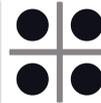




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I created a Google alert, and in the course of a week, there were 15 news items referencing skills. These ranged from academic to digital, from government to recruitment. It is most certainly a hot topic.

Important answers

The future is about finding the answers to two important questions; do you know what skills your people have? and do you know what skills they need next?

These questions are equally applicable regardless of whether you are an individual, a business or are looking to the development of our country.

We know that skills development is needed not only to progress our economy, but is equally important for businesses that are looking to future proof themselves in the wake of the fourth industrial revolution.

Driving high performance

Driving high performance means building skills. However, there is an important differentiation to make between knowledge and skill.

What we learn and accumulate through studying, reading and research is a body of knowledge. It is important to grow knowledge, whether you are a generalist, specialist or a multi-pod (someone with a diverse and varied set of interests).

Skills, however, is the application of the knowledge you have accumulated. It is when we begin to apply the information we have stored in our memories and are able to synthesis that when a skillset is developed.

Education systems have a developed and robust method of measuring knowledge using various academic tools and techniques such as assessments. The system is well versed in providing opportunities for individuals to grow their knowledge sets and to assess and benchmark what we know against industry standard or against our peers, but they fail to accurately measure skills.

This has often led to a disparity between what we learn at a university or college and actually being able to perform successfully in a work environment.

Machine frenzy

With the frenzy around the machines taking over jobs in the future, it becomes the responsibility of our business leaders and HR professionals to provide opportunities for individuals to retain their employability even if their jobs might be at risk.

However, doing so requires that we relook at the way in which we develop our employees' skills.

Gone are the days of trying to manage learning for staff or providing them with access to learning material that is only relevant for their job function of today. Doing so is a self-limiting exercise not only for the staff member, but for business too.

Simple focus

If you simply focus on the upskilling of your employees to perform the job function today, without having an eye on the future of that position or that person, you are essentially signing a death warrant for your business.

We need to unfurl the hand of management, loosen the grip on learning opportunities and find a way to enable continuous development in the organisation.

That is what skills development, driving high performance and talent management means for the next five to ten years. It means building an ecosystem which enables individuals to prepare themselves for what's next in their specialities, careers and positions.

The future will require your brain to become more diverse. We can no longer afford to think that we will pick one profession and stick to it for the next 30 years. That profession, even new ones, will quickly become outdated or synthesise and integrate with others to create new industries and with it, new careers.

We need to think outside of the box.



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