

'Lifespan of skills shortened, learnability the only way forward'

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THE ADVENT of new technologies has started to alter the entire job market where the premium is on different kind of skill sets and experts representing different industries are advising graduating students and young professionals to be on the path of continuous learning to remain ahead of the curve.

At the Indian Express-UpGrad talks event on the topic "Ready for the future of... learning" held in Bengaluru on Saturday, Ronnie Screwvala, entrepreneur and co-founder of UpGrad set the ball rolling with the most important question among all professionals,

especially in tech: Do I need to get panicky or is one going on right path? The short point being how does one get onto to the path of learning.

Rishad Premji, chief strategy officer, Wipro Limited, said: "Lifespan of skills has dramatically shortened and learnability is the only way forward." He felt that employers are demanding skills which are currently in short supply in the market and corporations are also providing the platforms for learning. "It is better to get onto to the bus otherwise you will be left behind," he cautioned.

Along with upgrading oneself with new skills, there are other aspects which are also equally important, which is de-

veloping a critical and analytical mindset. Manish Sabharwal, co-founder of Teamlease Services put it in a more cryptic fashion. "The notion of lifetime employment has now shifted to a taxi-cab relationship where skills are a premium," he said. Sabharwal was of the view that though the future is unknowable, today there is a massive opportunity to learn and along with that, inculcating soft skills becomes the critical differentiator.

The experts at the panel discussion felt that even as professionals go about their task of upgrading themselves with technical expertise, there are other skills like superior communication or ability to work in teams, which makes the critical



difference.

To a question posed by Shaji Vikraman, national editor, The Indian Express on what employability qualities do employers look at prospective candidates in the current scenario, Premji felt those who are on the path of continuously upgrading themselves and the willingness to learn will fit the bill.

Sabharwal had this piece of advice on how to go about the path of learnability: repair, pre-

pare and upgrade. He felt that though one does not what will be future of jobs, but it is always better to prepare oneself.

According to Sabharwal, having a growth mindset and a curious mind will ensure one's path towards learnability.

Despite the hiring slowdown in the Indian IT industry, Premji and Sabharwal felt that sector will continue to add jobs though the skills that will be demand will be different from what was in the past. "The IT industry in India has started to hire non-technical professionals...so there is a small change," Premji said.

In era of increasing automation, Sabharwal felt that superior skills in sales and customer support could become a critical dif-

ferentiator for employees in the near future.

As it was an interactive session, questions from the audience ranged from how does one make the shift from a non-technical area to the technology sector, does automation sound a death knell for new jobs or how does one chose the right course when there is a plethora of content.

Premji and Sabharwal were of the view that jobs with new kind of skills will be very much in demand and nobody would be comfortable with robo doctors. The willingness to learn new things will always emerge as the key differentiator in the hyper competitive world shaped by new technologies.