

# Work and Career in the Digital Age

- An orientation guide for customers and consultants -  
(Whitepaper)

Andreas Duffner, August 2016

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The fifth in a series of reports on relevant business areas in the digital age, the information intends to point to essential topics for enterprises exploring their digital transformation.

All previous articles are available on d-transform's [website](#).

## Abstract

Driven by demographic, socio-economic, and technological drivers our work and working environment is affected by rapid changes. "Knowledge" becomes much more important and determines the survival of companies. "Knowledge workers" are motivated by intrinsic values and independency more than money. New hard and soft skills and job categories are required for the journey into the digital age.

## What will the future of work look like?

The Information Age led the world into a significant change of working models. Demographic and socio-economic drivers and technology pushed us into globalization, fast economic growth, virtualization, new (and disruptive) business models, and new working models (e.g. crowdsourcing). The result: Work has taken on a completely new appearance and meaning.

The pace of change will exponentially increase accompanied by unpredictability. Sixty-five percent of children entering primary school today will work in completely new job types that don't yet exist. Whilst many jobs will be lost to disruptive labor market changes (many in manufacturing, production, office and administrative roles), there will be gains in architecture, computer, engineering, and mathematically related fields.

Data analysts, -engineers, and -stewards and specialized sales representatives will be among the winners across all geographies and industries. Industries such as consumer, entertainment and information, energy, media and professional services will benefit. (*The future of jobs, WEF January 2016*).



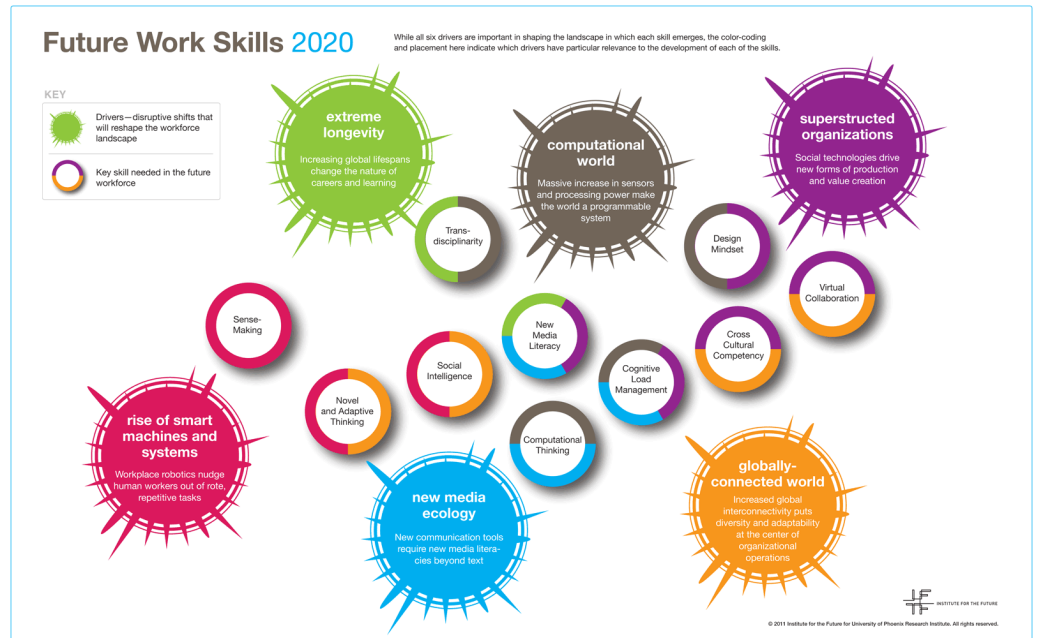
*"... in the future, talent,  
more than capital, will represent  
the critical factor of production."*

K. Schwab, founder of WEF, at his keynote, WEF Davos 2016

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**Future work skills** will be driven by computing, globalization, robotics, sensors, social technologies, and a new media ecology. The data source I refer to shows many new “soft skills”: sense making, social intelligence, cross cultural competency, novel and adaptive thinking, and trans-disciplinarity. With the rapid change and broader use of digital technology, soft skills will be more important in the future – and that’s good!

Exhibit 1: The Future Work Skills 2020 (*Institute for the Future for University of Phoenix*)



## The knowledge workers – at the tip of the digital evolution

**Peter Drucker (1909-2005)** predicted “the most valuable asset of a 21<sup>st</sup> century institution will be its **knowledge workers** and their productivity.” Information would drive the major changes, knowledge becoming a resource without limits; the biggest profession will be the knowledge workers.



“... knowledge workers are the pulsating heart of the knowledge society!”

*11 worker categories of the future; Christiane Pütter*



Knowledge workers are autonomous people. They love their independence, striving for self-determination and hating a dominating and directing work culture. Professional expertise is their top asset, and as they search for creative-cognitive challenges, they are intermediaries between science and economy.

Intrinsic values are more important than money. Common knowledge worker groups are academics, architects, consultants, engineers, lawyers, physicians, public accountants, scientists and software engineers.

In the digital age there are other new worker categories such as “digital Bohemians,” new specialists/”nomads”, and creative downshifters with high expectations for work/life balance. These categories primarily have flexibility and self-determination in common, and are increasingly self-employed.

What does this mean for companies? How can employers adjust as the values described above become more important?

Here are a few recommendations for action:

- **Promote open space** – Establish powerful and changing teams instead of functional organizations in a colorful, diverse working environment. Allow team members to participate in several projects, based on their expert role and not on their organizational status;
- **Provide orientation instead of direction** – Employees are motivated to achieve challenging targets. But they need to understand ‘the Why, What, and How.’ It’s about the right communication;
- **Creativity and diversity** – Onboard new, “crazy” team members, ideally from other industries. Look for synergies, avoid silos;
- **Delegation and trust** – Delegate decision power to experts (e.g. data analysts). Managerial involvement should be the exception.

What are the expectations of our **younger generations**? Initiated by Bertelsmann Stiftung in 2014, trainees were asked what they expect regarding their future work and working environment.

Their *worries* include job security, qualification, burnout, unfair distribution of wealth, and being replaced by robots.

Their *hopes* related to flexibility (changing jobs, roles and location), variety (esp. when looking for new opportunities), active involvement, participation, empowerment, and sharing knowledge ...



... making collective use of the “Cloud of Ideas.”

Finally, personal communication and relations – team work – were rated very high. This gives me a good feeling and some optimism that we are still aware of the importance of humanity, even in the digital age!



Q.: How does our ‘Generation Y’  
view the future of work?

A.: It has to concern me directly!

Study of Bertelsmann Stiftung 2014.  
Meine Arbeitswelt 2025

### About the author

As a management and business consultant and business coach, Andreas Duffner has been working closely with global companies since more than 25 years. His core expertise is customer relationship management, business transformation, management of multi-cultural teams, digitization as well as leadership and team coaching. He was founder of two start-up companies. Andreas Duffner was instrumental in building SAP's global Business Transformation Services practices; in the course of this he built the practices in Asia, Pacific and Japan (SAP Asia, Singapore. 2008 - 2010).

### The journey to the 'Digital Pavilion'

Visit d-transform's website [www.d-transform.com](http://www.d-transform.com) and watch the video about the journey to the digital pavilion:



### Imprint:

#### **d-transform**

Andreas Duffner

Roonstrasse 14

64625 Bensheim

Germany

+49 175 2681756

[info@d-transform.com](mailto:info@d-transform.com)