# Leadership Skills Of The Future

## Leaders of the future will also take on the role of thought leaders and influencers

By **Bert Miller**

The world is in the midst of a Fourth Industrial Revolution that is fundamentally changing the world of work. Specifically, AI, machine learning, robotics and other cutting-edge technologies are transforming how we work and adding efficiencies, which in turn is changing the profile of the workforce. As technology becomes more of a horizontal that affects every industry vertical, the workplace evolves in lockstep. The future of work is heavily augmented with technology, and leaders need to develop the right skills to help an organization maintain its competitiveness both in leading the charge in upskilling and setting into motion mentoring and development for their teams.

Technology has a direct impact on staff. Every robot that's added per 1,000 workers, for example, results in a 0.2% decline in employment-to-population ratio, which translates to a loss of about 400,000 jobs, according to "Robots and Jobs: Evidence from U.S. Labor Markets." The World Economic Forum expects that technology innovations in the workplace will

ultimately eliminate 85 million jobs worldwide by 2025. At the same time though, 97 million jobs requiring a different skillset will be created and finding staff to fill these positions will be a process as demand outstrips supply.

There's a cause and effect. Productivity hasn't kept pace with technology innovations, and eventually, the workplace will catch up as staff becomes more adept at adopting new innovations through leadership and upskilling. Leaders will focus more on results, accountability and freedom versus where and how employees get work done. Many a role will need to be redesigned. These changes take time though as people are often uneasy with new technology and getting upskilled and reskilled can be a process.

Leaders need to manage through this transition. As more repetitive tasks are performed by technology rather than people, employers will have more demand for employees with strong technical skills across multiple disciplines, like artificial intelligence and machine learning, data science and analytics, and cloud computing. Teams will ultimately focus on more value-generating tasks – technology can't make decisions and solve problems in the same way as a person. Critical thinking skills are imperative for both team and leaders.

Technology changes at a fast clip, and organizations constantly adopting the cutting edge and bleeding edge just to stay competitive. Doing so requires leadership that's agile, and companies need the right leadership structure in place to allow for this evolution. A hierarchical structure may not be the best strategy.

Rather than develop a select few people, management responsibilities will likely be spread across an organization and leadership models need to be able to capture the new path forward in this increasingly digital world.

Large teams aren't as agile either as a network of small teams that can be disbanded and reassembled as teams move onto new projects and challenges. The structure focuses on work and projects as teams are more product, customer and service based. This model could work to help bridge the gap between productivity and technology, but to form teams quickly requires having a clear understanding of everyone's skillset, scorecard and purpose.

As a company's resource needs change, a growth mindset will help leaders to strategize and pivot while following the latest trends and innovations. Organizations need to be able to dislocate themselves first before a competitor does.

Also, leaders need to be strong advocates for their teams so that the team as a whole and individuals can both achieve their goals. A leader needs to provide their team with the right resources and direction, and that means understanding everyone's strengths and weaknesses to be able to assign roles accordingly, as well as to provide training or additional staff with the right skillsets.

In a technology-heavy world, strong communication skills are even more imperative. Staff needs continuous feedback so that they can adjust goals accordingly and move to projects that are good fits. More frequent communication increases transparency, which is key to developing a team and moving forward as an organization.

Along with being able to provide a clear direction and strategy to staff, leaders of the future will also take on the role of thought leaders and influencers. To be an influencer means that the leader has obtained a level of success and shares their knowledge and philosophies to motivate others to achieve the same. Leaders grow because they have followers rather than in the old model, where leaders were promoted into their position regardless of whether they had a following.

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