Four Ways to Future-proof your Career – and your Life

Not too long ago, '2020' was a term describing the perfect vision. Now, it's the date for next year, and the science fiction-sounding '2030' is a mere 11 years away. There's no doubt about it – we are living in the future, but the future is even harder to see than ever before. So, how do we keep up with the times and ensure we remain relevant when we don't know what the next few years have in store for us?

Of all the things we fear in the uncertain future, the most prevalent concern is our jobs. What will the working world look like in one-years' time and will we be able to compete? Will the company we're loyal to still exist in years to come? Or will machine learning take over?

"None of us know what the future holds. On average, by 2020, more than a third of the desired core skill sets of most occupations will be comprised of skills that are not yet considered crucial to the job today. Many of us wonder what our jobs will look like five years from now," says Adi Stephan, Head of Learning and Lead in HP at IQbusiness.

Fortunately, there are things we *can* know already about what will be valued and relevant now, and later on. Here, Stephen unpacks the four things we can do to future-proof our jobs and selves today to stay on top tomorrow:

Adaptability to survive

As Darwin once said, it is not the strongest species that survive, but those that adapt. Optimism and an experimental mindset welcoming the new will be of utmost importance. "Flexibility and adaptability are now essential skills for learning, work and citizenship in the 21st century," says Stephen.

Tech openness is key

Anyone can tell you that technology is a major factor in the world of tomorrow – but how do we prepare if many of the platforms we'll be using for work soon have likely not been invented yet?

According to Stephen, attitude is again vital. Be on the constant lookout for the newest, best tech and be enthusiastic about mastering it first, rather than take a defensive stance which prefers keeping work 'the way things were for as long as possible. "We future-proof ourselves by optimising all available technology. The rapid pace of technological change forces us all to adapt quickly to new ways of communicating, learning, working, and living."

Self-learning is earning

"A Prudential survey found that, currently, one in five employees don't believe they are receiving adequate training from their employer. The reason? Traditional training focuses on technical skills and not the interpersonal skills that really matter. Curiously, in an age where information is everywhere, training programmes focus more on the 'how-to' than the 'want-to'," says Stephen. Because of this, those who get ahead are likely to be the ones who take the continuous learning and un-learning, vital for the future, into their own hands.

People skills are still paramount

One would think that in a future dominated by digitisation and populated with a fair share of robots and bots, EQ wouldn't be all that necessary. It's more important than ever, argues Stephen. "According to data from the recent World Economic Forum, previously impressive analytical skills and aptitudes like spatial ability and manual dexterity will be declining in 2022. Instead, emotional intelligence will be trending. It's crucial to focus on the soft skills –the human side of the equation –to prepare for the future of work," he says.

"We live in changing, turbulent times – especially in a country like South Africa. But future-proofing your work and yourself is possible. Be honest with yourself about your skill gaps, have a growth mindset and transform and transform again," concludes Stephen.