



Getting ready for 21st century careers

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With the interference of Information Technology in every sector, the careers in future will be totally different from now observes Prakash Menon, President, Global Retail Business, NIIT Ltd for Elets News Network (ENN). Digital has pervaded all aspects of life and is dictating the manner in which people now live and work. The world has witnessed high impact with the rise of the modern, cutting-edge, automated digital office.

Analysts are predicting that the workplace of the future will be a collaborative environment where human workers will rub shoulders with non-human colleagues (read that as Robots or Bots), with each side complementing the strengths of the other. Digitally-enabled jobs are going to be the new reality across sectors—from transportation, logistics, education, financial services and healthcare. While areas such as banking, retail and manufacturing are already on the path of automation and have digitized their day-to-day processes, the next level of growth in Digital will be driven by some of the new verticals mentioned above which will embrace technology with greater verve.

While all the Digital Transformation talk—of robots serving up pizzas, cars taking people everywhere without anyone being at the steering, diagnostics being performed on patients remotely—is all very well and portends a brand new world, it also raises significant issues and concerns.

Primary among them is the fact that in the emerging technology-led, high-tech environment, skills or should one say digital skills will play a significant part. While it is extremely exciting to hear about the potential of technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and SMAC (Social, Mobility, Analytics and Cloud), and the immense possibilities they are opening up, one has to understand that they require an all new set of skills and expertise.

Creating value, creating jobs

Going forward, Digital Transformation is expected to be a major value creator for nations, especially India, which is taking firm strides in this space.

According to global management consulting firm McKinsey & Co, Digital Transformation is expected to create USD 1 trillion in value and sustain 55-60 million jobs in India by 2025! There is however a caveat. McKinsey says that of the figure of 55-60 million workers, which are expected to be sustained by India's Digital economy in 2025, an estimated 40 million will need to be retrained and redeployed in new job roles.

Take the instance of India's tech juggernaut—the IT-BPM industry, the earliest adopter of and catalyst for digital in the country—which is already focusing on future-proofing of its workforce through re-skilling in Digital technologies. Expected to be the biggest generator of digitally-enabled jobs, the sector will require a whole new, digitally articulated generation of professionals who can add value to organisations.

Besides the tech sector, all other industry verticals too will opt for workers who fit their digital profiles. This also means that today's learners (tomorrow's knowledge professionals) have a wide spectrum of skills they can choose from, depending on the career path they want to embrace.

Today, unlike previous decades, it is no longer mandatory for students to go for traditional career choices such as engineering or medicine. As they say, there is life beyond that. The digital wave as we are all becoming aware, is throwing up a host of new domains that young learners can pick from while planning their future. They can in fact start soon after class 12, being the early birds in the realm of relevant skilling and make smart choices. Instead of targeting at the once coveted 'Graduation' degree, learners can decide to be more focused and aim for the skills that will be critical in the Digital age. In this way they can ensure that they are able to catch the attention of hirers, remain on top of the employability index and are of course 'job-industry-hour-one ready'.

And truly, in the existing Digital environment, the world is their oyster and options limitless.

Skills to aspire for and acquire

Among the hot skills that Class 12 pass-outs (especially those who are good at Math) can acquire is Business analytics, a technology that global research and advisory firm Gartner Inc. says will be deployed by 75 percent of the world's leading organizations. To be equipped with Business Analytics skills, students will have to choose a course that exposes them to technologies such as SPARK, Hive, and visualization tools like Tableau and Qlickview.

Data Science is the other preferred field and here students must look for programs that focus on technologies like R programming, and SAS.

Students keen on a career in coding (especially in Java) can go for training in Mean Stack which covers skills in MongoDB, Express.js, Angular and Node.js. They can also consider a program in DevOps, which will train them to become developers while providing them an understanding of IT operational processes. Owing to the sweeping Digital wave, advanced programming skills are back with a bang and a course in DevOps would be in order.

Other exciting fields include **Artificial Intelligence**, Machine Learning, and Robotics which are becoming popular, especially among Gen Y. To know more about these areas and find a fit here, students will have to enroll for courses that offer them insights into state-of-the-art automation tools and techniques. Machine Learning in particular is important, as in order to be skilled in AI implementation, students need to have expertise in Machine Learning techniques.

If they are looking for a career in Digital Marketing, (considered by McKinsey & Co to be a preferred skill in the current scenario), this would be the perfect time to join a program that teaches them all about e-mail marketing, blog promotions, and Facebook advertising.

As of now, there are a plethora of programmes that students can choose from post Class 12 to ready themselves for the 21st century. However, in selecting a training organization they need to be judicious and discerning, picking only the brands that are known for their market leadership, longevity and experience, reliability, high quality of content and flawless delivery. Global skills and talent development major NIIT, a household name in India, is offering online courses in many of these industry segments and preparing young learners for the future, which as analysts will proclaim, is already here.

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