

The Future of Work 未來工作

Technology is driving demand for new talent and skills in today's workforce, but can it address challenges facing companies' manpower needs?

科技正帶動現今勞動市場對新人才和技術的需求，
但能否應對企業在人力需求方面所面對的挑戰呢？

Technology is expected to replace around half of all jobs by 2025. That might be good news in light of Hong Kong's shrinking labour force and acute skills shortage, but what will become of workers heading for the museum? How will that change us as a society? Can we expect companies to become cold, automated operations void of any human interaction? How can schools prepare youngsters for the brave, new technology driven 2020s – assuming that they have a place in the future workforce?

These were just a few of the challenges that business leaders and HR experts tried to answer at the Chamber's recent closed-door CEO Manpower Conference, held under the banner: "The Future of Work."

On the upside, IT advances are changing where, when and how people choose to work. For companies, technology also allows them to pick talent from the global talent pool, because people no longer need to be physically present in a company. Automation can also lower their headcount, and raise productivity at the same time.

A study conducted by Goldman Sachs showed that 60-70% of steps and procedures for an IPO can be replaced by machines, leaving the remaining 30-40% to be followed up with a human touch.

"Companies can embrace technology to advance their businesses to make themselves more competitive, more efficient and more innovative, so companies should not fear technology developments," one of the conference speakers stressed.







Debunking Myths

Whilst the Digital Age is dramatically changing ‘how’ we manage talent, the fundamentals of ‘what’ we do will remain very much the same in the future.

- **MYTH 1: The attitudes of most young people today are very different to those of young people in the 1970s.**

When we look at our teenage years, and drop outs like Bill Gates, Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg, youngsters today are not that different from those from the ‘70s & ‘80s.

- **MYTH 2: The bosses of today recognise the needs of tomorrow’s senior leaders.**

Bosses underestimate how the youth values the nature of work and quality of leadership. They overestimate the importance of remuneration and work life balance.

- **MYTH 3: Technology is revolutionising the ways companies develop senior executives.**

Companies can design their own “live” case studies on the internet, but companies still prefer to send their senior staff overseas for company visits.

- **MYTH 4: Generation-Y?**

We have become almost obsessed with labelling and stereotyping age groups, but in the words of Deng Xiaoping: “It doesn’t matter if a cat is black or white, so long as it catches mice.”

Many employees, on the other hand, do fear IT advances, and for good reason. By 2025, over half of all occupations existing today will be redundant. From self-driving vehicles to carebots for the elderly to fully-automated hotels, artificial intelligence will transform the way we live, work and play.

That might sound like something from a science-fiction novel set far in the future, but the process has been underway for some years. For example, the car manufacturing industry was transformed when robots were introduced on production lines. We have been interacting with automated banking centers for years, and supermarkets are starting to follow suit by replacing cashiers with self-service checkouts. Taxi drivers think they have problems with Uber, but they will soon need to contend with driverless taxis as pilot programmes are underway.

But just as Uber’s technology put the taxi profession in jeopardy, driverless cars will make Uber obsolete – even though it was only launched a few years ago. This clearly demonstrates the speed at which technology is advancing. It is also turning our traditional linear planning process on its head as new technologies make total nonsense of business plans.

Nothing new

Change is nothing new, and not necessarily a bad thing. Throughout history, mankind has constantly dealt with change. The industrial revolution may have been the final nail in the coffin of cottage industries, but it was a major turning point in history, as almost every aspect of life was influenced in some way – generally for the better. The automobile replaced the horse and carriage, which was bad news for blacksmiths, but led to a new profession, the car mechanic.

CEO Manpower Conference 2015

The Future of Work

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What will a skilled employee look like?

Universities have traditionally prepared young people for work, but speakers suggested that a job which a student is training for today may not even exist in 10 years' time. So skills that companies will be looking for will be broad and likely filled by liberal arts graduates.

"We need to rethink education, because universities and the business community are not engaging each other enough to equip people with the right skills. At our company, we have lowered the value that we place on employees having a degree, because we recognize the importance of different people's skills," one of the speakers at the Chamber's CEO Manpower Conference said.

As such, workplace training and life-long learning will be vital for companies to give employees the right skills they need to do the job. "The corporate world needs to be sure their staff's skills are sustainable, because at the moment they are not."

However, as contract and project-based contracts become more common, businesses can tap talent from around the world. People no longer have to be physically in the office, or even in Hong Kong. However, speakers felt that as we are a service economy, it is still important to attract talent to Hong Kong.

"I think the most important aspect of attracting talent to come here is that they will be looking for a place to manifest their skills. They want to interact with other experts in their field. They want to be a part of the hub of expertise. So I think it is vitally important that we identify different aspects of what they want and how we attract and retain them."

What is different today, however, is the speed at which changes are taking place, and the speed is only going to get faster, together with the way we live and work.

"Everyone is going to have some new best robot friends in their life. One will be 'Fixer,' who is a robot who fixes things and does your housework. 'Speedy' will drive you from A to B, while 'PA' will schedule your meetings, book restaurants, organize parties, read the news to you ... there is a danger you will talk to 'PA' more than your husband or wife," one of the speakers projected.

'Fixer' and 'Speedy' will be able to take care of mundane, robotic work, as mechanical tasks become increasingly automated. While technology will automate low-skilled tasks, it will also level the playing field in business because small companies can leverage global networks, skills and clients from around the world. It will also create transparency, because it can attract – or put off – talent who see companies that align with their ethics.

"People's decision to work at a company increasingly depends on the organization's role in the community. So unless companies start considering this, then I believe they will not be around in 10 years' time," one of the speakers said.

Another speaker warned of even greater consequences: "Unless companies pay attention to employees' needs and wishes, they run the risk of not being able to find the talent they need, and their indifference could even result in social unrest."

Are we becoming slaves to technology?

Organizations that succeed in the future will have a flexible workforce and access to a wide range of skills. “There will be a huge base of freelancers available in the labour market, and corporations can find the best people to do the best job at the cheapest rate for a short period of time over the web,” an IT expert told businesses attending the Chamber’s CEO Manpower Conference.

Workers physically going into a building would bring their own devices to work in an office that was shared or rented on an hourly basis. The organization’s structure would be flatter and senior management can access database and useful information at the same time with the same speed as their line managers.

While the future of companies and work sounds like collaborating on projects with people from all over the world, speakers believe companies may actually be smaller and SMEs could have an advantage with fewer layers of checks and balances.

“I feel that technology is a tool rather than a threat to work and the workplace as we know it. When automation improves productivity and reduces costs, more demand will be generated, which would lead to the company having to hire more labour,” one speaker said.

Interestingly, not a single speaker at the conference mentioned the importance of employees building up relationships with clients. The advantages of a well-oiled office of team players was also ignored. Instead, business would be driven by the bottom line and availability of freelancers to deliver on time.

Such cold, clinical business ideas fly in the face of the growing trend of people looking for a complete experience package rather than buying a simple product or service at the lowest price. Technological driven businesses would also seem to be extinguishing innovation, and technology itself, is in danger of numbing interaction among people and communication, which is where innovation and ideas stem from.

“With the advent of new technology, people are glued to their smart phones. We are also working 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Shouldn’t we be looking for ways to control it and retain a balance between work and life? Or is it now a way of life that we are unable to resist?” a member of the audience asked.

We have already seen mass protests by employees in major cities around the world, from workers in Europe protesting about job security, to factory workers in Asia protesting about working conditions and even fast food workers in the USA protesting about pay.

Widening rich-poor divide

Many developed countries are being dogged by persistently high unemployment and stagnant wages. While in developing countries, disparity of the Gini coefficient ratio is increasing at an unsustainable rate, as technology, globalization and outsourcing leave segments of society behind. The challenge for society is what to do with them.

Speakers suggested that employers should continually upgrade staffs’ skills to keep up with the changes rather than displacing them. Employers also need to value intellectual capital more than now, as well as rethink the demands being placed on employees.

“We are in the generation of instant response, where if you do not reply to an email within five minutes people get very upset with you. This has led to workplace stress and work related illness has increased at an alarming rate over the last decade,” one of the conference speakers said. “These in turn will lead to civil unrest, and political and social instability if we do not start looking at it seriously.”

However, one speaker disagreed: “I do not buy into the idea of having a work-life balance. I believe there will be no work-life and private-life distinction going forward. The future of work is going to be 24-7 and private life is also going to be 24-7.” ❀



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據 估計，科技將於2025年取代約半數的工作。面對勞動力收縮和技術嚴重短缺，這對香港來說或許是個好消息，但假如工人都成為博物館的展品，會對社會帶來甚麼改變呢？企業會否變成一台冷冰冰、自動化的機器，無需任何人際互動呢？學校可如何裝備學生，迎接美好、以科技為本的2020年代——假設他們在未來勞動力中仍佔一席位？

總商會最近舉辦「CEO人力資本大會」，主題為「未來工作」。會上，多位商界領袖和人力資源專家嘗試回應上述挑戰和其他相關議題。

從好的方面看，資訊科技的演進正改變人類對工作時間、地點和模式的選擇。對企業而言，科技讓他們可從全球各地物色人才，因為員工已無需再親身到辦公室上班。自動化亦可減省人手，同時提高生產力。

高盛一項研究顯示，有六至七成首次公開招股步驟和程序可由機器取代，而餘下的三至四成則由人手跟進。

其中一位講者強調：「企業可善用科技推動業務發展，從而令自己變得更具競爭力、效率和創新，因此他們不應對科技發展產生恐懼。」

另一方面，許多僱員害怕資訊科技演進，他們的恐懼亦不無道理。到了2025年，逾半職業將不再存在。從自動駕駛汽車、護老機械人以至全自動酒店，人工智能將改變我們的生活、工作和娛樂方式。

這些看似未來科幻小說的情節，當中的過程其實已發展多時。例如，汽車製造業在生產線引入機械人後，便從此轉型；銀行業亦於多年前開始設立自動理財中心；超市正緊隨步伐，以自助結賬櫃取代收銀員。的士司機認為Uber影響生意，但



破解迷思

儘管數碼時代正大大改變人才的管理方式，但基本原則將大致維持不變。

- **迷思1：時下大部分年青人的態度，與70年代截然不同。**
當我們回看自己的青年時期，以及當年選擇退學的蓋茨（Bill Gates）、喬布斯（Steve Jobs）和朱克伯格（Mark Zuckerberg），現今的青年人其實與70和80年代的相差無幾。
- **迷思2：現今的老闆都了解未來領袖的需要。**
老闆往往低估了年青人對工作性質和領導質素的重視，並高估了回報和工作與生活平衡的重要性。
- **迷思3：科技正革新企業培訓高級行政人員的方式。**
企業可於網上自行設計「現場」的個案研究，但他們仍傾向派遣高層員工前往海外作實地視察。
- **迷思4：Y世代？**
我們總喜歡把不同的年齡組別標籤和定型，但正如鄧小平說：「不管黑貓白貓，捉到老鼠就是好貓。」



具專業技能的未來員工是怎樣的？

大學一直為年輕人作好投身職場的準備，但有講者指出，現時大學生所接受的培訓，可能不適用於十年後的工作。企業要求員工擁有的技能範圍將更廣泛，博雅教育的畢業生很可能更受青睞。

一名講者在總商會舉辦的CEO人力資本大會上說：「我們需要檢討教育，現在大學與商界之間欠缺交流，令學生在大學期間無法獲取所需的工作技能。我們公司已不再只著眼於員工是否持有大學學位，因為我們明白每個人都具備不同的才能。」

正因如此，在職培訓及終身學習對企業而言將極其重要，好讓員工學習到應付工作的必要技能。「員工現有的技能缺乏可持續性，因此企業需要確保員工具備可持續發展的技能。」

隨著以合約制及專案形式聘請員工的情況愈來愈普遍，企業可以從世界各地招攬人才。員工現已無須親身前往辦公室，甚或無須身處香港，亦能完成工作。然而，香港的經濟以服務業為主，不少講者認為，吸引人才來港仍然重要。

「我認為吸引人才來港的關鍵，在於提供一個讓他們充分發揮所長的环境。他們渴望與所屬領域的專業人士交流合作，並成為專業網絡的一分子。因此，我們必須了解他們的需求，以及吸引和挽留這些人才的方法。」

他們不久也將要面對無人駕駛的士的競爭，因為各地已先後推出試行計劃。

然而，正如Uber的科技令的士業陷入困境，無人駕駛的士亦會令推出短短數年的Uber變得過時。科技發展之快，正徹底改變傳統的線性規劃過程，令商業計劃變得毫無意義。

變革非新事

變革已不是新事，亦未必是壞事。從古到今，人類都不斷經歷變革。工業革命也許為家庭工業帶來致命一擊，但卻是歷史的轉捩點，因為幾乎每個生活環節都或多或少受到影響——普遍發揮積極的作用。汽車取代了馬匹和四輪馬車，對馬蹄鐵匠來說是壞消息，但卻造就了汽車修理這門新興的行業。

不過，今時今日的分別在於變革的速度只會日益加快，生活和工作方式亦隨之改變。

其中一位講者預言：「人人都會結交新的機械人好友，其中一個是『維修員』，負責修理事物和處理家務；『速運』會把你從A地點送往B地點；『私人助理』會為你安排會議、餐廳訂座、籌辦派對、朗讀新聞……但你會面對一個危機，就是你跟『私人助理』的對話交流要比丈夫或妻子還多。」

隨著機械式的工作日趨自動化，「維修員」和「速運」將可處理呆板乏味的機械式工序。科技除了使低技術工作自動化，亦讓小型企業可運用全球各地的網絡、技術和客戶，從而創造



我們正逐漸成為科技的奴隸？

機構未來的致勝之道，在於擁有靈活性的工作團隊，以及掌握不同範疇的技術。在總商會「CEO人力資本大會」上，一名資訊科技專家向與會者表示：「勞動市場將出現大批自由工作者，企業可從網上以最相宜的價錢覓得最合適的人才，完成各項短期的工作。」

未來的辦公室將以時租的形式共用或分租，親身上班的員工將需攜同個人裝置。機構的架構將較精簡，高級管理人員與部門經理能夠同時同速共用團隊的資料庫，獲取有用的資料。

儘管未來的企業運作與工作模式似乎傾向從世界各地招募人才，合作完成不同項目，但不少講者認為公司的規模實際上或會縮小，而中小企的內部制衡機制較少，或可成為優勢。

一名講者說：「就現時所見，我認為科技是有助於工作及職場的一種工具，而非威脅。自動化可提高生產力和降低成本，從而帶動需求增加，促使公司招聘更多人手。」

有趣的是，會上沒有講者提及員工與客戶建立良好關係的重要性，亦沒有談及高效團隊合作的好處。反之，企業會著眼於盈利，以及自由工作者能否準時完成工作。

隨著愈來愈多客戶追求完整的服務體驗，而非純粹以最低價購買一項簡單的貨物或服務，這種冷漠不仁的商業概念便顯得背道而馳。以科技為本的企業似乎正逐漸摧毀創意，而科技本身亦會令人際互動和溝通變得麻木，然而交流正是創意及靈感的來源。

一名與會者問道：「隨著科技日新月異，一般人的生活早已跟智能手機融為一體。我們的工作時間亦延長至每周七天、每天24小時無休。我們是否該設法控制這個情況，並維持工作與生活平衡？抑或，這已成為無法抵擋的生活模式？」

公平的競爭環境，並促進公司的透明度，讓僱員可尋找與個人理念一致的企業，最終企業便可吸引合適的人才。

其中一位講者指出：「員工加盟一家公司的決定，日漸取決於該機構在社會上的角色。除非企業開始重視這一點，否則他們將於十年內銷聲匿跡。」

另一位講者甚至警誡會出現更嚴重的後果：「除非企業正視僱員的需要和期望，否則他們或無法覓得所需的人才，而他們漠不關心的態度，甚至會導致社會不安。」

各地的主要城市均有僱員發起大型示威活動，從歐洲的勞工不滿就業保障，到亞洲的工廠工人埋怨工作條件差，乃至美國的快餐店員工投訴工資偏低等。

擴大貧富差距

不少發達國家都備受失業率持續高企和工資停滯不前所困擾。在發展中國家，隨著科技、全球化和外判的趨勢令若干社群未能趕上發展步伐，堅尼系數的差距正以一個不可持續的幅度擴大。社會要克服的挑戰，是如何應對這些問題。

多位講者建議，僱主應不斷提升員工的技能，以緊貼變革，避免脫軌。僱主也得正視知識資本的重要性，並反思企業對員工的要求。

「我們置身即時回應的時代，要是你無法在五分鐘內回覆電郵，對方就會勃然大怒。這引致工作間的壓力和工作相關的疾病，在過去十年以驚人的速度增加。」其中一位講者表示：「假如現在不開始認真處理，這最終或會引起內亂，以及政治和社會不穩。」

不過，一位講者不表認同說：「我倒不贊同工作與生活平衡的概念。展望未來，我認為工作與私人生活之間將沒有區別。未來的工作將會是7天24小時無休，而私人生活亦然。」

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