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Building the future of work together

Work: a vital part of life

by Viktorija Proskurovska

Work has always played a pivotal role in shaping societies and individual lives, and as we navigate an evolving landscape, it seems to remain a cornerstone of human existence. In November 2023, the ADAPT conference questioned whether work would eventually disappear from our lives. The answer was a resounding “no”.

This sentiment aligns with work's fundamental role in fulfilling our basic safety needs, as depicted in Maslow's hierarchy. The impact of work extends far beyond mere income; it influences our ability to care for loved ones, contributes to our self-esteem, and provides opportunities for future growth. Yet, the evolving nature of work requires a delicate balance between progress and adaptation. The critical element in this evolving paradigm is flexibility – the ability to mould work to fit into our lives rather than the other way around.

The consequences of a world without work are profound. The intrinsic value of work goes beyond financial remuneration. It provides a sense of confidence, self-reliance, and dignity. Studies reveal a direct link between unemployment and adverse effects on physical and social health. The emotional toll is equally significant, with feelings of worthlessness and unhappiness disproportionately affecting those without work. To understand this better, a [study](#) by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation comparing the sentiments of employed and unemployed individuals highlights the stark contrast, emphasising the importance of work for our overall well-being.

Moreover, work fosters social interactions, introduces us to new interests, and contributes to our self-fulfilment. Finding a job that aligns with our talents, skills, and interests is crucial for achieving a sense of purpose and accomplishment. As [the data](#) suggests, most people across different cultures acknowledge the primary importance of work in their lives.

Despite concerns about the impact of technology on employment, historical trends demonstrate that technological revolutions ultimately create more jobs. However, the caveat lies in the necessity to reskill and upskill to meet the demands of the evolving job market. The fear of job loss due to automation is valid, but adapting to these changes through continuous learning is the key to securing future employment opportunities.

While the concept of universal basic income may seem appealing, it poses economic and behavioural risks. A one-size-fits-all approach may not be the solution, as work holds different meanings for

different individuals. The shift from living to work to working to live is evident in modern society, reflecting a desire for a more balanced and fulfilling approach to life.

The younger generations, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, are reshaping the narrative around work. They prioritise flexible work arrangements, social engagement, and personal development over traditional notions of career progression. The rise of the gig economy and the emphasis on work contributing to personal goals rather than corporate ideals underscore a shift in values.

As we embrace the evolution of work, we must recognise its multifaceted role in our lives – from self-sustainment to social interactions and self-fulfilment. Adapting to the changing landscape of work requires a commitment to lifelong learning, flexibility, and an understanding that diverse forms of work are essential to cater to individuals' varying needs and demands. The world of work is dynamic, and our ability to embrace change will determine our collective success in creating a fulfilling future.

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