

Thriving in the New world of work



Thriving is a positive psychological state that is characterised by success and prosperity. The word thrive means to grow, develop or be successful (Cambridge dictionary). In an article for Forbes Magazine in 2018 Brett Steenbarger highlights that a wealth of research in positive psychology helps us understand the dynamics of thriving. The new world of work is daunting, uncertain and complex, especially considering the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) and the changes it has brought and is still to bring in the workplace. It may all seem overwhelming but a holistic approach to thriving in a rapidly changing work environment would ease the anxiety. Individuals and organisations can prepare to thrive in this new space that is more focused on “human skills”.

The components that are important in a holistic approach to thriving are individual and organisational. The ability to thrive in the workplace is a function of both an Individuals’ psychological makeup and the structure of the work environment.

Components for thriving individual and organisational

Individual

- Health and Well-being
- Skills
- Attitude
- Adaptability
- Embracing Technology
- Commitment to lifelong learning
- Job satisfaction
- Positive relationships
- Working in teams

Organisational

- Policy for mental health and well – being
- Creating an agile working environment
- Modernise the workplace
- Cultivate a culture of life-long learning
- Encourage flexibility
- Empower employees
- Strong leadership with people management skills
- Increase collaboration
- Encourage innovation

Individual components to thriving in the new world of work: Individuals thrive when they are healthy, physically, emotionally and psychologically. Botha, P.A., & Brand, H. (2009) define health as an integrated method of functioning that is oriented toward maximising the potential of the individual. According to the World Health Organisation, health is a state of complete physical and mental wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease. Healthy people tend to be more productive and are more likely to work in teams and have positive relationships, these are skills that are required in the new world of work. In the era of the 4IR, a commitment to lifelong learning is quite important. Upskilling and reskilling, learning and unlearning to be able to meet work demands that change constantly. The world economic forum has published the skills that are essential for the future and most of the skills are human skills that robots cannot excel in. In an uncertain world of work adaptability is key. Thriving individuals are productive and have a positive impact on the organisations as a whole. They are engaged and satisfied with their work.

Autonomy is important in the workplace as individuals who believe they are in control of their behaviour are more productive and more collaborative. Pierre Naudé, CEO of nCino, a software company believes that employees should feel that they can use their own brain power and experience to actually mould their jobs to be able to go forward and to adapt at the pace of change.

Organisational components to thriving in the new world of work

According to Deloitte Global's 2020 Readiness Report, The Fourth Industrial Revolution: At the intersection of readiness and responsibility, preparing workers to meet the demands of Industry 4.0 continues to be a fundamental business challenge. The new world of work requires organisations to have strategies with a people centred focus and cultivate a culture that encourages learning and unlearning, innovation, collaboration, teamwork. For employees to thrive the organisation needs to promote wellness and provide a healthy working environment.

Pierre Naudé asserts that the best way we can serve our organisations and our people is to create a company culture that actually trains and equips people to be flexible, self-reliant, and empowered. Organisations should understand that they need to create an agile work environment and workplace cultures where employees can continuously acquire new skills to keep up with the changing nature of work for them to thrive in 4IR.

Health and Wellbeing are important in the workplace. The cost of mental health in the workplace is absenteeism, presentism, limited progression and turnover. The Thriving at work report published in UK in 2017 recommended 6 mental health core standards businesses can adopt to create an environment where people can thrive: Produce, implement and communicate a mental health plan, Develop mental health awareness among employees, Encourage open conversations about mental health and the support available when employees are struggling, Provide employees with good working conditions, Promote effective people management and provide training on mental health and stress management - including

how to spot the signs and have supportive conversations, Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing.

Thriving in the new world of work requires organisations and employees to embrace technology and be adaptable. Individuals cannot thrive in isolation, the work environment has to promote and maintain an agile environment, with a human focus.