopting new talent strategies. Here's a deeper dive into potential hurdles organizations and their teams might face.

Managing a hybrid workforce

It's difficult to build trust and a sense of belonging when co-workers spend most of their time working outside the office. Working independently can cause team members to feel disconnected, isolated and alone. [53] Choosing the right technological tools and integrating them seamlessly into a company's existing tech stack can also pose problems.

Overcoming the challenges of managing a hybrid workforce requires strong leadership, clear communication guidelines, nurturing an inclusive culture, supplying the right technology and training and adopting management strategies tailored for hybrid teams.

Reskilling and upskilling personnel

The breakneck speed of a change in technology requires employees to engage in lifelong learning. However, identifying skills that will be relevant in the future and keeping up with evolving technology can be difficult.

Organizations can face these dilemmas head on by investing in training programs, resource allocation and a change management mindset to prepare their workforce for new roles and responsibilities brought about by emerging technologies including automation and AI. [54]

Prioritizing employee well-being and work-life balance

With the increasing workplace demands, prioritizing employee well-being, mental health and work-life balance has become a critical challenge. Some of this is due to the "always on" culture of remote work, plus the sometimes unforeseen connection between employee well-being and organizational success.

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53   https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2022/11/04/how-to-overcome-six-big-challenges-of-hybrid-working/

54   https://hbr.org/2023/09/reskilling-in-the-age-of-ai

Companies can alleviate this issue by putting supportive policies and resources in place. Leadership's commitment to continuously evaluate and refine their well-being strategies by listening to employee feedback and analytical insights can further benefit company culture and promote a healthy-minded workplace.

Embracing organizational agility and adaptability

Transitioning away from a traditional hierarchical structure can result in employee skepticism due to fear of the unknown. Siloed departments can also stand in the way of a more flexible work environment.

Adopting new talent strategies

To take full advantage of the future of work, companies need to transition from hiring only prospects who hold degrees and previous job titles as evidence of their worth to considering candidates with transferable skills and potential. [55] This shift in mindset requires significant cultural change and securing stakeholder buy-in throughout the transition to skills-based hiring practices to be successful.

Organizations must lead by example and involve employees in the transition process to overcome resistance. With internal buy-in, companies can reap the benefits of a flattened hierarchy that eliminates silos and empowers employees to make decisions, be accountable and contribute their ideas. Continuous communication in conjunction with a willingness to experiment will increase company agility and adaptability.

Opportunities

The future of work offers promising opportunities for growth, innovation and improvement across several sectors. With the correct policies in place, experts anticipate the job market will flourish as an estimated 250 million - 280 million new positions could be created through 2030. [56] Here is a look at the most promising sectors of the future, technological advancements and the skill sets anticipated to have the most impact and potential.

Emerging Economic Sectors and Models

There are a range of sectors that offer significant employment potential in the long term. Here are some important areas to note:

- **Care-based economy**
  This sector focuses on human-to-human connection, particularly as it relates to caring for seniors, children and youth as well as underserved groups. New career opportunities likely to emerge from this economy include care coordinators, community health workers and care technology specialists. [57]

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55   https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/solutions/workforce-development-and-training/skills-based-hiring-and-advancement

56   https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/jobs-lost-jobs-gained-what-the-future-of-work-will-mean-for-jobs-skills-and-wages

57   https://www.bcg.com/publications/2024/foreseeing-future-work-opportunities

Digital health tools, telemedicine and health informatics can assist with more accurate diagnosis and personalized care plans. Smart solutions and assistive technology can also enhance care for the elderly and those with dementia by improving quality of life while simultaneously reducing the burden on caregivers. [58]

- **Holistic security**
  The range of security issues and threats will continue to escalate in the future. As a result, new jobs will be created offering substantial advantages for individuals who embrace a holistic approach to cybersecurity and possess the advanced skills needed to understand a complex risk environment.[59]

  Companies will need employees with this skill set on their teams to craft and execute comprehensive risk assessments, business continuity plans and integrated security measures that will ultimately help organizations maintain operations, strengthen brand reputation, reduce financial losses and provide a competitive advantage.

- **Regenerative industries and infrastructures**
  Developing sustainable infrastructures based on circular processes in construction and manufacturing instead of linear ones can create various benefits for communities and environments including green buildings, nature-based materials and solutions, elastic transportation networks and climate adaptation. [60]

  Regenerative business models that prioritize resource efficiency, waste reduction and restore natural resources can result in new revenue streams that lead to competitive advantages. Also, adopting a do-it-yourself model of production will lead the way to more flexible supply chains while decreasing the environmental impact linked to the manufacturing sector. [61]

Technological Advancements and Skill Development

Emerging technologies like generative AI will drive innovation and create new job opportunities for healthcare providers, IT professionals, builders, educators, professionals (accountants, scientists, engineers and analysts, as well as managers and executives).
The demand for creative individuals like artists, performers and entertainers will also increase as rising incomes create more demand for relaxation, recreation and leisure.

In addition, jobs in unpredictable environments— such as gardeners, plumbers, or providers of child- and eldercare—have the potential to create 50-90 million new jobs worldwide, especially as more female employees join the workforce. This is because the positions are technically difficult to automate and often earn relatively lower wages, which makes automation less financially attractive. [62]

58 https://www.ioaging.org/technology/smart-technology-to-help-seniors-live-independently/

59 https://www.bcg.com/publications/2024/foreseeing-future-work-opportunities

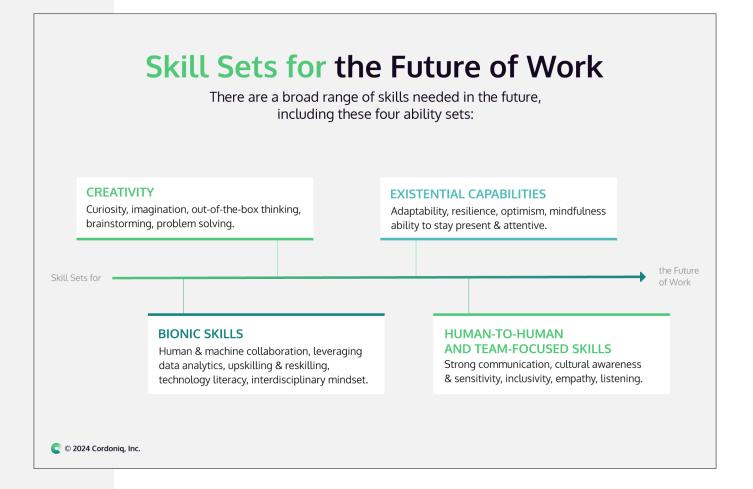60 https://www.bcg.com/publications/2024/foreseeing-future-work-opportunities

61 https://www.ey.com/en_gl/insights/climate-change-sustainability-services/regenerative-principles-sustainable-future

62 https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/jobs-lost-jobs-gained-what-the-future-of-work-will-mean-for-jobs-skills-and-wages

Equitable Workforce Development

By centering racial equity throughout all aspects of workforce development - from internal organizational practices to community engagement to program design and delivery - stakeholders can dismantle systemic barriers and create more inclusive pathways to quality jobs.

This requires adopting formal equity frameworks and decision-making processes that prioritize racial equity, elevating the voices of community-based organizations for underrepresented groups, designing holistic and culturally responsive programs, promoting industry change toward equitable hiring and retention and establishing continuous improvement processes.

Skill Sets for the Future of Work

There are a broad range of skills needed in the future,
including these four ability sets:

CREATIVITY
Curiosity, imagination, out-of-the-box thinking, brainstorming, problem solving.

EXISTENTIAL CAPABILITIES
Adaptability, resilience, optimism, mindfulness ability to stay present & attentive.

Skill Sets for   the Future of Work

BIONIC SKILLS
Human & machine collaboration, leveraging data analytics, upskilling & reskilling, technology literacy, interdisciplinary mindset.

HUMAN-TO-HUMAN AND TEAM-FOCUSED SKILLS
Strong communication, cultural awareness & sensitivity, inclusivity, empathy, listening.

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Skill sets for the Future of Work

As the 21st century progresses, employees may need to refine some of their skills and acquire new ones to remain viable in the workplace. Although a broad range of skills will be needed in the future, here are four that deserve special consideration.

- **Creativity**
  Skills like curiosity, imagination and out-of-the-box thinking will be a critical asset in the workplace of the future as employees tackle complex problems with unconventional solutions.

- **Bionic skills**
  The integration of human capabilities with advanced technologies. Some key bionic skills are initiating collaboration between humans and machines, leveraging data analytics, upskilling and reskilling regularly, acquiring technological literacy and having an interdisciplinary mindset.

- **Existential capabilities**
  Dealing with change and growth requires adaptability, resilience, optimism, mindfulness, curiosity and the ability to stay present and attentive.

- **Human-to-human and team-focused skills**
  Despite technological advancements, effective person-to-person interaction is essential to be successful in the workplace. Strong communication skills will be critical for collaboration and relationship-building. Also, understanding cultural norms and perspectives will facilitate an inclusive work environment. [63]

By capitalizing on these opportunities through strategic investments, technological advancements and collaborative efforts, societies can encourage innovation, create rewarding work prospects and build a more inclusive and sustainable future of work.

AI Challenges and Opportunities in the Workplace

AI is shifting nearly every aspect of business and employment and will continue to drive company culture and workplace advancement well into 2025 and beyond. Since AI adoption and iterations are rapid, unforeseen changes will be continually on the horizon.

AI is generating both challenges and opportunities for companies and employees. The functional possibilities with these integrated and varied models and subsets will provide significant advancements – along with potential hurdles – going forward.

Large Language Models (LLMs)

LLMs are textually-based artificial intelligence models which are continually trained on massive amounts of data, allowing for more complete and accurate output for potential business applications. LLMs can be open, private or open-source, providing various avenues for business access, growth and development.

These will provide varied formulas for customer service chatbots, content creation, data analysis and many other business use cases that will change how employees spend their time at work. Companies such as Google, Microsoft, OpenAI, Anthropic, Meta, Databricks and Mosaic are employing some of the larger, more rapidly advancing LLMs as of 2024. Many, if not most employees are already utilizing these tools in their workplaces and in their roles. Large technology companies such as Apple and Nvidia are also building internal LLMs for their processes that will ultimately affect the end users of their products.[64]

There is a learning curve required to upskill employees to use these tools. This transition will initially take time and resources, but in the long term, employees and companies that upskill in pace with LLM advancement and adopt these tools into the daily workplace structure, will be able to com-

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63   https://www.harvardbusiness.org/5-key-human-skills-to-thrive-in-the-future-digital-workplace/

64   https://zapier.com/blog/best-llm/

plete tasks at a faster automated rate, allowing employees to do other key jobs in the workplace that require critical thinking skills.

The challenges of data misinformation and security of these models will be a factor into 2025 and beyond. These risks will become more mitigated as models and security measures around learning data continue to advance.

Large Multimodal Models (LMMs)

The next steps of advancing AI in the workplace are with LMMs. These models integrate multiple data modalities, such as text, images, audio and video. Because of the complexities in training and need for large amounts of resources to run these models, they will continue to face challenges. High computational demands and the complexity of integrating multiple modalities can lead to performance issues. These difficulties require careful optimization and tuning to ensure effective deployment in business environments.

Hardware manufacturers have taken on the challenge of providing computing chips that are more energy efficient and support the computational needs for rapidly expanding artificial intelligence. [65]

Nearly every sector of business operations will be impacted by multimodal AI in 2025-2030. Deployed in a business environment, the application of AI will provide opportunities for employees, customers and corporations.

Workplace Application

With multimodal AI comes the opportunity of immersive experiences for "improved user involvement" that will include AR and VR in workplace applications including education, healthcare, sales, professional training and remote collaboration. [66]

AI will also facilitate enhanced communications and collaboration. Automated meeting transcription in real-time, as well as summarizing and generating multimedia content and materials, including visual aids based on text or spoken interactions, will create more inclusive and interactive experiences for the workplace.

As data is being analyzed from various sources utilizing LMMs, insights can be more comprehensive when viewing business trends, handling market management or providing a customer experience and for customer retention. Businesses and employees will benefit from improved decision making, as they can track various data points in real-time, eliminating some manual task work and providing more immediate information when working with customers.

LMMs will play a large role in customer service during 2025 and beyond. Interactions and ability to respond to queries across different modalities, including voice, text, visual queues and video will continue to see major improvements, and employees will need less work time invested in solving human error factors and interactivity issues, as AI helps to bridge this gap, providing more efficient and personalized customer support.

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65   https://research.aimultiple.com/large-multimodal-models/

66   https://www.gminsights.com/industry-analysis/multimodal-ai-market

Recommendations

For Organizations

The organization of the future should already be adapting and providing benefits that suit the workers of today and beyond. With Gen Z set to take the working landscape, the workers of the 60+ age generations are exiting it, and with them go the working hardlines that corporations have long depended on.

The employee of the future wants an employer who provides flexibility, opportunity and equal input from its people. An organization that can offer hybrid and remote work schedules, coupled with training and upskilling opportunities and support will attract the top talent of the future. Employee enhancement programs will drive the competitive edge that companies are looking for going into 2025 and beyond. These include benefits that support work-life balance for family dynamics and programs that provide financial incentives and assistance.

> **The employee of the future wants an employer who provides flexibility, opportunity and equal input from its people. An organization that can offer hybrid and remote work schedules, coupled with training and upskilling opportunities and support will attract the top talent of the future.**

Internal programs will be a large driver of incentivizing employees and hiring. These may be financial but also include family and health and wellness programs, employee equality in decision-making, educational opportunities for upskilling and more.

Google is an example of how companies can offer more benefits to assist in real-life scenarios, providing opportunity and inclusion for all. Google's career benefits include everything from access to fertility support to menopause support, educational financial assistance, fitness options and family support – all to create an atmosphere that can support a well-balanced and happy employee. [67]

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67 https://www.google.com/about/careers/applications/benefits/

The responsible, inclusive, sustainable and enabled (RISE) strategy implemented by Intel refers to their "aim to create a more responsible, inclusive, and sustainable world, enabled by technology and the expertise and passion" of their employees. This initiative is driving the direction of a sustainable and equitable future of work. Organizations that can adopt climate responsibility, technology and AI governance and talent development and retention with shared values such as the RISE responsibility work by Intel, will promote a culture where a diverse workforce will be an important and valued part of the drive to succeed in business. [68]

As Deloitte's "Leading a Generative AI-Fueled Enterprise: A CEO series" states "Today's CEOs must be on the decision-making frontline when it comes to imagining and implementing Generative AI for business success." Embracing digital transformation and educating senior leadership to make informed decisions regarding the enormous opportunities and potential risks that AI will take in their organization, will be paramount for the success of employee retention and satisfaction. [69]

For Employees

The workforce of the future will need to adapt to rapid changes driven by things such as the advancements in AI and automation, along with global changes in birth rates, healthcare, immigration, climate issues and technology shifts. Navigating the evolving workplace will require these employees to advance their learning skills and adaptability, to remain relevant and successful.

Important ways for employees to stay competitive going forward include:

Data Analytics and Interpretation

The ability to work with data, analyze it and derive meaningful insights will be highly valued across most industries, not just in technology jobs. Employees should develop skills in data management and interpretation to make informed decisions.

Creativity and Critical Thinking

As automation takes over routine tasks, human creativity and critical thinking will become more important. Employees should hone their problem-solving, innovative thinking and ability to approach challenges from unique perspectives. Problem solving and critical thinking, while working with diverse teams will be valued as a leadership skill.

Emotional Intelligence and Collaboration

With the rise of remote and hybrid work models, emotional intelligence and effective virtual collaboration will be essential. Employees should work on their interpersonal skills, empathy, and ability to build strong working relationships in digital environments.

According to Fortune, "Visual collaboration is the practice of simplifying and streamlining organizational teamwork digitally through scalable canvases—thereby promoting inclusivity, innovation, agility, and creativity in *every* single workflow. This kind of collaboration is vital for today's hybrid, distributed, and remote teams, making it possible for anyone to work together asynchronously or in real time."[70]

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68   https://www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/corporate-responsibility/2030-goals.html

69   https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/consulting/articles/ceo-guide-to-scaling-generative-ai.html

70   https://fortune.com/2023/01/10/brainstorm-tech-lucid-visual-collaboration-future-of-work/

Employees who embrace video collaboration will have the ability to adapt to many productivity tools in order to stay relevant in the workplace.

Collaboration should extend to the employee building a professional network so that connections are always growing in relevance to corporate job skills. This can open doors to transferable skills in the event that a job market shift occurs.

Lifelong Learning and Upskilling

The job market will be constantly evolving, requiring employees to embrace a mindset of lifelong learning. The worker of the future should actively seek opportunities to acquire new knowledge, skills and certifications relevant to their field. Employers will offer more internal skilling programs to advance employee upskilling and job satisfaction but will also expect employees to seek outside education opportunities to bring new skill sets to the workplace. A growth mindset will evolve over the next decades of work.

Digital Literacy and Adaptability

Strong digital skills and the ability to quickly adapt to new technologies will be crucial. Employees must continuously upskill and stay updated with emerging digital tools, platforms and software relevant to their roles. Being able to work from anywhere will also be an important part of an employable skill set.

The future workplace will be dynamic, with frequent changes in processes, technologies and work structures. Employees who can adapt quickly and embrace an agile mindset will have a significant advantage.

> **The future workplace will be dynamic, with frequent changes in processes, technologies and work structures. Employees who can adapt quickly and embrace an agile mindset will have a significant advantage.**

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, "...the future of the U.S. workforce is undergoing significant changes. We see a smaller, yet more diverse population, along with challenges in labor force participation rates and a growing emphasis on education and skills development. Industries are in transition, with the service sector gaining prominence and grappling with a pressing need to address shortages, particularly in vital areas like healthcare. Immigration remains a critical factor in talent acquisition. To navigate these transformations successfully, it's crucial for businesses, policymakers, and educational institutions to adapt and collaborate effectively for a prosperous workforce in the years ahead."[71]

By focusing on developing these skills, employees can position themselves as valuable assets to their organizations and increase their chances of staying relevant and employed in the rapidly changing job market of 2025-2030

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71   https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/data-deep-dive-the-workforce-of-the-future

For Policymakers

Moving into 2025 and beyond, government and private sectors will have to create initiatives to address the dynamic shifts in the workplace of the future. Support initiatives and policies are being formed now, to prepare for the challenges and opportunities that companies and employees will face.

The U.S. Department of Commerce and Department of Labor has created a Good Jobs Principles fact sheet that addresses recruitment and hiring, benefits, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA), empowerment and representation, job security and working conditions, organizational culture, pay and skills and career advancement. A roadmap of sorts, to help companies and their employees navigate the complexities of the future of work. [72]

Addressing the challenges of new workers coming into the market with minimal skills, the U.S. government is aiming substantial funding toward apprenticeship programs, to foster a growing workforce in a diverse range of job opportunities. They are also addressing the influx of foreign workers needed to fill the jobs that the declining U.S. population cannot sustain. H1-B programs are changing rapidly, to make the requirements fit the needs of U.S. economic growth and sustainability. [73]

Sustainability and environmental impact are core drivers for the future of the workplace and need high considerations from government policymakers. The office of the Federal Chief Sustainability Officer has listed many U.S. climate sustainability plans that will impact the future of work. From energy emissions to workplace building and infrastructure, all policies will have a bearing on the workplace of the future. Workers want sustainability programs to be adopted by the companies they work for and include them in the process of driving these initiatives. [74]

Cybersecurity, privacy and data infrastructure initiatives play a large part in what the future of work will look like for business. Critical infrastructure and corporate operations will need ongoing cybersecurity safe measures which will need to advance rapidly. Many companies are already adopting measures implemented by CISA, the Cybersecurity Infrastructure Agency, to safeguard the worker, customer and business operations in the U.S. CISA recommends many operational changes for companies to adopt in order to thrive in an ever-advancing cybersecurity threat society.

Recommending that companies take a pledge to adopt these parameters in the process of developing software that is "secure by design and secure by default", rather than trying to bolt on security measures after the fact. This will become a key factor in what companies succeed by securing their products for the global market. [75]

"The demand for cybersecurity talent is speeding up as more public and private sector organizations look to strengthen defenses against a multitude of threats. The National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE), led by NIST, is a partnership between government, academia, and the private sector focused on cybersecurity education, training, and workforce development." [76]

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72   https://www.dol.gov/general/good-jobs/principles

73   https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/skills-grants/h1-b-skills-training

74   https://www.sustainability.gov/federalsustainabilityplan

75   https://www.cisa.gov/

76   https://www.trade.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/2023USGWorkforcePrograms.pdf

Working with the EU and global leaders on technology impacts to the future of work, the U.S. released a joint statement regarding trade and technology. This is an important stance on the way that companies can adopt policies to stay ahead of the changing landscape, particularly in regards to AI advancement for trade and technology going into 2025 and beyond. [77]

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With Switzerland, the Ireland initiative and EU G7 and GDPR all working on preparing companies for the future of work, initiatives will be active, ongoing and ever changing for government policies to support global business, while addressing the needs of the workforce into the next decade and beyond.

77   https://www.commerce.gov/news/press-releases/2024/04/us-eu-joint-statement-trade-and-technology-council

Conclusion

To remain competitive, organizations will need to adapt strategies and policies to focus on the changing needs of the future workforce and workplace. Recent changes, including the permanent shift to remote work, have made managing workforces more complex.

Providing upskilling opportunities with software integration advancements will be an integral part of the future of the workplace in 2025 and beyond. The importance of software advances that support both company and employee success going forward will be critical in the global jobs landscape. Hybrid working opportunities will continue to increase, with integrated work platforms and innovative video collaboration tools that provide ease, access and diverse working environments supporting the dispersed workforce of the future.

The shifts in workforce demographics, particularly the influx of younger, and more globally-dispersed workers, is resulting in new expectations from all employees. Employee well-being and work-life balance must be priorities for organizations to attract and retain talent. Equitable and diverse workplaces will see a large gain in employee retention and innovation going into the future.

Cybersecurity technologies and skilled cybersecurity workers will also play an important role in the future of work. Governmental initiatives and directives will continue to advance and develop to support the workforce and protect the public into 2025 and beyond.

Meanwhile, organizations will continue to face challenges as the workplace dynamic evolves. But these challenges will create opportunities for those companies that can quickly adapt. The workplace of the future also demands that employers become more agile, empathetic and innovative in their approach to workforce management, benefits and career development. Changes in management styles will continue to evolve as employees adapt to their new work environments.

The adoption of AI and the associated toolsets will bring additional challenges not only to management, but to the company structure and its workforce. AI will, however, provide innovative opportunities for employees and their employers. Employees will find more opportunity to advance their skill sets, becoming more proficient and adding to company values. AI will determine many facets of the shifting workplace from 2025 going forward for the coming decades.

Companies and employees will need to negotiate these changes and progressions with agility and adaptability, as the global landscape moves into the future of work in 2025 and beyond.

Future of Collaborative Work 2025

Balancing the New Era of Workforce Expectations
and Technological Advancements