

This insight into the future of jobs should not be wasted

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Imagine if, at the beginning of the industrial revolution, you were given an insight into the incredible economic and workforce transformation that was about to come.

Imagine you had global data foreshadowing the upheaval and change that was about to occur, across almost all industries, and the implications for jobs, skills and workforces around the world.

Of course, no one had that kind of insight in the early 1800s. In contrast, when it comes to the great technological and green transformations of our age, we have much more rich foresight, and we should make good use of it.

The World Economic Forum's recently released [Future of Jobs](#) report brings together the perspectives of 803 companies, collectively employing more than 11.3 million workers, across 27 industry clusters in 45 economies around the world.

This significant international survey paints a picture of enormous jobs and skills churn across the coming years, predicting that 23 per cent of jobs are expected to

change by 2027, with 69 million new jobs created and 83 million eliminated.

Two key forces – advances in technology and the transition to a cleaner/greener economy – are expected to drive major change in jobs and skills on a global scale across the next five years.

There is a story of strong growth, with the report finding that the green transition and localisation of supply chains will lead to net job gains around the world. The Australian results bear this out even more strongly.

Likewise, the impact of new technology on the workforce will also be momentous but with more mixed results for workers.

Adoption of technology and increased digital access will overall be net positive for jobs, but growth will also be offset by significant losses.

It's probably not a big surprise that the jobs predicted to grow the fastest are artificial intelligence and machine learning specialists, sustainability specialists, business intelligence analysts and information security specialists.

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The largest absolute growth in jobs is expected in education, agriculture and digital commerce. The biggest losses will be felt in clerical roles such as bank tellers, cashiers and data entry clerks vulnerable to automation.

Overall, the message is clear – the global workforce is in for a bumpy ride.

We know when the types of jobs in demand change, the overall skill profile of the workforce must also undergo major change. The companies surveyed considered only 56 per cent of core skills in the workforce today would remain stable over the next five years. That means 44 per cent of the skills workers currently hold are expected to be disrupted.

Interestingly, the standout skill most in demand by companies around the world in 2023 was analytical thinking closely followed by creative thinking.

The report predicts six in 10 workers around the world will require retraining or upskilling by 2027, but only around half of workers are seen to have access to adequate training opportunities today. The challenge is huge. The businesses surveyed said skills gaps and an inability to attract talent were the key barriers to industry transformation.

When asked what they planned to do about it, there were two top answers: investing in learning and training; and accelerating the automation of processes.

The upshot: many workers will need to be upskilled, and many will find themselves replaced.

The question is, are we ready? Can our education and training system upskill workers efficiently and effectively? Do we have the policy settings to ensure those replaced by machines can re-skill and find new ways to contribute? If not, let's get on to it – now.

In 2023 we're in a complex place. We're navigating not just one industry transformation but two – technological and green – all while finding a new normal as we emerge from the pandemic and deal with economic instability, cost of living pressures, supply chain disruptions and increasingly divergent labour markets around the world.

It's a lot to deal with.

But, in 2023, we have one clear advantage over those who faced similar big upheavals before us. Thanks to said technology, we now have data, and lots of it, in real time, from a wide range of sources.

Of course, no one can predict the future, but today's political and business leaders have a fairly good idea of the scale of workforce change and churn that's coming down the pipeline, the factors driving that change and the areas of the economy likely to see innovation and growth and those likely to see job displacement and contraction.

If knowledge is power, we're much better placed than our predecessors in the 1800s. We have information, data, predictions and insights. As a result, we should be on the front foot, able to navigate these transitions more smoothly and

efficiently to maximise potential, growth and innovation and minimise the human cost.

The changes coming may be just as momentous as the impact of the steam engine and the production line, but, this time, we have no excuse for being unprepared.

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