

## Executive Summary

### Research Question

What are the skills that HR professionals will need in the future (i.e. 5-10 years)?

### Introduction

Leading HR organizations and institutions have identified the main types workplace disrupters: technological, demographic, and socioeconomic (see Appendix A). HR needs to equip itself with skills to preempt challenges that may arise. The focus of future skills identification will need to be attuned to the implications of rapid technological advancement, as well as challenges associated with an increasingly “borderless” workplace. Indeed, technological trends such as the prevalence of cloud technologies are becoming increasingly relevant, while changing work environments and flexible work arrangements (FWA) are rated as the top trend of concern according to CHROs and other talent executives of leading global employers.

### Technological Advancement

We assess the implications of technology from two perspectives; the need for HR professionals to develop the skills necessary to grow with modern technology, and the need to enable and work with a labor force that will be significantly affected by replacement of labor with technology.

#### Using technology

*Data-driven HR:* To effectively capture the benefits of “big data” and provide the predictive element more businesses are emphasizing, HR professionals will need to not only understand analytics, but be able to draw inferences for guidance.<sup>1</sup> To best utilize the technology, HR professionals will also need better understand how the tools they use work on the back-end.<sup>2</sup>

*Curators of employee development:* With increased prevalence of e-learning and the emergence of “social learning” platforms, emphasis will need to be placed on designing the employee development experience in a way that meets the individual employee and their job needs. HR will need to develop skills as content curators rather than creators to create more agile learning experiences.<sup>3</sup>

#### Enabling the new employee experience

*HD>HR:* As automation drastically reduces headcount, a greater need will be placed on what technology cannot do well, such as higher-order critical thinking, creativity, emotional engagement, and real-time problem solving. HR will need to incorporate aspects of Human Development, geared towards enabling desired behaviors and processes.<sup>4</sup>

### Socioeconomic and Demographic Changes

The world we work in is constantly changing. With continued globalization, the dominance of flexible work arrangements (FWA), and multiple generations coexisting simultaneously in the workforce, it becomes increasingly challenging for companies to ensure all employees are engaged.

**Global expertise and ethical decision-making:**

Despite the obvious benefits of a flexible and globalized workforce, HR professionals need to be aware of the challenges that stand to occur as globalization continues to lower company boundaries. HR professionals need the skills to be able to work with the business to identify and create new roles, and not just merely move jobs overseas. Location strategies that move parts of the workforce elsewhere naturally reduce job availability in the original locations, leading to reduced employee morale. Meanwhile, ethics should be emphasized and practiced, ensuring countries with more lax labor laws aren't exploited.<sup>5</sup> HR professionals will need to have local labor law expertise outside of their primary jurisdictions.

**Flexibility, self-reflection, and ability to execute quickly:**

With 43% of workers in the United States already in flexible work arrangements(FWA), up from 27.5% in 2004 the frequency of FWAs will only continue to grow.<sup>6</sup> HR professionals should have expertise in labor policies (both local and global), and have the ability to design new FWAs to address arising challenges. HR professionals should be flexible and self-aware. In cases where a particular FWA is not working out, instead of following trends and forcing something that is popular to work, HR should be bold enough to make necessary changes and realign certain programs that are no longer working.

**Relationship building skills, and ability to think “big picture”:**

HR needs to preemptively prepare for the mass retirement of senior leaders, and not merely identify high potentials as successors. Work is becoming increasingly siloed, so it is necessary to cultivate younger professionals that have the ability to think “big-picture.” In many companies, the role of “Chief of Staff” has emerged to give younger professionals the opportunity to shadow senior leaders.<sup>7</sup> HR professionals need to have relationship building skills to convince senior leaders to share their time to develop the future leaders of the firm.

**Agile leadership**

In a framework focused on capabilities that will enable the future of HR (Appendix B), particular changes are emphasized. While “change management” is important today, the future of HR will require more focus on “agile leadership.” There will be a greater need for anticipating change by studying the environment and initiating action. For example, in the space of talent acquisition, instead of “sourcing and recruiting” as roles open, HR professionals will have to proactively identify and cultivate relationships with potential candidates.

<b>Conclusion</b>
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The skills HR professionals will need in the future are highly dependent on the overall technological, socioeconomic, and demographic shifts affecting businesses and the world at large. While predicting future skills and competencies has proven to be difficult in the past, framing HR and the workforce within the perspective of the aforementioned trends gives insight into how HR needs to become more analytically sufficient, responsive to future employee development needs, and adaptable to changing workplace and workforce dynamics.

## References

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**Additional Resources:**

[https://prezi.com/narl9mtzmyxs/future-of-hr/?utm\\_campaign=share&utm\\_medium=copy](https://prezi.com/narl9mtzmyxs/future-of-hr/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy)

The Future of Jobs: Employment, Skills and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, World Economic Forum., January 2016

Summary of the Future of HR Project Summit: Phase Two, CHREATE, May 21, 2015

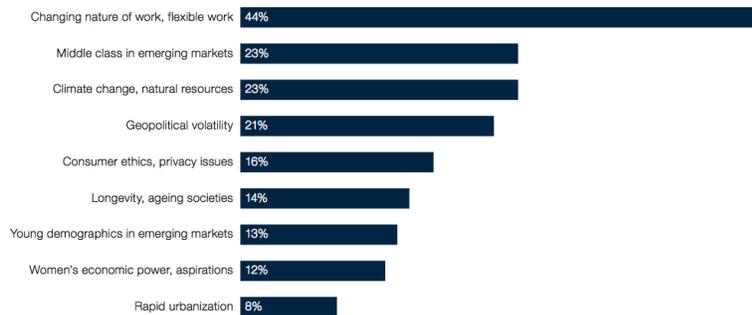
Shift: The Commission on Work, Workers, and Technology: Report of Findings, May 2017

**Appendices:**

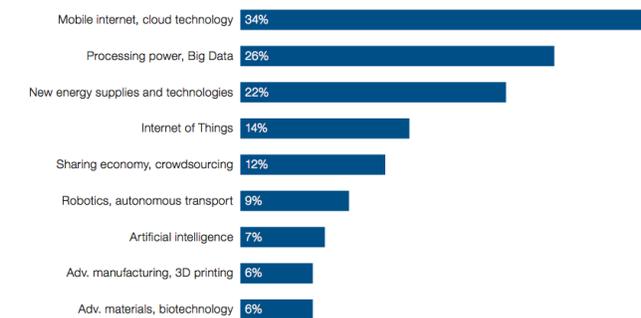
**Appendix A**

**Figure 2: Drivers of change, industries overall**  
Share of respondents rating driver as top trend, %

**DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC**



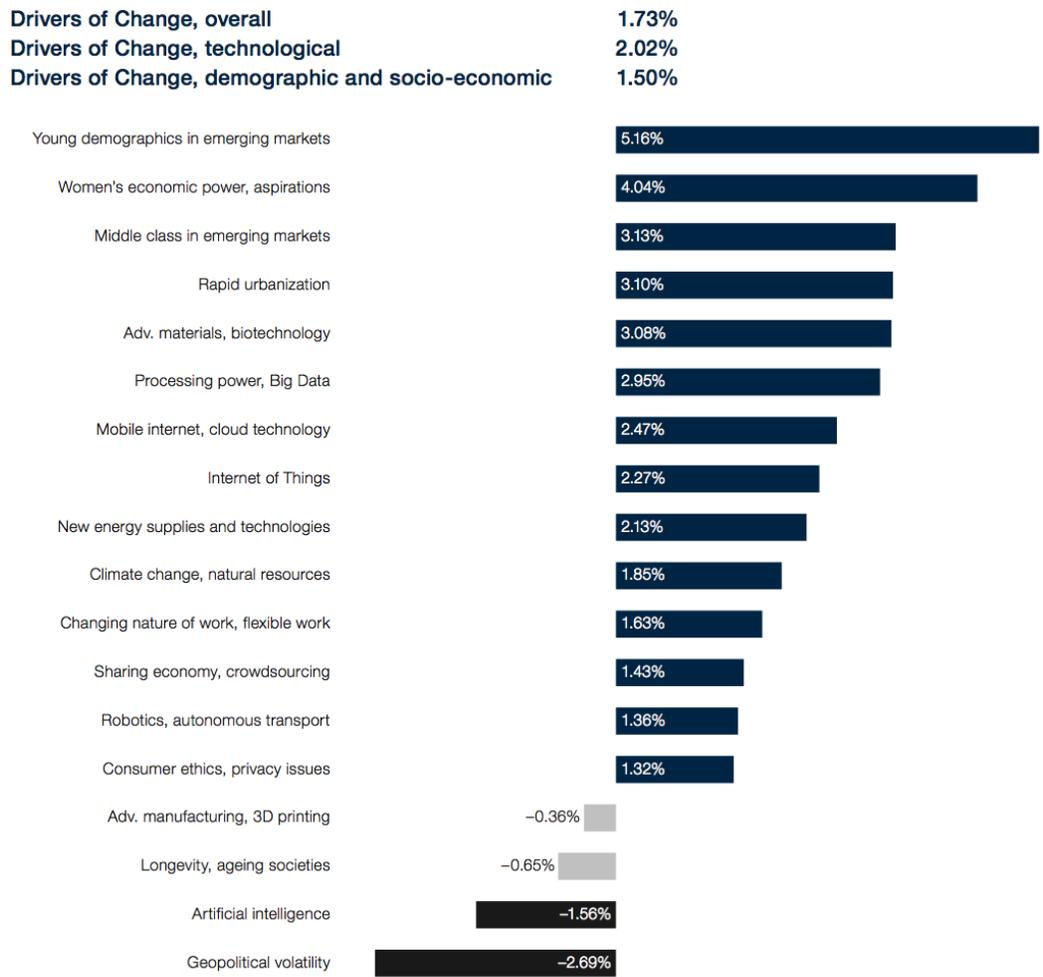
**TECHNOLOGICAL**



Source: Future of Jobs Survey, World Economic Forum.  
Note: Names of drivers have been abbreviated to ensure legibility.

Appendix A(continued)

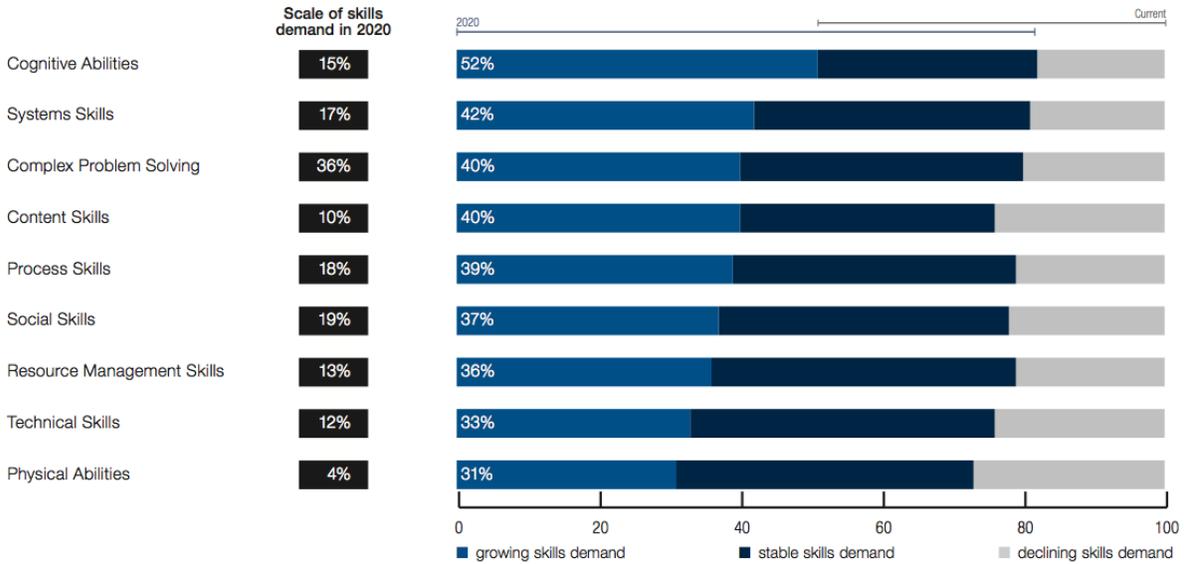
**Figure 4: Employment effect of drivers of change, all job types**  
Compound growth rate, 2015-2020, %<sup>7</sup>



Source: Future of Jobs Survey, World Economic Forum.  
Note: Names of drivers have been abbreviated to ensure legibility.

Appendix A (continued)

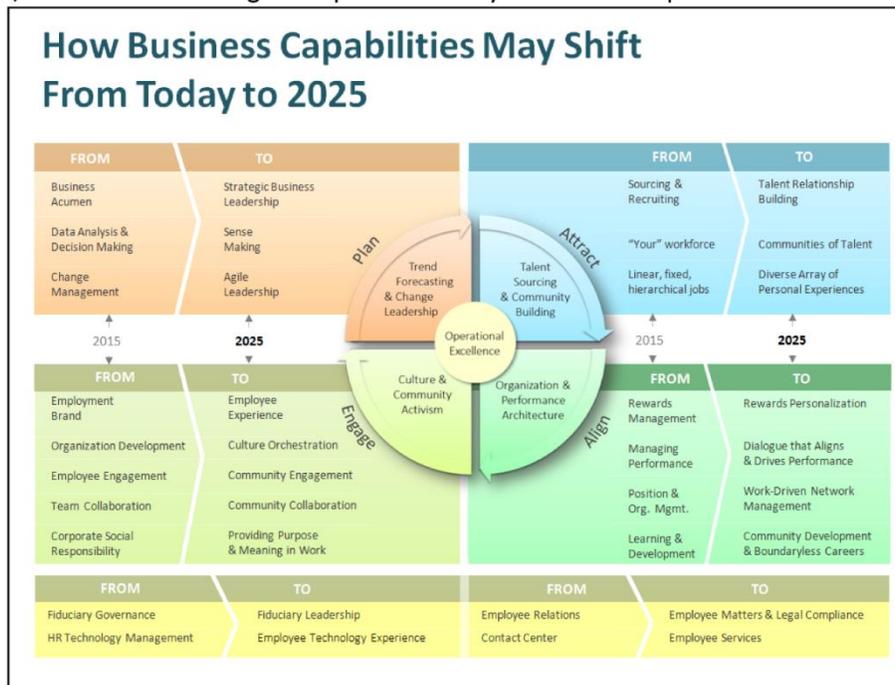
**Figure 10: Change in demand for core work-related skills, 2015-2020, all industries**  
 Share of jobs requiring skills family as part of their core skill set, %



Source: Future of Jobs Survey, World Economic Forum.

World Economic Forum

Appendix B



CHREATE: Summary of the Future of HR Project Summit