



How smart workers can future-proof their career prospects



Georgina Barrick

It is no secret that the world of work is shifting, and that individuals need to prepare for this changing landscape if they want their skills to remain in demand. And the way to do so, is to become a SMART worker, says employment expert Georgina Barrick.

“Within the next decade – and we are already seeing this happening to some degree – the traditional employer/employee relationship will be largely a thing of the past,” says Georgina Barrick, MD of Cassel&Co, Insource ICT and IT Edge – the specialised recruitment agencies of ADvTECH Resourcing focusing on Finance, Accounting and IT.

She says that by 2030, historical workplace structures will overwhelmingly have been replaced by the concept of workers as consultants and their own bosses, who sell their services to client companies.

“As we move away from the idea of the employee working for one company, depending on that company for everything from their salary to the promise that they will in all likelihood be able to rely on that company for a safe and ongoing income, individuals need to understand how they can navigate the workplace market in the not-so-distant future,” says Barrick.

And this is where being SMART comes in.



“SMART is an acronym for the profile of future-fit workers: Specialist, Mobile, Adaptable, Resilient and Talented. Being SMART will be the key to surviving and thriving in the new world of work,” she says.

Barrick says the driving forces behind the changing work environment include rapid and ongoing technological innovation, which is responsible for the disruption of historic industries and old economic systems. This gives rise to new industries and jobs, but also means that an estimated 50% of all jobs currently in existence – including white collar roles – will become automated.

While these are certainly **scary times**, they are also **exciting**, as we enter an age where **the goal of a bigger return for less work may be achieved**.

“Already, we are seeing evidence of so-called creative destruction in rising global unemployment, declining average length of service, increasing mid-career transitions and disruption across all industries,” says Barrick.

“Over the next five years, the World Economic Forum estimates that we’ll see the decline of job families like Office, Administration, Manufacturing and Production. Conversely, there should be a rise in the importance of Business and Financial Operations, Information Technology, Mathematical, Architectural and Engineering roles.

“While these are certainly scary times, they are also exciting, as we enter an age where the goal of a bigger return for less work may be achieved, but only if you have the right skills and are able to adapt to a rapidly changing work environment.”

Barrick says global research has identified four major trends that will impact the world of work over the next 15 years:

1. FLEXIBILITY

“Globally, we are seeing a continuation of the growing trend towards short term work. According to the International Labour Organisation’s ‘The Changing Nature of Jobs’, 75% of the global workforce is currently employed on temporary or short-term contracts.

“It is believed that by 2030, workers will work ‘with’, not ‘for’, companies and will work with multiple ‘clients’ simultaneously, joining skills guilds, rather than becoming employees.

“The focus will be on knowledge workers, who can do their jobs anywhere and at any time.

“This idea of workers as entrepreneurs will promote flexibility and autonomy – and will benefit high-skill workers.”

2. LIFELONG LEARNING

Already, the idea that you study and then use what you’ve learned to follow a career at one company throughout your life has become obsolete, notes Barrick.

“Lifelong learning, where workers constantly reskill or renew skills every 5 years, is becoming the norm,” she says.



3. QUALITY VS QUANTITY

“The emphasis is shifting away from chasing money at all costs to a focus on critical values, like work/life balance, happiness and fulfilment,” says Barrick.

“In future, there will increasingly be a shift away from the culture of ‘overwork’ towards a system where work is enmeshed in life – and reward is based on expertise and results, and not on job title or length of service.”

4. TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

Technology already enables remote work and, as fibre becomes the norm in South Africa, internet speed is no longer the inhibitor it was 10 years ago.

“Over the next 15 years, it’s predicted that rapid technological innovation will promote 24/7 work performed by employees in different geographic locations and time zones. The traditional notion of a ‘corner office’ as we know it today will become obsolete as workers work remotely, hot desk and collaborate in ways we can’t yet imagine.”

“Ultimately what all of this means, is that individuals need to become more adaptable, and be able to manage their careers with greater resilience and flexibility,” says Barrick.

“They also need to become adept at building their personal brands and selling themselves on a fluid job market. Reputation management, customer relations and negotiation will be key to the worker of the future. Additionally, they need to take responsibility for lifelong learning and regular upskilling, with a good dash of entrepreneurship thrown in.”



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Employers of the future also need to adapt, she warns.

“They will need to be able to manage complexity and ambiguity effectively, and quickly and efficiently identify skills gaps and tap into the freelance market. Additionally, employers should already start investigating how they can develop collaborative, global, and virtual working environments in order to attract the best talent. »

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