



10 Critical Skills Future Workers need Today

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(Source: *University of Phoenix Research Institute Future Skills report*)

I've always been a fan of multidisciplinary skills upgrade—learning that draws from a range of disciplines to create a wholesome package of knowledge that can be applied instantly in plentiful ways. For example, a combo of business, technology and entrepreneurship from the engineering department of the University of Waterloo, Canada, that has served me up a decade of value in my communications consultancy career. Yeah, cool, right?

And now in April 2020, with *C* forcefully freeing up more reading time for me, I've landed on a pretty report (Yes, written back then in 2011.) that seems to be almost prophetic for this season. This report, written by the *Institute for the Future for the University of Phoenix Research Institute* is a literal art piece for forward thinkers; I hope someone was taking notes then.

As unemployment surges and underemployment becomes a real basis for slicing remuneration, the workers of the future (which is already here) will have to repackage themselves as multi-faceted value-additions that serve a higher purpose than robots (that can now be programmed to automate tasks and do them without smirking or asking for a day off).

So here is my summary of the top ten required skills and it isn't your usual run-of-the-mill.

1. **Sense making:** Individuals and groups that exercise higher level thinking and extract key insights from information
2. **Novel and adaptive thinking:** Being able to adapt problem solving skills to the context and situation, not fixated on one shoe fits all

3. **Social intelligence:** Ability to build connections with others outside of their inner circle to accumulate important information and stimulate required actions
4. **Transdisciplinarity:** They call it being T-shaped, going deep in one discipline, but having some knowledge of other disciplines to be able to make better informed decisions.
5. **New media literacy:** The age of solely writing is over. Workers who can present information in multiple formats using media like podcasts, blogs, vlogs, infographics, will have super-value as consumers now require creative and more interesting packaging to keep them glued down to your content.
6. **Cognitive Load Management:** The ability to filter the gold out of massive amounts of information, misinformation and disinformation. Maybe we all have to practice mental model-thinking, which is what I've been ruminating on since e-meeting Michael Simmons. If used well, mental models can help you quickly ditch the dirt and scoop the silver.
7. **Design Mindset:** And then there is the whole idea of individuals who are very aware about how design affects output whether it's a workspace or a worksheet; they combine elements together very well to cause the desired reaction.
8. **Cross cultural competency:** Although diversity has been a catch-phrase for decades now, it's no longer about being politically correct more than it is about being productivity-focused. Surprise surprise! research has shown that workplaces with diverse thinkers who are able to appreciate other cultural settings (rather than cookie-cut rank) produce better results in terms of innovation and service delivery.
9. **Virtual collaboration:** We have seen more online collaboration in 2020 than we shall probably see for the rest of the decade. Social distancing and bans on movement worldwide have catapulted us to the virtual-sphere and expanded the geographic scope of our collaboration. And this is good –we can actually have short productive meetings that get to the point so we can get on with the work. So, get geared up to master the tools of online collaboration.
10. **Computational thinking:** I was exceedingly average when it came to computation back in high school, but accounting in Waterloo geared me up for analysis and appreciation of what the numbers mean for business. Statistical analysis will be required for future workers; it's all in the numbers.

The very good news though, is that all of these skills are quickly learnable with little harm to your purse and immediately applicable if you choose to think as a life-long learner.

I have a feeling organizations will experience heightened productivity if they drop boxed like thinking of single-disciplinary workers and evolve their interview processes to include these skills that sooner, rather than later, will cause the single-skewed worker to become obsolete. (*Opinion entirely mine.*)

The full report from the University of Phoenix Research Institute Future Skills can be downloaded at http://www.iftf.org/uploads/media/SR-1382A_UPRI_future_work_skills_sm.pdf