INTERVIEW ANALYSIS:

A LOOK AHEAD TO 2030

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FUTURE TALENT COUNCIL
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Future Talent Council

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Executive Summary

As one thought leader noted, artificial intelligence (AI), automation, the Internet of Things and technical disruption in general are the catalysts for many of the challenges talent will face in the future. All policy makers, 71 percent of thought leaders in higher education and nearly 80 percent of business leaders said AI and automation are topics of discussion at the highest levels in their organizations.

There is a high level of uncertainty, though, about what kinds of jobs will be needed in the future and how they can equip talent now with the technical skills needed for the future. There will be a greater need for technical skills, but what exactly those skills will be is difficult to predict because of the rate of technical change.

Thought leaders from all stakeholder groups agree: developing leaders for the future is a high priority, with 96 percent of thought leaders from business, 95 percent of thought leaders from higher education and all public policy leaders saying this was on their agendas at the highest levels. Thought leaders from business and education believe the leadership skills for the future will be soft skills, not technical skills.

Some interviewers mentioned the perceived millennial reluctance to assume leadership positions to some interviewees. Overall, employers felt that while millennials may not want to take leadership roles in traditional, hierarchical organizations, they are willing to take leadership positions on teams. Employers see a trend toward flatter organizations where “team leaders” or “project leaders” will rotate among different team members and replace unit managers or directors.

Thought leaders are extremely aware that the shelf lives of knowledge and skills are shrinking, and they know they need plans in place now to anticipate reskilling people, particularly those in industries and professions most at risk because of AI and

automation—truck drivers, for example—although few industries will be immune to the effects of digital disruption.

There was consensus that like it or not, delivery of lifelong learning must change, at least after the undergraduate level. Apprenticeships, just-in-time training, online training, experiential learning, simulations, individualized learning platforms, module learning, and university/employer partnerships to develop certificates were all discussed as learning delivery modalities that would increase in the future to foster lifelong learning. Several employers said that millennials and upcoming generations love to learn, expect to continuously learn, and will walk away if those opportunities are not given to them, so offering lifelong learning opportunities is increasingly seen as a retention tool.

Introduction

This report analyses nearly 120 interviews about the future of talent conducted by Future Talent Council (FTC) staff members with thought leaders from around the world in the fall of 2017 and the winter of 2018. These thought leaders came from the public and private business sectors, higher education and government, and represented a variety of industries, from advertising, transportation, energy, finance, manufacturing, telecommunications, to higher education and more. Forty-six of the thought leaders interviewed were from North America (the U.S., Canada and Mexico), 45 thought leaders were from continental Europe, 11 were from the U.K., and the remainder were from India, China, Japan, Kenya, Hong Kong and Australia.

Thought leaders were asked to focus on three of the eight imperatives FTC has identified as trends that will have a significant impact on talent and talent development by 2030. Those three imperatives are artificial intelligence (AI) and automation, leadership, and lifelong learning. The remaining five FTC imperatives are:

- Big data and predicative analytics
- Diversity/employing and empowering marginalized populations
- Ethics, transparency and sustainability
- Flexibility and work-life integration
- Global talent workforce

Interviewers were provided scripts and did try to follow them as closely as possible, but because thought leaders were often passionate about one or two topics, and in some cases, time, prevented discussing all three imperatives. In other cases, discussions naturally veered as interviewers and thought leaders probed other areas of interest about the future of talent. This makes making an apples-to-apples analysis challenging; however, definite trends emerged.

To identify trends, recorded interviews were reviewed and loosely transcribed into a word processing program. From there, each written interview was reviewed for trends and entered into an Access database for analysis.

AI and Automation

With a few exceptions, AI and automation is at the forefront of all thought leaders' minds. The majority (71 percent) of thought leaders in higher education said that AI and automation was a topic of discussion at their universities, although it was a higher priority for technical universities than for more traditional liberal arts universities.

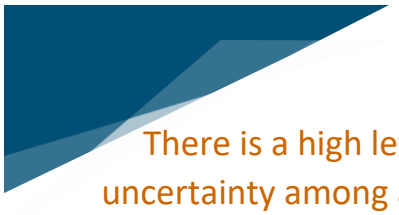
Technical disruption be the catalyst for many of the challenges talent will face in the future.

Nearly 80 percent of thought leaders in the business sector said AI and automation were high priorities for them at the corporate level. There were a few outliers, however, but with good reason: One interviewee came from the mining industry and said that while they had discussed AI and automation, they needed to proceed carefully because automating mining practices could impact entire communities in which they have locations. His concern was to ensure that if automation in his industry happened, the social implications would be thoroughly thought out. Another interviewee from the human services sector said that because his industry was so high-touch, AI and automation would be difficult to fully integrate and would not impact as many jobs in his industry. All three interviewees from government said that AI was a top agenda item.

There is a high level of uncertainty among all three stakeholder groups about what kinds of jobs will be needed in the future and how they can equip talent now with the technical skills needed for the future. As one educator said, "we don't know what we don't know." All stakeholder groups agree that there will be a greater need for technical skills, but what exactly those skills will be is difficult to predict because of the rate of technical change. Higher education, however, is not resting on its laurels; 73 percent of interviewees from this stakeholder group said that courses on AI and automation have already been or will soon be added to their universities' curricula, and often across all majors, not just in STEM majors.

There is a caveat to this, though. When discussing AI and automation, most thought leaders combined big data and analytics with AI and automation in their discussions, whether in higher education discussing technical majors, or thought leaders in business discussing AI and automation's impact on their industries or professions. In addition, during AI and automations discussions, seven thought leaders in the business sector specifically discussed cybersecurity as a concern, as did several thought leaders in higher education. Thought leaders in both stakeholder groups also talked about data privacy when referring to AI and automation. This may mean that when discussing AI and automation, interviewees reframed the question in their minds as a broader "digital disruption" discussion.

Not all interviewees were asked directly if they thought AI and automation would result in job losses, but of those who were asked, educators and government stakeholders were a little more optimistic than business leaders, saying that AI and automation would cause job losses in the near term, but in the long term, more and more meaningful jobs would be created. Business thought leaders were slightly more likely to say that AI and automation would cause jobs to be lost completely, particularly lower-skilled jobs. Business thought leaders, however, were more likely than stakeholders in higher education and government to note that AI and automation would be more like an evolution than a revolution, and like other historic industrial upheavals, in the long run, people will be reskilled, and a new normal will be established.



There is a high level of uncertainty among all three stakeholder groups about what kinds of jobs will be needed in the future.

Nearly a dozen leaders in higher education commented without prompt that their institutions were discussing not only the impact of AI and automation on the university and the required skills sets of their graduating students, but on the ethical and societal implications of AI and automation. Only three interviewees from the business stakeholder group mentioned this in their discussions about AI and automation.

Leadership

Thought leaders from all stakeholder groups agree: developing leaders for the future is a high priority, with 96 percent of thought leaders from business, 95 percent of thought leaders from higher education and all public policy leaders saying this was on their agendas at the highest levels.

Business and higher education stakeholder groups agree on the soft skills that will be needed for the future.

Most interviewees from the business sector said they already had leadership development programs in place or had plans to launch or relaunch new ones, and perhaps with good reason. Of the business leaders who were asked directly if they had the leaders in place now in their organizations for the leadership skills anticipated for the future, 59 percent said they did not; only 42 percent felt confident they did. Most felt that the issue in terms of future leadership skills lay not with incoming generations—more than 80 percent of business leaders responding to this question said they thought the younger generations were coming into the workplace with the basic leadership skills they were looking for—but with their existing leaders. Thirty interviewees from the business sector said that they have current leaders who simply won't, or can't, learn the leadership skills that will be needed for the future.

This is a concern thought leaders in higher education share, both in terms of university leadership and in the inability of seasoned professors to adapt to new technologies. Younger professors, say interviewees from higher education, are more eager to use new learning technologies in the classroom, and this is appealing to incoming students who are accustomed to it.

But what exactly are the leadership skills of tomorrow? Except for two interviewees in the higher education stakeholder group, they are soft skills, not technical skills—and the two exceptions in the higher education stakeholder group said both soft and technical skills. Interviewees in the business and higher education stakeholder groups shared a high level of agreement about what those soft skills are:

LEADERSHIP SKILLS FOR 2030	
Business Stakeholder Group	**Higher Education Stakeholder Group**
Agile learning and working	Agility
Authentic leadership	Analytic skills
Change management	Authentic leadership
Coaching	Change management
Collaboration	Coaching
Communication	Communication
Critical thinking	Critical thinking
Entrepreneurial mindset	Entrepreneurial mindset
Flatter hierarchy	Flexibility
Flexibility	Innovative thinking
Innovative thinking	Mindfulness
Meaningful purpose	Open mindsets
Open mindsets	Problem solving
Problem solving	Strategic/visionary thinking
Strategic/visionary thinking	Team Orientation
Team Orientation	

Some interviewers mentioned the perceived millennial reluctance to assume leadership positions to some interviewees. Overall, business leaders felt that while millennials may not want to take leadership roles in traditional, hierarchical organizations, they are willing to take leadership positions on teams. Employers see a trend toward flatter organizations where "team leaders" or "project leaders" will rotate among different team members and replace unit managers or directors.

Educators appear to be moving away from using the term "leadership skills" to developing "whole person" skills, although the actual skills remain the same. In fact, one interviewee from the higher education stakeholder group said that "leadership is a 20th century concept." The trend is away from selecting leaders for their technical skills and more for their human skills. At least four universities interviewed recently started leadership development programs focused on developing the "whole person." This trend becomes more apparent when discussing lifelong learning.

Lifelong Learning

Five interviewees from the employer stakeholder group did not discuss lifelong learning, but of those who did, all of them said lifelong learning was a topic of much discussion at the highest levels of their organizations, as did all the public policy makers interviewed. Of the educators interviewed who discussed lifelong learning, all but two said it was a high priority item in their universities.

Thought leaders are extremely aware that the shelf lives of knowledge and skills is increasingly shortening, and they know they need plans in place now to anticipate reskilling people, particularly those in industries and professions most at risk because of AI and automation—truck drivers, for example, although few industries will be immune to the effects of digital disruption.

Most believe that lifelong learning is an issue that universities, employers and public policy makers must work on collaboratively, with few exceptions (a few European employers felt that the reskilling of lower-skill workers whose jobs may become obsolete should be a government-led solution with vocational school input). Lifelong learning of higher-skilled workers was a role for universities, employers and the individuals themselves.

There was consensus that like it or not, delivery of lifelong learning must change, at least after the undergraduate level. Apprenticeships, just-in-time training, online training, experiential learning, simulations, individualized learning platforms, module learning, and university/employer partnerships to develop certificates were all discussed as learning delivery modalities that would increase in the future to foster lifelong learning. Several employers said that millennials and upcoming generations love to learn, expect to continuously learn, and will walk away if those opportunities are not given to them, so continuous learning is increasingly seen as a retention tool.

There were some differences of note among stakeholder groups. Only five interviewees from higher learning voluntarily cited apprenticeships and internships as positive ways to acquire knowledge and skills, whereas 14 interviewees from the business stakeholder group did. And perhaps because many of those interviewed in the business

stakeholder group were not in learning and development specifically, only five mentioned blended learning as a way to foster lifelong learning, whereas 28 interviewees in higher education discussed blended learning as a positive way to deliver knowledge and skills.

Thought leaders are extremely aware that the shelf lives of knowledge and skills is increasingly shortening.

Twenty-two interviewees from higher learning discussed certificates and "micro degrees" as a future trend in learning delivery, yet only five interviewees in the corporate stakeholder groups raised that possibility. And while 85 percent of interviewees in higher education said that online and virtual learning would increase, only 13 interviewees in the corporate stakeholder group raised that as a possibility.

Nearly 68 percent of interviewees in higher education said that, at least at the undergraduate level, education would continue to be delivered face-to-face. (Only three interviewees from the business stakeholder group thought that undergraduate education would continue to be delivered face-to-face only.) Others from higher education felt that the future of undergraduate education would become a mixture of online and face-to-face delivery. It is this face-to-face interaction, higher education thought leaders believe, that gets to the development of those leadership "soft skills" needed for the future.

"Soft skills," "whole person development," and "the delivery of a liberal arts education to teach critical thinking skills" were mentioned frequently by interviewees from higher education, perhaps because of the uncertainty in what technical skills will be needed because of the rate of technical change. All three policy makers also said the importance of a solid liberal arts education will rise in the future.

At the post-graduate level, thought leaders do see a rise in virtual, online learning because the need for human interaction is needed less. Interviewees in higher education also mentioned the trend toward "flipped classrooms" and a general trend toward offering more experiential, case-based learning.

Other Imperatives

Interviewers encouraged thought leaders to mention any other imperatives they thought were high on their organizations' agendas. Diversity was raised by 17 interviewees from the corporate stakeholder groups and by five interviewees in the higher education group. Interviewees from the corporate stakeholder group also mentioned work-life balance and sustainability. Interestingly, diversity was the only shared imperative between the two groups (public policy interviewees did not discuss any other imperatives beyond the top three). Twenty-two interviewees from the higher education stakeholder group mentioned global cultural education and/or competence and global virtual work—not one interviewee from the corporate stakeholder group discussed the global imperative. Other topics mentioned included cybersecurity (by interviewees from the corporate stakeholder group), growth mindsets (from interviewees from higher education and the corporate stakeholder groups, the importance of developing a purpose-driven organization (eight interviewees from the corporate stakeholder groups) and individual educational plans (from two higher education interviewees).

Conclusion

Thought leaders from all stakeholder groups agree that AI, automation and digital disruption will profoundly change the future workplace and the knowledge and skills talent will need to succeed in a VUCA business world. Employers, leaders from higher education and public policy makers also understand that these challenges cannot be addressed by any single stakeholder group, but rather collaboratively among all three stakeholder groups to secure the future of talent through lifelong learning, work and public policy.

Methodology and Sample

Approximately 130 thought leaders from around the world were interviewed in the fall of 2017 and the winter of 2018. These thought leaders came from the public and private business sectors, higher education, and government and represented a variety of industries, from advertising, transportation, energy, finance, manufacturing, telecommunications, higher education and more. This report analyses nearly 120 of those interviews. This analysis represents a truly global view. Forty-six of the thought leaders interviewed were from North America (the U.S., Canada and Mexico), 45 thought leaders were from continental Europe, 11 were from the U.K., and the remainder were from India, China, Japan, Kenya, Hong Kong and Australia.

Thought leaders interviewed came from the Future Talent Council's (FTC) stakeholder groups. Fifty-seven interviewees came from the private and public business sectors, 58 interviewees were from institutions of higher education, and three were from ministries of labor or education in Europe. In the business sector, those interviewed included CEOs, chief human resource officers, and global heads of talent management and acquisition.

Interviews conducted in the higher education sector included university presidents, chancellors, rectors, deans and assistant deans, provosts and vice provosts, and leaders of academic centers. This group often provided insights from both the institution's point of view on the future of learning and leadership, and at the student development and learning levels.

To accommodate busy executive schedules and international time zones, five FTC staff members from the U.S., the U.K. and Singapore conducted the interviews. Interviewers were provided scripts to follow that provided an overview of FTC's purpose and mission, and the eight imperatives the council had identified as issues that will have a profound effect on the future of talent by 2030.

ABOUT FUTURE TALENT COUNCIL

The Future Talent Council is a global strategy group focused on understanding and influencing the future of talent and work. We engage the foremost educational, political and business leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas. To address the pending global employment issues, The Future Talent Council (FTC) was formed in 2017 by Lars-Henrik Friis Molin, the founder of Universum Global and numerous other companies. Future Talent Council is based in **Stockholm** with offices in Singapore, Sydney and New York.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to bring together the leaders of higher educational institutions, senior executives of major employers, and governmental officials who are involved in labor matters to collaborate on the critical talent issues that will affect the global economy.

CONTACT US

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