

7 ways to ensure humans can befriend machines in the workplace

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The debate of the decade is whether or not robot workers are replacing human jobs. What's for sure is that automation is changing the skills companies require from workers, yet the speed with which this is happening across functions within organisations varies.



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Many organisations are investing in digital, shifting tasks to robots and subsequently creating jobs. At the same time, companies are focusing on developing their skills development offerings, so their human workforce can perform new and complementary roles to those done by machines. This is proof that the skills revolution is truly underway.

Confidence in automation is growing globally. According to the Skills Revolution 2.0, ManpowerGroup 2018 report, in 35 of 44 countries surveyed more companies are planning to grow or maintain rather than shrink their workforce. In most cases, robots are helping to boost productivity and proving to be critical to economic growth. This is why it is important that humans are able to positively interact with robots in the workplace.

Here are seven ways the human workforce can befriend machines and automation to their benefit:

1. Remember leadership matters

Executives need to be the igniters of change, innovation and culture to ensure their companies become learning organisations in an era of rapidly changing skills.

2. Ensure that women are a part of the solution

According to Marrying Up Educationally by the Institute of Family studies 2017, women comprise 50% of the

workforce and in 2017 became more educated than men. Creating a culture where women can thrive is more critical than ever.

3. Understand what your workforce wants

Failure to invest in automation risks missing out on creating wealth and jobs for the future generation.

ManpowerGroup's 2018 Skills Revolution 2.0 report states that by 2025, millennials and Gen Z's will make up more than two-thirds of the global workforce. Companies must respond by incorporating NextGen work models including contract, part-time, and temporary work to attract and retain the best skills - because 87% of workers are looking for this type of flexibility.

4. Know the capabilities of your people

Organisations need to use assessment, clean data and predictive performance to deploy talent in the most effective way and avoid creating skills silos.

5. Tailor training

Companies must replace sheep-dip approaches to training with focused strategies and guidance to develop critical, in-demand skills for their workforce. The introduction of machines into the workforce ups the need for more critical skills from the humans in that organisation – and this needs to remain a focus.

6. Bet on soft skills

Organisations should fine-tune talent strategies to account for the fact that soft skills are often harder to develop than hard or technical skills. The good news is that soft skills can be grown and nurtured, and ensuring this happens should be a focus not only for those in management but their employees and team members too.

7. Enable humans to augment technology

Organisations must continuously assess and re-evaluate the skills they need to ensure their human talent complements automation. In the Skills Revolution, this is how people will augment robots rather than be replaced by them.

As digitalisation and automation become business as usual, HR departments need to evolve. With record talent shortages around the world and employers planning to automate tasks and create new jobs, it's no longer a question of simply finding talent: they need to build it. A dynamic talent strategy will fuel future growth by employing the right combination of building, buying, borrowing and bridging talent. Developing skills that are core to the business is how

companies will develop organisational agility and workforce resilience for the future.

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