

# Mastering the Machine

As technology and machines become more prevalent, uniquely human attributes such as customer-centricity, critical thinking, social influence, problem-solving and, most importantly, learning agility; will be skills of the future



**H**ave you wondered that if in a few years from now, about 50 percent of the best jobs that will be, are not even created today - then what exactly - a) should an individual be focused on learning and b) should an enterprise be training the existing and future workforce on?

## The Only Competitive Advantage

The increasing consensus on the future of jobs is that the advent to machines and technology in the Fourth Industrial Revolution will infact create many new jobs. That's an optimistic note. This means the jobs aren't going anywhere, but are either being upgraded or there is a shift in their nature. Therefore, the skills required to perform them would need to be altered completely.

What can be garnered from this is that in this rapidly changing environment and technology landscape - where the disruptions will only become bigger and swifter - the key to survival for enterprises and individuals will be learning agility. For enterprises, this includes being innovative, creative and adept at risk-taking. For professionals, this means learning to learn at a rapid pace, acquiring deep

skills and strengthening their capabilities to apply those skills in current and future roles.

As mentioned by the World Economic Forum in the Future of Jobs, 2018 report, it is critical that businesses take an active role in supporting their existing workforces through reskilling and upskilling and that individuals take a proactive approach to their own lifelong learning.

It is critical for individuals to note that employers will always be looking out for the best talent i.e., employees who are willing to learn, acquire new skills and can help employers find solutions to critical internal and customer problems.

Similarly, the best talent will be seeking employers who are willing to invest and play a leading role in ensuring their employees are acquiring the right deep skills. Eventually, talent is going to be the only competitive advantage for organisations.

Let's look at some skills that organisations can choose to invest in and help employees develop them:

## Tech that

**Skills:** *Technology and digital skills coupled with absolute*



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— Bimaljeet Singh Bhasin, President, Skills and Careers Business, NIIT

*focus on customer outcomes and experience.*

The future is tech, so in order to keep the engine running, it would be imperative for employers to ensure that their employees acquire skills and know-how of creating digital solutions to deliver exceptional customer (internal or external) experience. For the less technically inclined, it is still going to be a prerequisite to up digital literacy and develop customer-centricity.

Interestingly, StackRoute, an NIIT incubated venture, runs disruptive IT learning solutions that produces top class full stack developers and tech professionals with deep-skills. As digital transformation partner, StackRoute works with several large IT organizations, product engineering firms and GCCs/GICs to transform their workforce into multi-skilled IT professionals.

### Think right

**Skills:** *Analytical, creative and critical thinking.*

No matter how far automation and artificial intelligence take the world, the charm of human ability to think critically will never fall out of fashion. Employers need to ensure there is a pool of agile analytical, critical and creative thinkers who can make decisions - in corporate strategy, operations and marketing - as these will impact the entire organization. They would be required for building and evaluating arguments and creating a better and productive organisation.

### Saving the ship

**Skills:** *Reasoning and complex problem-solving.*

The buzzword of the present and the future is 'analysis'. It forms the base for both simple and complex problem-solving. Employers need to ensure their employees are expert problem solvers - ones who are deft at taking larger, complex issues and breaking them down into tangible

solutions. They must be trained to be agile enough to look at challenges in the eye, pay attention to instincts and know what the data is trying to indicate and meanwhile, have solutions and contingency plans ready, even before the storm hits.

### Make an impact

**Skills:** *Leadership, emotional intelligence and social influence.*

A good leader must be well-versed on metrics, business growth as well as social capital growth. Someone who knows how to build, grow, influence and leverage his social ecosystem. While some leadership skills may be inherent, there are ways to up your employee's managerial skills, emotional intelligence and help guide their thinking and behaviour to achieve your company's goals. Also, in times now and ahead, social influence plays a key role in business; hence knowing how it can work to your company's favour is imperative for your employees.

### The Key Takeaway

Back in the 1970, American author Alvin Toffler wrote in his book, Future Shock, 'The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.' The quote may have been ahead of its times but there can't be a better time than now to follow his advice and build learning agility as a key attribute for both the organisations and individuals. The need of the hour then is to have a steady partnership between individuals, businesses, and training and learning companies to create a transformative impact on the workforce - only then will the Fourth Industrial Revolution be a success for humans and machines alike.

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