

Reshaping Human and Social Skills for the Digital Era

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voice for business

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Introduction

In the rapidly evolving digital landscape, the significance of digital competencies cannot be overstated. However, possessing digital skills alone is not a guarantee of comprehensive success in today's world. To truly thrive in this era, it is imperative to complement digital proficiency with robust human and social skills. Recent findings such as those from the *Global Talent Trends 2022-2023*¹ report by Mercer underscore this imperative. The report sheds light on organisations that are at the forefront of reshaping the nature of work, emphasising the importance of several key aspects including relevance, partnership, well-being, employability, and collective energy.

In a world marked by sociopolitical and economic uncertainties, these priorities emerge as essential not only for organisations but also for individuals seeking to prosper in this challenging environment. The report further accentuates the significance of adopting a skills-based talent model and an agile work design to shape the future workforce effectively. It highlights the pivotal role that organisations must play in promoting lifelong learning and expanding work opportunities, thereby addressing the substantial gap between the demand for skills and the available workforce. This approach becomes instrumental in creating pathways to prosperity for individuals from diverse backgrounds and across generations.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the transformation of business models, work methodologies, and technological advancements. Consequently, the emphasis has grown on reimagining work structures, prioritising the human experience, and fostering optimistic and energised workplace environments. Companies find themselves in a unique position to harness this energy and drive transformative change as they adapt to the demands of a new era of work.

These insights align seamlessly with observations from the 2020 *Future Skills Assessment* conducted by IOE and Deloitte. It underlines a consistent trend in the evolving job market—a steadfast focus on striking a balance between digital skills and essential human and social competencies to navigate the complexities of today's work environment effectively.

Moreover, the International Labour Organization (ILO), in recognition of the growing importance of human and social skills, together with its constituents, acknowledges the need for a comprehensive skill set in today's competitive labour market and businesses. In alignment with this perspective, the ILO has initiated since 2018 a new learning program designed to assist companies in seamlessly integrating soft skills into their human resource development programs². This initiative reflects a proactive stance in equipping the workforce with the multifaceted abilities demanded by the modern workplace, further underlining the significance of human and social skills in achieving professional success.

¹ Global Talent Trends 2022-2023 (mercer.com)

² Going beyond technical skills: Soft skills matter in the workplace (ilo.org)

Social skills in the evolving digital workplace

In the rapidly evolving landscape of the modern workplace, marked by technological breakthroughs and digital transformations, the significance of human and social skills has become more pronounced than ever. These skills, encompassing areas such as communication, leadership, innovation, and emotional intelligence, are no longer just beneficial but imperative for thriving in today's and tomorrow's work environments. As we delve into the complexities of how these skills interact with and augment technological advancements, it becomes clear that they are the cornerstone for not only personal success but also for the cohesive and efficient functioning of teams and organisations. This exploration sheds light on the increasing importance of human and social skills in an era where technology is reshaping every aspect of work, challenging traditional roles, and creating new paradigms for interaction, creativity, and productivity in the workplace.

Human and social skills in today's workplace

The modern workplace necessitates a broad spectrum of human and social skills crucial for success in individual, team, and organisational dynamics. These skills, such as effective communication, time management, collaboration, innovation, problem-solving, leadership, emotional intelligence, and stress management, are not only universally applicable across various fields but also essential for enhancing workplace productivity, performance, job satisfaction, and team well-being. Their importance is heightened in the context of the evolving digital environment, where they complement the technical skills required to navigate advanced automation, virtual, and AI-based among other types of technologies.

The interplay of human skills and technology

The interplay between human skills and technology, as outlined in a Randstad report³, showcases the evolving digital job market's impact on labour. It emphasises the increasing demand for digital skills in roles such as data engineers and software developers, highlighting the continuous digital transformation across various sectors. Despite this surge in digital skill requirements, the report underlines the enduring importance of social cohesion, problem-solving, and interpersonal communication. These human-centric skills are essential for effectively navigating the challenges and opportunities presented by AI and automation, reinforcing the need for a balanced development of technical and social competencies for optimal productivity and innovation.

Rethinking social skills in a tech-enhanced workplace

The Evolving Digital Workplace: The modern workplace is undergoing significant social and digital transformations driven by rapid technological adoption and the need for business agility. This transformation, characterised by Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity and Hyperconnectivity (VUCAH), has led to a heightened focus on employee experience and well-being. Consequently, workplace transformation initiatives are increasingly centred around embracing digital technology, enhancing agility, and improving employee experiences. This shift requires organisations to balance social and technical aspects in creating new working methods, redesigning work, and redefining the nature of human and social skills needed to adapt to these changes.

³ Insights.pdf (randstad.com)

The importance of employee-centric approaches

In a survey conducted by PwC on Digital Day in 2018, over 1000 respondents revealed that in the future workplace, employees most require self-determination and more space for creativity. This mutable environment of digitalisation demands a focus on the human aspect of work, emphasising meaningful and socially accepted occupations with impact.

Technology's role in promoting creativity

The positive reception of digitalisation aligns with the desire for creativity and empowerment in the workplace. New technologies, including Artificial Intelligence and robots, are welcomed as “workmates” if they fulfil expectations of simplifying work tasks, increasing efficiency, offering innovative potential, and facilitating access to information. However, risks associated with digitalisation, such as data security concerns, lack of social interaction, and potential job loss, are also acknowledged. In this context, the key attributes for succeeding in today's and tomorrow's workplace are openness, curiosity, flexibility, and teamwork skills. Radical new ways of thinking, along with basic technical skills like coding, are becoming increasingly important. Support from the education system, employers, and the government in the form of further training, infrastructure, and appropriate frameworks is necessary to develop these skills.

New ways of working in the digital workplace

The Revolution in Working Environments: The adoption of digital technologies is revolutionising employees' working environments. This revolution is evident in the increasing reliance on digital technology for tasks, processes, functions, and relationships. Traditional social skills, developed based on physical presence and direct communication, are being challenged by the increasing virtualisation and digitalisation of the workplace, necessitating the development of new social skills aligned with the demands of highly digitalised workplaces.

Adapting to mediated social relations

As work modes evolve (remote, mobile, hybrid, virtual teams), the reliance on ICT for maintaining social relations and engagement at work is increasing. Workers must acquire the ability to effectively manage relationships facilitated by digital means. These skills are crucial for promoting collaboration, strengthening team bonds, and ensuring effective communication in a work environment heavily influenced by digital technologies.

8 necessary socio-digital skills for today's digital workplace and how to develop them

Socio-digital skills represent an amalgamation of human, social, and organisational competencies essential for fostering efficient and effective workplace relationships, particularly in environments heavily influenced by advanced digital technologies. These skills are pivotal in enabling employees to excel, remain engaged, and maintain well-being amid the growing digitalisation of work settings. Mastery of socio-digital skills allows individuals to fully harness the advantages of digital technologies, while mitigating potential drawbacks.

Crucially, these skills are instrumental in adapting to the digital era, facilitating effective communication, collaboration, and decision-making within the dynamic and interconnected nature of contemporary workplaces. As the digital transformation relentlessly alters work dynamics, the importance of socio-digital skills in ensuring both individual and organisational success becomes increasingly paramount.



Multigenerational and inclusive skills

Multigenerational and Inclusive Skills are essential competencies for effective collaboration in a multifaceted, age-diverse workplace. These skills include understanding, respecting, and valuing the perspectives and experiences of different age groups, recognising each generation's unique strengths and challenges, promoting effective communication, and

⁴ The Deloitte Global 2023 Gen Z and Millennial Survey

fostering an inclusive environment where all employees feel valued. Deloitte's Global 2023 Gen Z and Millennial Survey⁴, which involved over 22,000 Gen Z and millennial participants across 44 countries, underscores the importance of these skills. It highlights their value-driven approach to lifestyle and career choices, stressing the need for inclusive practices to attract and retain younger talent. Additionally, the survey reveals that 77% of Gen Z and 75% of Millennials would consider leaving their current job if it required them to work full-time in the office, indicating a preference for flexible and inclusive work environments. To develop these skills, organisations can implement strategies such as IT Boot Camps for enhancing digital skills, dedicated IT Days, mentorship programs for cross-generational skill sharing, workshops on emerging technologies, tailored digital literacy courses, team-building activities, role-playing and simulations for empathy building, online learning platforms for continuous education, interactive seminars on diversity and multigenerational management, and regular feedback sessions to adapt to employee learning needs. These initiatives help bridge generational divides, cultivate a culture of continuous learning, and ensure an inclusive, collaborative work environment.

Data skills in the modern workplace

Data Skills in the Modern Workplace are not confined to technical capabilities in data collection and analysis; they also critically involve social skills for deciphering and conveying insights from intricate data. These skills, encompassing narrative techniques, storytelling, visualisation, and presentation, bridge the divide between data science teams and other organisational sectors. They transform complex data into understandable and relatable insights, making them vital for today's data-driven decision-making processes. Deloitte Insights underscores⁵ the challenge of increasing workforce data skills, a concern for 95% of federal Chief Data Officers surveyed. They emphasise the need for data literacy across all levels and functions of organisations, noting that all roles require data fluency to make informed decisions.

To develop these essential data skills, training in various areas is key. Data storytelling training focuses on simplifying complex analytics for a wider audience. Enhancing data presentation skills is crucial for effective communication of data-driven conclusions, aiding in informed decision-making. Learning to create context-sensitive visualisations helps in quickly conveying information and trends. Developing explanation and persuasion skills enables individuals to articulate complex data in terms that resonate with diverse stakeholders, ensuring a cohesive interpretation. These development strategies collectively strengthen communication skills, essential for effectively conveying data insights to varied audiences, simplifying complex concepts, and tailoring communications to meet the specific needs of different groups.

AI and conversational AI skills development

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) becomes increasingly omnipresent and continues to grow rapidly across various sectors, the integration of AI and Conversational AI, like ChatGPT, demands a unique blend of technical and socio-digital skills. A Salesforce survey highlighted that 62% of workers in Australia, the U.K., and the U.S. feel they lack the skills to effectively and safely use Generative AI (GenAI). Furthermore, 70% of business leaders do not believe their teams have the skills to safely and effectively use GenAI⁶. In the U.S. as an example, workers predominantly use GenAI for tasks like writing content, analysing data, and customer support. However, a significant skills gap persists, with 49% of workers acknowledging the need for AI tool training, yet only 14% having received any instruction⁷. Skills around data and machine learning are

⁵ Bringing data fluency to life | Deloitte Insights

⁶ AI Is Changing the Skills Employers Want from Workers (shrm.org)

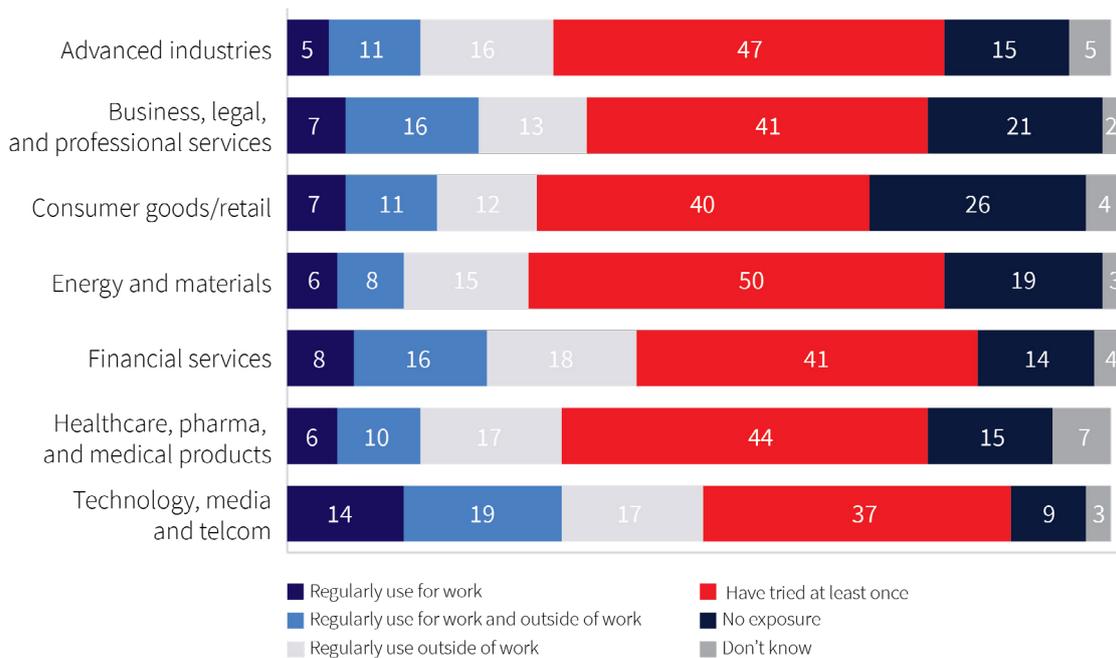
⁷ AI Is Changing the Skills Employers Want from Workers (shrm.org)

increasingly valued, with a focus on controlling AI systems, often in natural language, as seen with technologies like ChatGPT. Ensuring these systems perform as expected is becoming a crucial skill.

To address these gaps, foundational training on AI models and their applications is vital. This training can help employees understand which AI tools or models are most suitable for their job functions or workflows. Employers play a crucial role in this skill development by establishing responsible AI use policies and providing comprehensive training. This includes AI fundamentals, ethics, security, effective communication, and critical thinking. Workshops on AI ethics and simulation exercises can provide hands-on experience with AI tools, and enhance problem-solving capabilities. Training in communication and critical thinking is essential for interpreting and conveying AI insights effectively. Additionally, workshops on adaptability and resilience prepare employees for the evolving nature of work in an AI-driven environment.

Respondents across regions, industries, and seniority levels say they are already using generative AI tools.

Reported exposure to generative AI tools, % of respondents



Note: Figures may not sum to 100%, because of rounding. In Asia-Pacific, n = 164; in Europe, n = 515; in North America, n = 392; in Greater China (includes Hong Kong and Taiwan), n = 337; and in developing markets (includes India, Latin America, and Middle East and North Africa), n = 276. For advanced industries (includes automotive and assembly, aerospace and defense, and advanced electronics), n = 96; for business, legal, and professional services, n = 215; for consumer goods and retail, n = 128; for energy and materials, n = 96; for financial services, n = 248; for healthcare, pharma, and medical products, n = 130; and for technology, media, and telecom, n = 244. For C-suite respondents, n = 541; for senior managers, n = 437; and for middle managers, n = 339. For respondents born in 1964 or earlier, n = 143; for respondents born between 1965 and 1980, n = 268; and for respondents born between 1981 and 1996, n = 80. Age details were not available for all respondents. For respondents identifying as men, n = 1,025; for respondents identifying as women, n = 156. The survey sample also included respondents who identified as “nonbinary” or “other” but not a large enough number to be statistically meaningful. Source: McKinsey Global Survey on AI, 1,684 participants at all levels of the organization, April 11–21, 2023

Experimentation skills

Experimentation skills are crucial in fostering a culture of exploration, discovery, and learning within organisations. These skills enable individuals to try new approaches, learn from failures, and continuously test and refine ideas. As highlighted by Elbanna & Murray (2009)⁸, developing these skills requires an open-minded approach and a supportive work environment where failure is seen as a natural and valuable part of the learning process. This culture of experimentation encourages reflection and feedback, which are key to learning from experiences and adjusting approaches.

To effectively develop experimentation skills, organisations should encourage habitual experimentation as a standard mode of thinking. Employees should be motivated to question the status quo, share ideas, and experiment with different methods. Cultivating an open-minded orientation is also essential; this involves creating a culture that welcomes new ideas, fosters a sense of discovery, and tolerates failures, treating them as growth opportunities rather than setbacks. Furthermore, embracing agility and enabling teams to make autonomous decisions can expedite the learning process. Integrating experimentation into regular feedback and assessment processes helps in celebrating curiosity and innovation. Creating spaces like innovation groups, solution circles, and creativity rooms can also encourage collaborative experimentation in a more informal and creative environment.

Hybrid/remote/mobile working skills

In today's dynamic work environment, the surge in hybrid, remote, and mobile working paradigms is reshaping the requisite skills for employees and managers. This transformation, as detailed in a 2021 McKinsey & Company report⁹, highlights the need for adeptness in managing both virtual and physical work environments, maintaining a balanced work-life integration, and acquiring new socio-digital skills, especially crucial for managers in charge of geographically dispersed teams. The transition to virtual spaces, primarily one-directional in interaction, presents unique challenges, particularly for younger workers. They often encounter difficulties in effective online socialising, deciphering non-verbal communication cues, and comprehending intricate workplace dynamics and culture. To navigate these challenges, a multi-faceted approach to skill development is vital.

Firstly, enhancing virtual influence and digital leadership skills is paramount. This involves cultivating an impactful virtual presence and the ability to build and maintain connections across diverse communication platforms. Secondly, developing the capacity to balance and blend various work modes is critical. This includes integrating strategies for self-care to safeguard mental health and wellbeing in a shifting work landscape. Thirdly, honing skills for seamless transition between physical and virtual environments and mastering effective time management strategies are essential to thrive in hybrid work settings. Moreover, the implementation of clear communication policies and guidelines is essential. These policies should encompass directives on the optimal use of communication technology, protocols for virtual meetings, and setting clear expectations for response times, appropriate language, and tone in digital communications. Such guidelines are crucial in establishing a framework for professional and effective interaction in a digital context.

By focusing on these development areas, organisations can facilitate the integration of newcomers into the workforce, ensuring their productivity and wellbeing in a rapidly evolving, hybrid work world. This comprehensive skill enhancement not only benefits individual

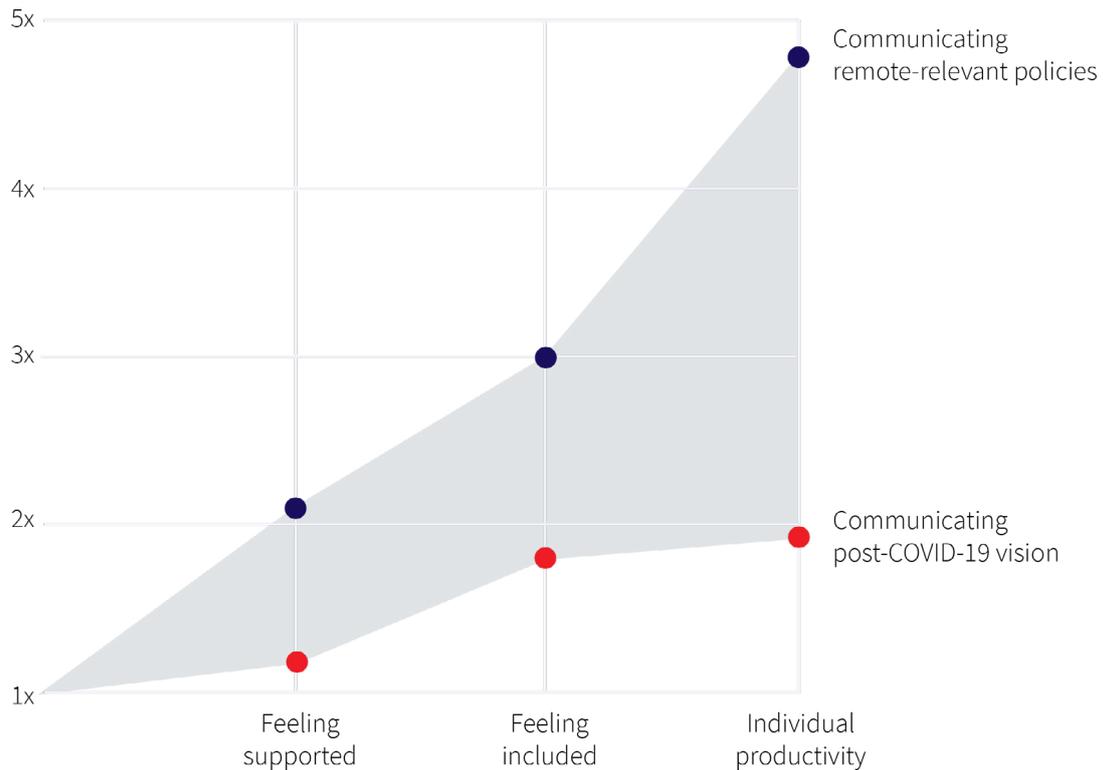
⁸ Elbanna, A.R. & Murray, D., 2009. Organizing IS projects for innovation: A collective mindfulness perspective. In: Americas Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS 2009), San Francisco.

⁹ The postpandemic future of work: Hybrid, remote, and what's ahead (mckinsey.com)

employees but also contributes to the overall adaptability and resilience of organisations in the face of changing work dynamics.

Organizations with clearer communication are seeing benefits to employee well-being and productivity.

Importance of communicating vision and policies on productivity, support, and inclusion, impact multiples



Note: All analyses conducted while controlling for all other predictors, region, industry, company size, job level, age, gender, and parental status (n = 4,854-5,043).
 Source: Reimagine Work: Employee Survey (Dec 2020-Jan 2021, n = 5,043 full-time employees who work in corporate or government settings)

McKinsey & Company

Diversity and inclusion skills

Diversity and inclusion skills are vital in the modern workplace. According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), these skills involve recognising and valuing differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, and religion. They also encompass effective communication across diverse cultures and building relationships based on mutual respect and understanding. In the workplace, these skills foster a positive and inclusive environment, promoting productivity, creativity, and innovation. A diverse and inclusive workplace culture attracts and retains talent, improves employee morale, and contributes to overall business success. To develop these skills, SHRM suggests strategies¹⁰ such as continuous learning, empathy, active engagement with diverse groups, and participation in training and awareness programs.

Adaptation skills

Developing adaptation skills in today's fast-evolving digital environment is crucial across all organisational levels. These skills involve reevaluating assumptions, embracing innovation, and adapting to new situations, especially in leveraging technology. They consist of cognitive flexibility, social adaptability, and behavioural agility, allowing for both proactive and reactive responses in the workplace. Enhancing these skills involves training in critical thinking, active listening, leadership, and communication. Additionally, adopting agile methodologies, as emphasised in the research by Elbanna & Murray (2009)¹¹ and Elbanna & Sarker (2016)¹², is beneficial. These methodologies promote lean decision-making, psychological safety, and autonomy, fostering a work culture that's adaptable and resilient. To further develop these skills, it's important to engage in continuous learning, seek diverse experiences, and practice flexibility in different contexts. Regular feedback and reflection also play a vital role in honing these abilities, helping individuals and teams adjust their approach and strategies to meet the demands of a changing workplace.

¹⁰ Tips for Improving Workplace Inclusion (shrm.org)

¹¹ Elbanna, A.R. & Murray, D., 2009. Organizing IS projects for innovation: A collective mindfulness perspective. In: Americas Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS 2009), San Francisco.

¹² Elbanna, A. & Sarker, S. (2016) Risks of Agile Software Development: Learning from Adopters IEEE Software, 33(5), 72-79.

How can employers support and develop socio-digital upskilling of their workforce?

Clear communication policies for the digital workplace

Establishing clear policies and guidelines for communication through technology is vital. These policies should delineate the usage of modern office tools across different work environments, including hybrid, remote, and mobile settings, and set norms for social conduct in virtual spaces. Employers should set clear expectations on the use of communication technologies, such as email, instant messaging, and video conferencing. This includes guidelines on response times, language and tone, and work communication clarity. Advice on virtual meeting etiquette, like microphone discipline and active listening, is also essential.

Boosting productivity through socio-digital upskilling

Studies underscore the benefits of prioritising socio-digital upskilling. McKinsey¹³ reports that organisations actively embracing digital upskilling and reskilling witness a 20% boost in productivity and a 50% reduction in employee turnover. Furthermore, LinkedIn research indicates that 80% of professionals recognise the growing importance of human and social skills, like communication and leadership, in the digital era. Providing training in social skills, including communication, conflict resolution, leadership, and empathy, is beneficial. These skills improve interpersonal relationship management, conflict resolution, and team leadership, thereby enhancing the use of digital tools.

Managing technostress: employee well-being in a digital world

Technostress, the stress caused by rapid technological changes, can overwhelm employees, impacting their well-being and productivity. It arises from constant connectivity, information overload, and the blurring of work-life boundaries. Addressing technostress is crucial for a healthy work environment. Raising awareness about technostress and supporting employees in managing stress related to technology can be beneficial. This might include offering training on mindfulness and stress management, providing counselling services, and introducing time management techniques such as the Pomodoro method, which involves focused work sessions followed by breaks. Ensuring resources for a balanced work-life, through flexible work schedules and wellness programs, can also play a significant role in mitigating technostress.

Empowering socio-digital skills through innovative learning technology.

Leveraging technology to build socio-digital skills is an effective strategy. Tools like video, simulations, asynchronous talks, and interactive chatbots offer dynamic learning experiences, fostering two-way communication and flexible learning opportunities. Employers can use simulations for practical problem-solving and decision-making practice, chatbots for on-demand support and guidance, and videos and presentations for accessible expert knowledge. This approach to learning enhances employee skills in real-world contexts.

¹³ <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/the-case-for-digital-upskilling>

How can government support socio-digital upskilling of future workforce?

In the realm of workforce development, the role of governments assumes paramount significance, particularly in the context of preparing individuals for success within an increasingly dynamic and digitalised world. To substantiate this assertion, we shall delve into a comprehensive exploration of various exemplary global initiatives and credible references. These noteworthy exemplars not only underscore the significance of government intervention but also illuminate the pathways that can lead to a more adaptive and resilient workforce in an era characterised by constant technological evolution.

Skills enhancement initiatives

The pivotal role of governments in nurturing adaptable workforces is vividly demonstrated by a multitude of global initiatives and credible references. A prime example is the *SkillsFuture* program¹⁴, which illustrates how governments worldwide are actively encouraging individuals to assume responsibility for their learning and development in order to align their skills with the dynamic demands of the digital era. Initiatives like *SkillsFuture* offer a diverse array of training opportunities, ranging from internships and apprenticeships to subsidised courses in cutting-edge fields such as coding, data analytics, and digital marketing. These multifaceted programs cater to a broad spectrum of learning preferences, ensuring accessibility for individuals from diverse backgrounds and circumstances.

One distinctive feature of such initiatives is the provision of financial incentives, exemplified by the allocation of skills credits. For instance, in the case of the *SkillsFuture* program, Singaporean citizens aged 25 and above receive SGD 500 (USD 375) in credits, empowering them to take control of their learning journeys and access education and training opportunities that would otherwise be out of reach.

Educator-industry coordination

In the realm of renewable energy, educational institutions are forging vital partnerships with clean energy companies to cultivate specialised training programs and foster impactful research collaborations. A striking illustration of this synergy can be found in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) collaboration with industry giants like Tesla and SolarCity, facilitated through the MIT Energy Initiative.¹⁵ This initiative serves as a dynamic bridge between educators and industry leaders, facilitating:

Research Projects: MIT conducts cutting-edge research projects in collaboration with industry partners. These projects address pressing challenges in the renewable energy sector, from enhancing solar panel efficiency to refining energy storage solutions.

Joint Ventures: MIT and its industry counterparts engage in cooperative ventures, pooling resources and expertise to develop innovative clean energy technologies.

Student Internships: MIT students benefit greatly from internships and cooperative programs offered through this collaboration. They gain practical industry experience, contributing to ongoing projects and acquiring industry-specific skills.

¹⁴ <https://www.skillsfuture.gov.sg/initiatives/mid-career/credit>

¹⁵ MIT Energy Initiative

Such partnerships not only enrich the learning experience but also equip students with the practical skills needed in the clean energy workforce. Furthermore, these collaborations accelerate the development of renewable energy solutions, aiding the global shift toward sustainability and climate mitigation.

Educator exchange and collaboration programs

Educator exchange and collaboration programs are pivotal in enhancing workforce adaptability, with governments playing a crucial role in their support. These initiatives offer educators invaluable opportunities to engage with real-world workplace settings, providing firsthand insights into the skills and knowledge currently in high demand. For instance, the United States Department of Education (ED) champions initiatives like the Teacher Quality Partnership Program (TQP)¹⁶ of the U.S. Department of Education. TQP facilitates partnerships between institutions of higher education and high-need school districts, allowing educators to participate in clinical experiences within K-12 schools. This practical exposure equips educators with a deep understanding of the skills required for modern workplaces, extending beyond conventional classroom teachings.

The benefits extend to both educators and students. Educators gain the ability to adapt their teaching methods to align with industry requirements, ensuring that students are well-prepared for the evolving job market, especially in the digital era where workforce demands are continually shifting.

Furthermore, educator exchange programs and open forums serve as bridges that connect educators with industry experts and professionals, promoting knowledge sharing and collaboration. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has actively advocated for such partnerships, emphasising their role in enhancing education systems globally¹⁷. This connectivity creates a dynamic environment for educators to gain fresh perspectives and industry-relevant insights, which they can then integrate into their classrooms, enriching the educational experience for their students.

Industry engagement in education

Governments have undeniably and increasingly recognised the importance of industry engagement in education. Through official statements, policy documents, and concrete actions, it is evident that governments worldwide have acknowledged the significance of forging partnerships between educational institutions and industries.

For example, the National Program for Advanced Skills (NPAS)¹⁸ in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) stands as a compelling illustration of a government-backed initiative that exemplifies industry participation in education. This program showcases the commitment of the UAE government to bridge the gap between academia and industry.

In addition to policy and initiatives, statistical data reveals the growing emphasis on this trend. Budget allocations and resource allocations dedicated to educational-industry collaborations have seen notable increases. These financial commitments underscore the importance governments place on preparing students with skills aligned with industry demands. Moreover, government officials and leaders have repeatedly emphasised the necessity of such partnerships. Their statements highlight the government's recognition of the pivotal role that industry engagement plays in shaping a skilled and adaptable workforce.

¹⁶ <https://aacte.org/federal-policy-and-legislation/teacher-quality-partnership-grants/>

¹⁷ PISA - PISA (oecd.org)

¹⁸ National Program for Advanced Skills | The Official Portal of the UAE Government

Conclusion

Encouraging the development of socio-digital skills in the ever-evolving world of work is a multifaceted endeavour that necessitates a collaborative approach involving various stakeholders, including governments, employers, educational institutions, and individuals. The role of fostering socio-digital skills transcends mere advocacy; it entails active cooperation, shared responsibilities, and a collective commitment to shaping a future-ready workforce.

Governments, with their overarching role in policymaking and regulatory frameworks, have a pivotal responsibility in creating an enabling environment for workforce development. They can introduce initiatives that promote socio-digital upskilling, offer incentives for businesses to invest in employee training, and facilitate partnerships between educational institutions and industries. Furthermore, governments can play a significant role in advocating for the importance of socio-digital skills at a national and international level, emphasising their essential role in economic growth, innovation, and social progress.

In today's dynamic work environment, employers play a crucial role in nurturing a culture of continuous learning, especially in socio-digital skills. Recognising that these skills evolve, organisations should invest in technology-driven training, promote diversity and inclusivity, and offer chances for employees to grow their socio-digital capabilities. It's also vital for businesses to update their hiring and retention practices to attract and keep talent adept in these essential skills, ensuring they stay competitive in the digital era.

Educational institutions are integral participants in this cooperative ecosystem. They must adapt their curricula to align with the dynamic demands of the digital era, integrating socio-digital skills into their educational programs. This adaptation involves not only technical proficiency but also the development of essential human and social competencies. Educational institutions can establish partnerships with industries to offer practical training and ensure that graduates are equipped with the skills required by the job market.

Individuals, too, play a pivotal part in this collective endeavour. They are not passive recipients but active participants in their own upskilling journey. Individuals should take ownership of their learning, seek opportunities for self-improvement, and engage in lifelong learning. This proactive approach is essential for personal and professional growth, enabling individuals to adapt to the ever-changing work landscape.

In essence, fostering socio-digital skills is a collaborative symphony, where each stakeholder contributes its unique melody to create a harmonious future of work. It is through this shared responsibility, commitment, and cooperation that we can build a more prosperous, adaptable, and resilient workforce, ready to thrive in the digital age and beyond.



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voice for business

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