

# The five key skills professionals need to thrive now and into the future

Dr. Jaclyn Lee says employers need to focus on retraining while employees need to embrace new technologies and “unlearn, learn, and relearn”. Report by **Jerene Ang**.



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**At OCBC's Future** Smart, Future Workforce learning festival on 8-9 July, Dr. Jaclyn Lee, Chief Human Resources Officer of Singapore University of Technology and Design, shared the five key skills everyone needs in order to prepare for the onslaught of change brought about by digital transformation.

Lee started the presentation by imagining a future where today's budding technology – such as augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and autonomous vehicles – is incorporated into our daily lives, from the moment we wake up, to going to work in our autonomous car.

She then highlighted six mega trends dominating our economy and transforming the workplace and jobs. These are:

- People and the internet.
- Artificial intelligence and big data.
- Sharing economy and distributed trust.
- Computing, communications and storage everywhere.
- Digitalisation of matter (via 3D printing).
- Internet of things.

These mega trends are set to impact a wide range of industries, including banking and finance, automotive and transportation, healthcare, and even legal, especially at the entry-level.

As automation and intelligent robots replace human labour, jobs that are repetitive and manual may be lost. However, new jobs will also be created, she said, with 2.6 jobs created through the internet for every job lost.

As mid and low-skilled jobs involving manual and routine tasks are replaced, new jobs will be created involving cross-disciplinary knowledge, creativity, and innovation.

In line with this, Lee suggested that employers needed to focus on retraining employees as well as creating new management and reward systems.

While employees needed to embrace new technologies and “unlearn, learn, and relearn”.

“A cross-disciplinary learning and growth mindset is very important,” she said.

With that, she highlighted five key skills that we need to start harnessing to allow the workforce to thrive now and into the future.

## 1. The ability to work across disciplines

With the new world needing new systems, services and products, today's projects and work scopes have become multi-disciplinary in nature. The workers of today are now required to take on new roles quickly, go beyond their functional scope, juggle multiple roles, try new things, and manage complex multi-stakeholder situations.

## 2. Virtual collaboration and social intelligence

To be superior than machines, social intelligence – the ability to collaborate, sense and adapt thinking styles, as well as develop deep and meaningful relationships with others – is crucial. With the emergence of digital tools, we are now able to work virtually across boundaries. Hence, leaders need to be able to assemble a virtual team quickly by tapping into various talent sources, and integrating the talent to deliver performance.

## 3. Literacy in different types of media

As Millennials and Generation Z enter the workforce, it is crucial for leaders to be able to understand different media platforms and leverage them for persuasive communication to engage with the workforce as well as use these tools to train and develop employees.

## 4. Computational thinking and analytics

As big data and analytics become reality, computational thinking is high in demand. Data scientists today are required to plough through mountains of data, spot trends and patterns for use in various functions – from HR, to consumer marketing, banking, and more. Leaders and professionals should be able to use prescriptive analytics to pull data for scenario planning and decision modelling. Skills such as pattern recognition, algorithm design, and data analysis will become core skills. In the future, the job title ‘chief statistician’ is likely to become the sexiest.

## 5. Innovative and adaptive thinking

This involves the ability to think and derive solutions beyond that which is routine; as well as using design thinking to integrate new ideas into existing processes, systems, and products. As the world shifts towards automation of routine work, the ability to respond to unique, unexpected circumstances of the moment will be important. **H**