

# THE FUTURE WORK WEEK IS COMING. ARE YOU READY?

Do you remember the Jetsons? This 1960s cartoon from Hanna Barbera depicted what life would be like 100 years into the future. We saw flying cars, robotic maids, moving walkways and gasp—a 9-hour work week<sup>1</sup>. This animated classic predicted a few trends that came to fruition, but for the most part, its vision for business today remains slightly out of orbit.

In the same decade, IBM economist, Joseph Froomkin, predicted that automation would birth a 20-hour work week within the century<sup>2</sup>. While we've yet to see the shortened work week and flying cars, today's experts are strategizing about ways to help employees and companies streamline operations in the years ahead. Below are three steps that you can take today to get ready for business tomorrow.

## 1. RE-SKILL FOR TOMORROW'S DEMANDS.

Here comes the difference that five years can make. In 2015, the Top 10 skills needed, according to *The Future of Jobs* report by the World Economic Forum<sup>3</sup>, were:

- Complex problem solving
- People management
- Negotiation
- Service orientation
- Active listening
- Coordinating with others
- Critical thinking
- Quality control
- Judgment & decision making
- Creativity

In 2020<sup>3</sup>, complex problem solving remains #1, but creativity jumps from 10th to 3rd place. On deck for one year from now is:

- Complex problem solving
- Creativity
- Coordinating with others
- Judgment & decision making
- Negotiation
- Critical thinking
- People management
- Emotional intelligence
- Service orientation
- Cognitive flexibility

So take inventory of your strengths and weaknesses. Do some research on which skills will be in demand by 2030, and start recalibrating for what's next. The future will be here before you know it—flying cars or not.



## 2. EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY AND THE EVOLVING WORKPLACE.

If remote work is an option, this structure is predicted to be embraced by many businesses when we reach 2027<sup>4</sup>. Would you like to excel at working remotely? Consider creating a designated workspace in your home, free of distractions and excess noise. Utilize timers, daily goals and other tools to maintain productivity and the discipline to stay focused. You'll also need to excel at communicating effectively in both virtual and in-person environments. Mastering additional technologies that companies use to stay connected can also help you excel in a virtual office setting.

Companies can examine their policies to keep pace with competition and operate in a spirit of continuous improvement. Studies have shown that flexible work arrangements outside of the 9-to-5 model boost employee engagement, productivity and creativity. That matters, since creativity is forecasted as a top skill in years to come<sup>3</sup>. Lower absenteeism and better health are other benefits.

“Although many organizations are still in the process of adapting to flexible work arrangements, the employee motivation and creativity that most businesses need to increase competitiveness could come from opportunities outside the traditional 9-to-5 model,” says DeVry University Professor Jacqueline Saldana, Doctor of Management.

### 3. PREPARE FOR PHILANTHROPY.

Social responsibility helps the planet, people and business. It makes sense, then, that in 2015, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>5</sup>, which provides a blueprint for global peace and prosperity. Governments and the corporate world have been recognizing that placing heart at the center of business models makes for a brighter future. Professionals are more likely to be attracted and retained when they recognize that profit has purpose, because they’ll have the opportunity to embrace and lead social change.

“Corporate social responsibility is no longer a trend—it is the essential strategy for quality, sustainability and profitability,” says Saldana. “If we have learned one thing from business history, it’s that organizations that follow socially responsible values such as people, profit and planet are way more successful than their counterparts. In fact, businesses that are not socially responsible continue to struggle with poor reputation, public backlash and profit losses as a result of paying expensive fines, legal fees and additional marketing costs to restore their reputation.”

### PLACE YOURSELF IN THIS PICTURE.

Take a moment to visualize the future with your footsteps in it. Focus on which parts of these forecasts excite and inspire you. Where do you see yourself in 10 years as an employee (or employer)? Place yourself into this picture, and let’s try to answer a few questions.

### WHAT IF?

Maybe you’ll have earned an additional certification or degree. A lifelong student never stops learning. It’s how doctors and dentists stay informed of the latest medicines and technologies to treat their patients’ health ailments. Medical or not, you can apply this practice to your field and continue to grow as trends change.

### HOW ABOUT?

Perhaps you’ll work in a different manner with new processes and tools. You know your patterns of learning and working better than anyone else, because you are the one using them day in and day out. Reflect on how your prioritization of work has evolved over the years. How have you learned to save time? Maximize personal productivity?

### YOU COULD...

Are you drawn to managing a program that gives back to the community and aids others? Many retailers support local schools or branches of charitable causes within the United States. Will your employer add one? Could you land in a role in which you manage one?

### REDISCOVER POSSIBLE

Look back on your childhood at what you wanted to be when you grew up. For whatever way your ambitions are inclined, look ahead to discover for the first time, or rediscover, where there could be a place for you. Make history in the future that has yet to be written.

Reference Sources:

<sup>1</sup> <https://cartoonscrapbook.com/cartoons/the-jetsons-1962/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://time.com/3754781/1965-predictions-computers/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/the-10-skills-you-need-to-thrive-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.upwork.com/press/2017/10/17/freelancing-in-america-2017>

<sup>5</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

---

Through the education partnership between your employer and DeVry University, you have access to education benefits in support of your professional and life goals. To learn about transferring qualifying credits, tuition rate savings, and other benefits available to you through your employer, contact your HR Representative.

