



SDF NEWSFLASH - EDITION SDF3/2016

The Future of Jobs

We recently had the pleasure of attending a presentation by the respected trend analyst, Mr Dion Chang (founder of Flux Trends) on the topic of “business disruptors” and “observing trends as a business strategy”. With specific reference to the impact these trends may have on employment, skills and workforce strategy, coupled with the current focus on the #FeesMustFall campaign, it got me thinking... what is the future of jobs in South Africa? More importantly, are we appropriately upskilling towards this trend line?

This year also marks the beginning of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the trend towards automation and data exchange in manufacturing technologies. This includes developments in genetics, artificial intelligence, robotics, nanotechnology, biotechnology and the like. These so-called “smart systems” are exciting to behold, but as industries and employers are still grappling with the question of what exactly these “game-changers” are, both current and future occupations are undergoing a fundamental transformation. While redundancy is likely in some instances, there are other job types that are growing rapidly, as well as those that may require a change in the skill sets required to do them.

So how do we go about planning for something that is not yet clear in the minds of most?

The *Future of Jobs Report*, published by the World Economic Forum (2016), provides some interesting insights into this question. The report specifically deals with the current shifts in employment, skills and recruitment practices across different industries and geographies. In particular, it introduces the concept of “skills stability” to quantify the degree of skills disruption within an occupation, job type or industry. The report suggests that there is a positive outlook for employment across most industries, with some jobs growing across several sectors.

However, it is also clear that there remains a need for more talent in certain job categories. It is thus likely that this anticipated job growth, coupled with the current skills shortages of some jobs, is set to exasperate the current recruitment challenges faced by business.

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The need to reskill and upskill our workforce has never been more necessary. While much has been published about the inadequacy of the schooling system to prepare these future workers, the reality is that it would take too long to respond to the rapid technological advancements by waiting for the next generation of workers to be better prepared.

Business thus needs to play an active role in supporting our current workforces through reskilling and upskilling; individuals need to take a proactive approach to their own lifelong learning; and governments need to create an enabling environment to assist these efforts.

Adapted from the The Future of Jobs Report published by the World Economic Forum, 2016.

Kind Regards

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07 October 2016

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