



## **Maximising your potential in the changing world of work**

The world of work is changing, fast as a result of many factors including; growth in service industries and decline in manufacturing; more workers employed from abroad e.g. India and China; need for more developed and sophisticated skills; a greater need to keep skills updated throughout your life as work needs change; a larger proportion of mature workers as part of the whole employee mix and with people working longer and harder because of the pension shortage.

People need to earn more money to fund not only the basics such as fuel and food, but also consumerism driven lifestyles. A guaranteed annual pay rise is no longer a certainty and rewards are increasingly performance related. Life expectancy is also increasing, so people need to earn even more money to fund their retirement. The result? People work harder and harder when they often they want the opposite. With the proportion of the population aged over 55 growing, this also puts huge pressure on money needed to fund the health service.

### **A problem = an opportunity**

The changing world of work is challenging and yet provides positive challenges and opportunities at the same time. The world can literally be your oyster, with opportunities to work abroad and to have a much greater variety of jobs or careers than previous



generations. There are many more flexible work options available but with pensions a less common benefit, it is essential to create a long-term strategy and plan for yourself for the future, both career wise and also financially.

Generation Y (18-28 year olds) may want everything now, but they also carry the responsibility of funding an ageing population on their shoulders in an uncertain and fast changing world, with the cost of living growing. Responsibility is a key word now, people need to make their own career happen and keep their skills updated, which takes time, focus and confidence.

Commuting longer hours and working harder creates stress, tiredness, lack of time for self and family life, with a knock on effect on relationships, health, well being and confidence.

Anxiety, depression and obesity are all growing and drinking alcohol and drugs use to relax or escape is on the increase. All these factors will affect what people achieve at work, as well as how they feel about themselves, which will influence both their ability to be productive and also their likelihood of making a big change to do what they really want.

Work related factors have a huge impact in society and with work taking up so many hours of life, it is vital for happiness and fulfilment to find a job and career you love.



Employers need their employees to work harder and to get more work from less people. Stress, tiredness and the anxiety and fear of individuals all inhibit clarity of thought and confidence, essential for the high productivity and engagement that companies seek.

### **Why is career change difficult for people?**

Change is scary because the brain naturally finds it easier to repeat the same patterns and habits and it takes more effort to create new neural pathways. Work is such a huge part of people's lives. It affects their identities, financial situation and future prospects, confidence, perceived status and emotional and financial security.

How people feel affects what they do and many people have low self esteem and natural fears such as fear of failure, fear of success, fear of rejection, fear of making the wrong decision and regretting it. These fears can be paralysing and lead to procrastination, overwhelm and inaction, resulting in an individual staying stuck. Instead of 'fight or flight', it's 'freeze'.

As it is natural for humans to progress and grow, resistance to change can lead to ill health and reduced confidence, with someone mentally beating himself or herself up for not making the change they want to happen. This is stronger amongst certain demographic groups and professions.

Perfectionists often take longer to make changes. Self-promotion is not easy for women, they are uncomfortable with it because their brains are programmed to put others' needs ahead of their own. But



women need to learn how to sing their own praises. Accountants and lawyers often find it harder than others to promote and sell themselves. Creative people can create so many ideas and options that they become overwhelmed by too many choices and limit their success through lack of focus, or don't make a decision because of overwhelm.

Career change is also scary because it involves moving from your comfort zone of being known and liked and entering a new environment where you are not known and have to start again. Fear of making the wrong decision increases with age. People have more to lose and larger financial and family commitments and can get set in their ways and play safe.

When completely changing career, not only do people have to deal with their own fears and anxieties, they have to deal with the fears and anxieties of parents, friends and peers.

With uncertainty about pensions, the economic outlook in the UK and around the world unstable, India and China becoming the emerging sources of talent, threat of terrorism and an increasingly crowded country and expensive lifestyle, it can be tempting to cling on to what you have and adopt the 'better the devil you know approach' when actually there is no more safety and security in full time employment than there is in self employment.

Self-employment presents its own challenges; freedom and choice on the positive side, but an infinite number of things to do and a need to manage yourself and create clear boundaries between work and home life.



Whether you stay where you are or make a career change, it is vital to know who you really are and what makes you different and better than your competitors. You need to have a clear vision for where you want to be and how to get there. To have a personal and professional development plan is essential to keep your skills up to date, whether you are self employed or employed.

Investing time to understand your target audience's characteristics and needs and insights about what is important to them, what motivates them and then to target them in the right way and at the right time is time well spent. The same applies whether you are seeking a promotion with your current employer; getting a new job with a new employer; setting up your own business to attract clients/customers, and when changing career direction. The same applies to marketing and managing yourself better. Human beings are endlessly creative about coming up with ways of stopping their success or productivity or sabotaging their potential! Often they don't even realise that they are doing it.

### **Predicted future changes**

Here are some of Energise's predictions about future changes in work:



- Data indicates that the UK's roads are going to get more and more congested, so working from home/flexible working is a simple way to stop productivity from being lost
- Support is needed for the 55+ to keep their skills updated, especially in technology. They are a potentially rich resource for companies that is currently untapped or even ignored and rejected
- Formal and informal mediation to help younger and older workers work alongside each other and older workers to change their attitudes and beliefs about young people 'serving their time', as they did going up the career ladder, and to feel comfortable about working for a boss who is younger than them.
- Greater emphasis on playing to strengths, with females appreciated for and utilised in a more targeted way for their skills, i.e. nurturing, multitasking and building rapport and relationships.
- More young people setting up businesses at a young age and needing support because of the limited experience they possess because of their youth. Support/mentoring for their natural enthusiasm and to avoid getting into debt or bankruptcy.
- Retirement age going up and saving for retirement compulsory.
- More flexible working practices for all – working mothers and carers of aging dependents need it but more to the point, many people want it and would be more motivated and productive as a result. Employers who are pioneers in this area, especially in traditional professions such as law will get the cream of the crop of talent, as others get left behind



- More mentoring e.g. for women to help them get on in a work infrastructure that is a legacy of a historically male dominated world
- More female owned businesses. The UK has half as many female led businesses as the US. (Source John Hutton, Secretary of state for business)
- Growth in both employer and employee branding.  
'Inspirational management and corporate reputation are the most important factors when choosing a new employer'  
(Source = Universum survey 2000 professionals Career Times Feb 08)
- Learning and development will become more personalised, targeted and real time, woven into every day work rather than separate to it e.g. coaching, action learning sets across departments, mentoring etc
- Meditation in its simplest form as well as other stress management techniques will be introduced to help increase productivity, better manage stress and improve well being

## **Conclusions**

Overall individuals need to take responsibility for themselves and their careers and finances and have real clarity about who they are and what differentiates them from others with similar experience. They need to keep their skills, both technical and interpersonal up to date and honed in an exponentially changing world and see change as their friend, not their enemy.

Every person needs to have a clear employee brand and take responsibility for their own career. A targeted strategy, plan and



SMART goals, including continual personal and professional development will help to steer a course towards your own vision, whatever change and uncertainty happens along the way.

It's challenging being in middle management. 30-50 year olds have young Generation Y sniffing at their heels, hungry for responsibility and to get on fast and be developed. Above them they have the 50+ staying longer pre retirement because they can't afford or choose not to retire, so blocking progression up the career ladder. It is even more important therefore for this middle band to keep developing their skills, be proactive, promote themselves, see their skills in transferable and lateral ways and to maximise their potential through specialism, yet adaptability.

Flexibility, resourcefulness, good self-promotion and self-management are essential to get on and stay ahead.

The key to success is to clearly identify your target audiences and goals and to let others know who you are, what you have to offer, and how you can make a difference in their organisation.

More and more people are choosing to make a change and do a career that they really want. In a changing global world and with uncertain economic downturn, making a change takes courage and requires a well thought out strategy and plan.

#### **4 questions for you to reflect upon**

- How do you most stop yourself in work and life?
- What would be your ideal work?



- How could you work smarter rather than harder?
- How do your skills, character and experience make you unique?

### **First steps to rethink your job/career - 5 tips**

1. Define your unique selling proposition (USP) – what makes you different or better than your competitors
2. Create a personal development plan that ensures the training you do equips you for the skills needed in tomorrow's world of work
3. Get an objective and supportive mentor or coach to champion you and help you see skills, opportunities and threats that you are too close to see yourself
4. Know your values and make sure that your work, life and employer matches them
5. Take steps to increase your self-belief; if you believe you can you can. If you believe you can't you're right!

### **About Energise**

Energise's job is to liberate people's talent. We help individuals through both the practical and emotional aspects of career change. We also work with companies to develop strategies and an employer brand to attract and develop the talent that will ensure their success long term.

We increase your self awareness about what's important to you; your values, what motivates you, what makes you unique through the skills you possess, the qualities you have and the life and work



experiences you have had, how you hold yourself back and how to overcome this.

We use our background in marketing and branding to help you create a distinctive, unique and compelling employee brand and targeted vision, communication strategy and plan so you achieve your objectives fast and feel comfortable.

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We also keep abreast of trends, data and research to help you to quickly and proactively take advantage of emerging career trends and to avoid any threats, so you maximise your potential.

We also help people to deal with the natural fears and anxieties involved in career change and promoting yourself, and to manage and harness your mind, utilising our training in Neuro linguistic programming. (NLP)

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