

4IR demands reskilling workforce

By [Garsen Naidu](#)

19 Mar 2020

While automation and digital technologies are disrupting the workplace as we traditionally know it, it has become imperative for organisations to start reskilling their workforce. Automation and artificial intelligence are not only disrupting the assembly lines but right across the so-called blue-collar jobs.



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This is mainly because in most instances, artificial intelligence (AI), is actually doing a better job than humans. For example, the use of virtual assistants in the workplace is growing.

By 2021, Gartner predicts that 25% of digital workers will use a virtual employee assistant on a daily basis. This will be up from less than 2% in 2019. All these changes are also bound to induce uncertainty, anxiety and increased stress levels among employees, especially mid-career professionals, about their future. Not only are jobs being shaken up by AI but entire industries are facing massive changes, thanks to the power of technology.

According to a recent report by McKinsey, 30% of jobs globally could be automated in the next 15 years. That number is even higher in industrialised countries such as the US, whereas many as 73 million jobs could be disrupted.

A 2019 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends report revealed that in South Africa, business leaders are open to the digitalisation of work in order to reach company goals. An Accenture study also indicates that 35% of all jobs in South Africa – almost 5.7 million jobs – are currently at risk of total automation.

Providing new skills

With a fragile economy and growing unemployment, especially youth unemployment, further job losses in South Africa could have a crippling effect. Therefore, organisations need to future-proof workers from technological change and help economies by providing new skills for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Cisco's Networking Academy has impacted 10.9 million people across the world by upskilling them to equip them to be the workforce of the future. Through providing training in networking, cybersecurity and IoT among other courses, Cisco is changing the world – one student at a time.

In South Africa, in the past 22 years, more than +US\$21 million has been invested towards developing IT skills via the 138 local Academies where 16,500 students have been trained in the recent academy year.

The World Economic Forum recently launched its Reskilling Revolution, a multi-stakeholder initiative aiming to provide better education, new skills and better work to a billion people around the world by 2030. The Reskilling Revolution platform has been designed to prepare the global workforce with the skills needed to future-proof their careers against the expected displacement of millions of jobs and skills instability as a result of technological change.

It is also designed to provide businesses and economies with the skilled labour needed to fulfil the millions of new roles that will be created by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, shifts in the global economy and industrial transitions towards sustainability.

As organisations empower and enable employees, thanks to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, employee engagement is critical. This is a time when employees are working from anywhere because of the power of mobile technologies.

Cisco defines employee engagement as the connection that employees feel to the company's vision, strategies, and business execution, together with their commitment to helping us realise our objectives over time.

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