Why we need our human skills more than ever

There is much talk on the development of digital technologies and the impact it is having and will continue to have, on the future of work. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, automation, robotics, virtual reality, augmented reality, big data, digital platforms... the list goes on. These technologies are enhancing our businesses in ways that ten years ago we could not imagine. But they are also changing the way we work.

There is a big shift in the division between the behavioural and the cognitive tasks as automation, data analytics and other clever technologies drive procedural change within organisations in the search for greater and greater levels of efficiency. The demands of the human workforce are progressively in the realm of cognitive tasks, and these require a specific set of skills, namely human skills.

Organisations large and small have an ever-increasing need for innovative thinking, creative problem solving and dextrous decision making, and all of these need to happen within the context of constant and rapid change.

So what do leaders and team members need to drive purpose and profit in business within the context of digital progression? Certainly flexibility, agility

and resilience.

Flexibility – constantly looking for ways to adapt, enhance, adopt and conjoin, to predict and prepare for future challenges.

Agility – the ability to respond rapidly, and positively, to change.

Resilience – the ability to reflect, to turn failure into learning, to come back fighting after a setback.

How do we build flexibility, agility and resilience? We need to appeal to the strengths of our teams in any given situation. This means that we need first to build teams that have high levels of trust and open communication, that see the benefit in collaboration and sharing – teams that value individual differences, strengths and skills sets.

We need to build an organisational culture that supports risk and exploration, one that gives autonomy to its members to develop as individuals, and where there is support for vulnerability and ambiguity.

We need to put curiosity at the heart of our values and build an environment where questioning is the norm.

We need to focus on wellbeing and put humans back at the core of business.

We need to build a purposeful business, which align strategic goals to individual goals.

Is your organisation putting the effort into developing the skills, attitudes and behaviours that keep us at the top of our game, and in charge, so that we can make use of new digital technology effectively and efficiently to grow our businesses?

Alexandra Pearson is an entrepreneur, facilitator and a trainer. She worked in

China for 25 years where she established several successful organisations. She has trained and facilitated leaders, managers and employees in personal development, leadership and creative thinking skills, and has cycled from Beijing to Xanadu 25 times. Alex is now Co-director of <u>The Yurt Academy</u> and a Lecturer in Management at The Business School, University of Sussex.

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