

# For the Next-Gen Employees, it's Time to Recalibrate Industry Skills

Syeda Meher Taj

Director, Brand, Marketing and Communications, EY Global Delivery Services, India;  
Syeda.taj@gds.ey.com

The job scenario across the world has been undergoing rapid change over the last few years. There are newer ways of working at the workplace, causing a huge impact on the overall skills requirements. And for the younger generation just out of educational institutes, this appears to be a tough time.

The question that emerges is: How should our prospective new-age professionals, especially students, prepare for the skills required for Industry 4.0? The new-age employer wants employees well-equipped in different machine technologies, as well as possess skills such as inventiveness and creativity.

A recent Future of Jobs Report by the World Economic Forum surveyed the profile of the new-age skills needed for what it called the New Machine Age. The report claims that going ahead, the focus will be on specific and niche skills. It further adds, half the skills needed to succeed in the future will be cognitive, and the other 50% will be on human connections and collaborations at work.

These include evolved technical skills such as those in artificial intelligence (AI), cloud technology, virtual learning (VL), machine learning (ML), big data, automation, etc., and human skills like marketing and communication, sales and branding, and training and development. It is therefore crucial that new-age skills are integrated into the formal education system right from the beginning.

Coming to India, the 'Youth in India 2022' report released reveals that our youth have neither the awareness nor the skills that new industries require. The 2021 India Skills Report says that less than 50% of our youth are said to be capable of employment. This points to a wide skill development and employment disparity; that's a serious challenge indeed.

## New-Age Employees and the Role of Academia

Globally, what we need is a young, efficient, well-trained workforce. Clearly, the focus should be on early skill development, right from the formative educational years. There should be renewed focus on subjects like analytical reasoning or financial and marketing analysis, those that are essential to analyze the vast data transferred through cloud.

Jobs with new-age skills include those in technology, healthcare, finance, and education, with specific examples being software developers, data analysts, AI/ML engineers, healthcare technicians, financial analysts, and STEM educators. In Industry 4.0, only those candidates skilled in cloud computing, algorithms, automation, AI, ML, VL, etc., will emerge as suitable candidates at the workplace.

But the burden isn't of educational institutes alone. For example, when we talk of new-age technologies, how many graduates take the initiative to equip themselves for a seamless absorption into the new and hi-tech tech jobs? Therefore, students themselves must develop a life-long 'education mindset to train themselves for the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

## A Primer for the Next-Gen Employee

It's worth bearing in mind some key tips when looking to acquire and master new skills:

**Start with core skills.** Most skills consist of core competences and secondary skills. Core skills are essential

to learning a new skill, whereas secondary skills are useful but not essential to mastering a skill.

**Set realistic goals.** Acquiring and mastering a new skill is often a long and complex process. That's why it's worth your while splitting it into a series of smaller steps and set realistic milestones.

**Learn from others' experiences.** The key to success is the ability to build and improve on other people's experiences. This applies equally to acquiring and mastering new skills and learn the relevant experience and the skills one looks to acquire.

**Learn from the experts.** Find out who are the experts in your relevant field. Try to know what makes them authorities in their subject area, capitalize on it, and use their experience and knowledge to expand your own skill set.

**Have a good mentor.** By connecting with a teacher or a senior employee (in your institute or organization), you will learn your skills by leaps and bounds. In fact, having such support throughout your career will be extremely useful for any professional.

**Set realistic goals.** Set measurable goals for yourself. Acquiring and mastering new skills involves setting realistic and positive goals, and these should inspire you every day in your career.

**Get constant feedback.** To put new skills into practice, it's essential to get regular feedback. It is vital to the learning process. Self-reflection strengthens your personal growth and allows you to monitor your progress.

**Evaluate yourself constantly:** Finally, self-insight helps greatly. What are your strengths and weaknesses? What

qualities, talents, and traits will help you learn a specific skill? Posing yourself these questions will generate the right insights to learn more.

## It's Time for a New Beginning

Times are changing! There is renewed emphasis on promoting vocational training and skill development in collaboration with various stakeholders. This change is being witnessed right from the institutional level (government and educational institutes) right up to the individual companies. And it's paying off very well.

On a personal level, one may say the Indian student community has a remarkable spirit of resilience. India is also a leader in the area of IT and general technology. Therefore, it's no surprise to see that innovations are beginning to dominate business and college curricula because there is realization that jobs will focus on advances in new tech and new learnings.

Skill creation outside the formal education system needs a more concerted and improvised action at each step to counter the inherent challenges. These are issues that should be considered pragmatically on an institutional footing. In this new reality, more strategic and complex skills will be at the forefront. New employees will need to build talents to develop their critical digital and cognitive capabilities, social and emotional skills, and their adaptability and resilience.

Peter Drucker said, "The only skill that will be important in the 21st century is the skill of learning new skills." How right he was!