Unilever Future of Work Summit Report

The Future of Work

Imagine it's early 2020. In the nearest city to where you live, you're walking around a brand-new office. You admire its sleek lines and its banks of plasma screens with uplifting imagery from a fresh brand identity campaign. You take in a varied combination of private and public working spaces; that the work canteen has central islands rather than a long service counter. There are charging points everywhere and the wifi signal is rock solid. The car park has so many more cycle spaces than before.

And yet the nagging thought occurs to you that in many ways, the way this office is organised is recognisably the same as an office of 1920. There are areas or even whole floors for siloes of people in different functional groups. Those people come in every day and, despite that modish range of meeting environments, tend to sit in the same place and have lunch at the same time with the same people. Those at the heart of the company have been here for many years and know little else. Their professional and technical educations long ago set them on their current occupational paths. And when you take in this internal landscape more closely, it occurs to you that most people look remarkably like one another. Perhaps some are even the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of their 1920 predecessors.

In a flash, the COVID-19 pandemic changed how we think about work futures. For many years, our natural tendency has been to update, not to reinvent. We've often done old things in new ways, but we've much more rarely done truly new things. And yet it suddenly became apparent that within weeks – within days, even – we could completely overturn long-held assumptions about the very nature of organisational life and still survive (or even thrive).

Releasing the conventional bonds of co-location, competence and coordination has naturally led us all to wonder what other assumptions about the world of work could be changed or abandoned. In short, what happened in March 2020 demolished arguments like 'that's how it's always been', 'you couldn't do it any other way' or 'nobody would do any work if we weren't organised like this'. Rather than another modernised version of the present, what could the future really look like?

The Unilever Future of Work Summit:
London, 2-3 December 2021

Unilever has been dedicating time and resources to the Future of Work since well before the COVID-19 pandemic. As digitisation has started to drive permanent changes in the nature, duration and availability of work, so Unilever has committed to help both its own employees and others be better equipped to realise their own sense of purpose in this new employment landscape. The company has launched programmes to retrain its own staff, develop radically new working models and support young people in joining the workforce at large.

Coming together in the spirit of appreciative inquiry, the Unilever Future of Work Summit convened a remarkable gathering of minds from across industry, academia and the third sector around six broad Future of Work themes: new employment models, inclusion, youth entrepreneurship, re-skilling, future-fit youth and harnessing technology. These themes both represent and build upon Unilever's Future of Work commitments to:

- help equip ten million young people with essential skills to prepare them for job opportunities by 2030

- reskill or upskill Unilever employees to ensure that by 2025 they will all have a future-fit skill set

- pioneer employment models to provide everyone at Unilever with access to flexible employment options by 2030

For the Summit, more than 75 organisations dispatched some of their boldest and most imaginative thinkers to take part in two days of intensive discussion. On the first day, 4,000 virtual participants from more than 30 countries listened to and questioned a series of presenters and panel members. On the second day, smaller groups of external experts from the 75 organisations and Summit partner executives engaged in focused discussions and ideation sessions around each of the Future of Work themes. Critically, these were all linked to potential enablers and purposeful next steps.

The participants thought boldly about the future, but they also brought reports from adventurous and cutting-edge real-world practice. Their perspectives are therefore a meaningful bellwether of trends. They also represent a way to envisage those changes which are already in motion alongside those which are highly likely to come. From the vantage point of the Summit, then, we can see the outlines of a new landscape on the horizon. Where precisely we aim for, and how exactly we get there, are for us all to decide. We hope that by sharing some of the highlights from the Future of Work Summit, we can contribute positively to this urgent and exciting conversation.

The Time is Now

The Unilever Future of Work Summit demonstrated convincingly that there is a clear and irreversible momentum in changing practices of work. For the participants, there is indeed a Fourth Industrial revolution afoot, but it is of such duration and scale that there remains time to harness and shape it.[1] Conversely, when we asked Summit participants, their answers on a range of questions told us it was one for which they did not believe we are yet adequately prepared.

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[1] The Fourth Industrial Revolution refers to a step change in industrial productivity as a consequence of the interconnection of multiple technologies. Coined popularly by World Economic Forum Founder and Executive Chairman, Klaus Schwab, it asserts that the changes seen are more than just improvements to efficiency, but express a significant shift in industrial capitalism. See Schwab, Klaus, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2017) and Philbeck, Thomas and Davis, Nicholas, 'The Fourth Industrial Revolution: Shaping a New Era', *Journal of International Affairs*. 2018, 72 (1), 17–22

Unsurprisingly, the force behind this change is perceived as digital. Nearly nine in ten (88%) believe their job will be impacted by technology, although sentiment is generally positive about its possibilities (94% believing it could augment human potential). Only 42% of this future-oriented group said that the skills they already have today would allow them to be successful in the years ahead, and as many as 88% thought they would have to retrain at some point. Nearly as many (84%) believe young people are not learning the right skills for the future, and almost as many (82%) would like more flexible employment options than currently exist.

88%

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Significantly, however, our participants also highlighted three other key features of the future working landscape. One was the importance of intersectionality – of the honest recognition of the combination of identities each of us brings to work – and the others were enthusiasm for entrepreneurialism and the role of the public sector.

Almost two-thirds (63%) wanted to be entrepreneurs and more (77%) said public-private partnerships should play a leading role in driving entrepreneurship.

Our Six Themes

The largest part of our report is devoted to a detailed exploration of the six themes, but first it may be helpful to consider them together. They are closely and irrevocably interconnected:

- **New employment models**: while necessarily concerned with changing contractual requirements as to duration or hours worked, these are ultimately driven by the assumption that by doing so, we can increase both wellbeing and productivity

- **Inclusion**: the necessary complement to any effective diversity initiative, inclusion refers to the establishment of a culture of openness, equity and belonging

- **Youth entrepreneurship**: in exploring how to facilitate creative opportunities for younger people, a focus on what may work differently and better for Generation Z and Generation A entrepreneurs

- **Reskilling**: the challenges and opportunities of continuous learning to meet the demands of a rapidly-evolving work environment, both upskilling and reskilling existing members of the workforce

- **Future-Fit Youth**: how best government, multilateral organisations, civil society and the private sector can serve young people around the world in helping them succeed

- **Harnessing technology**: exploring how best actively to shape the technology agenda to incorporate the needs of, and augment the performance of, human workers

We set out in the following pages what we discovered about each of these six themes, both in terms of current practice and thinking, and the implications and possibilities that lie ahead. For each, we explain how the topic is generally defined and conceptualised, and why it is generally regarded as so important. We consider the main challenges for managers and have identified for each three big opportunities. Finally, we provide some micro-examples which could in due course scale and exert real impact on the world of work.

New Employment Models

Fatima leads design services at Equipoise, a global marketing company. As a business leader in the middle of the 21st century, she doesn't size her job by reference to how many people report to her or her job title – not least because nobody actually reports to her and she doesn't have a job title. In any given year she may get to engage several hundred members of the Equipoise talent pool, but which ones, and for how long, is a matter of business need and talent availability. That's because the pool comprises more than a thousand product designers, graphic artists and UX experts who have

'flexicurity' – an arrangement where they are employees of Equipoise, but only work on assignments. They work for 4 days a week, receive a package of benefits and a retainer and are free to work on as many assignments within and outside Equipoise as they choose. It has become the way most people work for organisations as it combines better work-life balance with greater productivity and innovation. It's a win-win for everyone, Fatima believes, as she now spends her Fridays dreaming up the next big innovation whilst helping out at her father's old age home.

New Employment Models – a definition

New employment models are being developed in a wide range of different frameworks which reconfigure traditional assumptions about how fixed a given set of working commitments might be, permanently shorter working weeks as a norm, wider use of job sharing and how retirement benefits are earned and drawn.

Underlying these experiments is a widespread belief that changing what are often monolithic employment practices is key to unlocking greater productivity and well-being. More pragmatically, though, they may also be the means of addressing skill shortages, catering to the needs of workers in ageing populations and attracting great, diverse talent. For this last reason, they are often incorporated within or closely associated with an organisation's equity, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) strategy.

Why New Employment Models are Important

It is often argued that women are more likely to find value in alternative employment models and this was borne out by our informal survey during the

Summit, where 87% of women participants – as opposed to 71% of men - indicated they personally would prefer more flexible options.

There is widespread interest in advancing new employment models from both demand and supply sides. They offer improvements in wellbeing and productivity, and getting them right can give employers a strategic advantage in attracting the best talent. More practically, they may play an integral part in delivering truly agile ways of working by allowing managers best to match resources with changing requirements.

There are challenges in delivering these models. Most notably these relate to overcoming traditional mindsets – both in first order and second order terms. Employers and employees may think different ways of working are not for them, and even when they find them attractive, may believe their chances of success are diminished because others do not.

Because the HR infrastructure for employment is often built to operate on an industrial scale, it can be technically hard to introduce non-standard and variable arrangements. Software systems for work recording and compensation may be inflexible and intricately connected with other aspects of a company's operating system, and the personnel skills for setting up and managing these arrangements are by definition currently scarce. The legal background to alternative models of employment and compensation is different from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and is sometimes actively unhelpful.

Despite these challenges, many organisations and governments are actively working on alternative employment models from paid sabbaticals to 4-day weeks, as the benefits to productivity, wellbeing and agility seem to outweigh the challenges.

Three big opportunities for new employment models

Talent platforms

One of the arguments against the conventional model for employment is that it exacts a heavy price in return for de-risking access to skills for employers and security of income for employees. By relaxing divisional and organisational boundaries and creating platforms in which multiple business units and even companies participate to bid for and share out scarce talent, it may be possible to create more value for both sets of agents.

Communities of New Employment Practices

Given the nascent quality of these experiments and the barriers to getting to scale quickly, it makes sense for employers who are pioneering these practices to collaborate, systematically sharing learnings and best practices from micro-examples and trials and coming together in multi-stakeholder working consortia in order to build critical mass.

Creating a favourable regulatory and legal environment

Non-private stakeholders – notably governments and relevant NGOs – can accelerate the exploration and introduction of new models of employment by enabling the right regulation while simplifying and harmonising how work is regulated.

New Employment Models – Some Micro-Examples

Unilever's U-Work

Unilever's U-Work is designed to offer 'flexibility with security' and a socially responsible alternative to the gig economy. Open to existing employees and recent leavers, it represents an ongoing employment relationship which allows people to work flexibly according to their life situation. Examples include new parents wanting to spend more time with their children, 'young starters' who want the security of a job, but the flexibility to nurture a startup and more experienced colleagues preparing for retirement but still keen to draw on and share a wealth of knowledge built up over the course of a career.

U-Work members are provided with employee assignment pay, a monthly retainer, access to capability building and a suite of benefits including a pension and access to medical and life cover (configured differently from those attached to conventional full-time contracts).

Experience to date suggests that the success factors for schemes like U-Work include launching one or more pilots, selectively over-investing in early adopters, building a community of alternatively-employed workers and promoting the role of the 'contact manager' to manage the relationship between the employee and the business and to navigate local legal frameworks.

Swiss Re's Own the Way You Work

Swiss Re have a range of initiatives under way to explore new ways of working. One of these is a generation programme to combat 'brain drain' due to demographic trends in their workforce as well as generally help employees to transition positively into retirement.

In order to work out the most effective interventions to make, they used a design thinking approach, working closely with colleagues who were themselves approaching retirement age in order to work out where the greatest opportunities might lie. They now have some 12 different retirement options for employees to choose from.

So far the key success factors for this programme have included creating and closely studying the outcomes from an initial pilot and making it possible for employees to taper off responsibilities without compromising their retirement benefits.

Autonomy's Four-Day Working Week

Think tank Autonomy is leading a consortium of researchers and activists in a multi-company initiative around four-day working weeks (whether literally worked on four separate days, or with a 20% reduction in hours shared across the existing five). Crucially, their model assumes that workers retain 100% of their original salaries but commit to comparable productivity levels previously associated with five-day weeks. They point out that for more and more jobs, there is no strict correlation between output and working hours.

The potential benefits of a four-day week are self-evident: it may be easier both to attract and retain staff and overall environmental impact is lowered by requiring less commuting and use of utilities.

One early experiment has yielded very promising results. Following a trial by the national government and Reykjavik City Council in Iceland, contracts have been renegotiated or made capable of supporting a four-day week for some 86% of the country's workforce. More are to follow. In Spain, some 200 companies will be starting a trial in early 2022. Unilever have announced a trial scheme in New Zealand and from January 2022, the Dubai Chamber of Commerce is mandating a four-and-a-half day working week, aligning with a recent change in the working week for UAE federal government employees.

Inclusion

Gerry enjoys the content of his work, but he enjoys the experience of working for Acclaim Marketing as much for the sheer range of people he works with. It wasn't like this back in the 2020s, when he first joined the company as a graduate trainee after taking his degree at night school. Then, despite lots of warm words, there was a definite 'Acclaim type' – people from a limited range of social backgrounds and with pretty much the same education; with his non-traditional route to Acclaim and his non-native accent, Gerry secretly wondered whether he was the hiring mistake. 20 years on, what makes people unique and different is genuinely celebrated – even if everyone is less attached to a single, unchanging identity. In fact, Gerry belongs to three separate affinity groups in Acclaim and that's far from unusual. But most of all he's very happy being Gerry.

Inclusion – A Definition

Inclusion has its roots in sociology and anthropology. The concept helps us appreciate just how subtle are the practices, beliefs and rules which permit and withhold access to groups and the work they undertake. In practice, though, inclusion means both knowing and feeling you belong just the way you are.

Inclusion is inextricably tied up with exclusion. Whether consciously or unconsciously, we can disincentivise or restrict people's participation because of one or more of their group identities. So inclusion is also closely linked with intersectionality – the specific challenges attached to the particular combination of characteristics that make up a human in terms of gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, social origin and other typologies.

In the world of work, inclusion is as much about practice as theory. There is an emerging consensus about the practical steps organisations can take to promote inclusion. First, they can cultivate awareness. There is so much each of us still has to learn from each other, not all of which is immediately or easily obvious. Second, they can endorse actively counteracting bias. That means encouraging people to stand up and speak out when they see exclusion and bias in day-to-day decision-

making and problem-solving. Third, they can do a much better job of valuing diversity for its positive performance benefits (and expect their managers be instinctively uncomfortable if everyone looks, sounds, thinks and lives in the same way). And fourth, they can bring these attitudes and behaviours together to encourage people to be proud equity advocates – to recognise when policies and processes are inherently unfair and change them for the better.

Why Inclusion is Important

Just as new models of employment are in part driven by the desire to unlock productivity improvement, so creating a culture of inclusion offers the prospect of workers who can bring their authentic selves to work. It is a fundamental requirement for productive, sustainable, connected workforces. It is also directly connected to growth.

Inclusion matters a lot to people. More than half of professional job seekers look for an organisation's diversity and inclusion policies when considering a new job.[2] It is particularly important to younger workers, who are increasingly likely to raise the need for inclusion and diversity.[3]

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[2] Hays Diversity & Inclusion 2019 report
[3] See the steadily rising importance of a diverse workforce as ranked by new graduates (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2008 onwards)

Inclusion has thus risen to the top of the agenda for many companies. Getting this right is a powerful weapon in winning the 'war for talent'. There is evidence that inclusive teams perform significantly better.[4] Across the business landscape, teams who can harness a broader array of talent are simply more equipped to attract new business by better understanding the perspectives of more people – whether they are customers, clients or consumers. Inclusive teams drive employee motivation and satisfaction and standing for inclusion improves a company's global image and its licence to operate.

As we have noted above, intersectionality is at the heart of inclusion. Research shows that people at the intersection of different groups face the biggest challenges. For example, women of colour – and especially 'double onlys' (where someone is the only woman and the only person of her race in the room) – are far more likely than white women to experience microaggressions.[5] Inclusion thus means more than serving one particular stakeholder group (in this example, all women or all Black people). Organisations do valuable work when they pilot with given stakeholder groups but the most pressing challenges are to be found at intersections.

Making progress on inclusion can be hard work. Understanding and awareness lag their equivalents for diversity and equity, and organisations are not as easily able to measure their performance on inclusion as they are on gender and race. Even when armed with insight and diagnostic metrics, it is hard to know how best to implement inclusive behaviours effectively.

For the moment, ED&I remains better understood by leaders than by their juniors. Research often identifies an implementation gap as policies pass through the organisation.[6] Given the pivotal role of supervisors and junior managers, it will be particularly important to design measures to bring them on board for inclusion.

As with any other business dimension it will be important to measure progress and to reward and hold people accountable for getting the right things done and doing them well. This may also help generate a flywheel effect comparable to that for diversity by linking to investor metrics and those of rating agencies.

Three Big Opportunities for Inclusion

Meaningful Metrics

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[4] See *Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters*, McKinsey, 2020
[5] See *Women in the Workplace*, McKinsey and LeanIn.Org, 2021
[6] See for instance *Fostering Innovation Through a Diverse Workforce*, Forbes Insights, 2020

By measuring the value of inclusion at scale, it will be possible to make a more powerful business case for introducing truly inclusive ways of working (perhaps mirroring the outperformance probabilities calculated for diversity). Simple, easy to understand metrics provide social proof and can help generate a bandwagon effect or 'race to the top' on good practice

Agreed Standards

Over and above convincing business leaders, metrics need to be common and calculated using transparent means of data definition and collection which can be used by investors, banks, commercial partners, rating agencies and other stakeholders. This in turn allows norming against local, national and industry averages.

Mobilising Middle Managers

Designing practical guidance and finding effective ways to address the middle manager gap in inclusion were consistently identified as major opportunities by the experts participating in the Summit. These are the leaders who are most likely to witness the day-to-day effects of policies and practices that create barriers to fairness and observe the damaging effect they have on morale and collaboration. Equally, they are in the best position to help level the playing field and the first to benefit from the improved business performance that more equal teams produce. Research may help identify the greatest obstacles to take-up, whether they are conflicting priorities, trade-offs between short-term cost and long-term gain or just technical uncertainty.

Inclusion – Some Micro-Examples

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion at Unilever

Unilever places inclusion at the heart of its ED&I strategy, and it is one of CEO Alan Jope's top three priorities. To date, the majority of practical work has been framed in terms of four focus areas of gender, people with disabilities, race and ethnicity and LGBTQI+. As a leading consumer goods company, Unilever's overall objective is to reflect the inherent diversity of shoppers and of society as a whole.

The company relies on its senior leaders to drive its ED&I strategy as much through formal accountability as by nurturing their personal passion. It also provides a comprehensive ED&I inclusive leadership learning journey. Unilever's top 900 leaders are trained on inclusivity and assessed around nine dimensions of inclusion, with formal plans to capture development opportunities. The programme will be rolled out to all managers in the course of the next year.

A major part of Unilever's ED&I commitment is to unstereotype its marketing communications, with a target of 100% of its advertisements to be considered un-stereotypical by consumers. In itself, this is associated with greater attentional impact and intention to buy. For instance, since 2003 Dove has continued to trailblaze in a series of campaigns which tackle gender, race and cultural stereotypes head-on.

By 2025, Unilever aims to spend

$2 Billion

With diverse businesses owned and managed by people from under-represented communities

Alongside this, the company has launched a series of inclusive products such as Degree Inclusive, the first ever product in its category to be adapted for people with upper limb mobility concerns and it is actively seeking to implement an ED&I strategy in procurement. By 2025 it aims to spend $2 billion with diverse businesses owned and managed by people from under-represented communities

The Valuable 500

While more than 90% of companies claim to be committed to diversity and inclusion, disability is often left on the side-lines. Only 4% of companies integrate disability and inclusion into their diversity and inclusion agendas.[7] This is hardly in their commercial interest. Globally there are 1.3 billion people who live with a

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[7] *The Global Economics of Disability*, Return on Disability Group, 2020

disability, whose market value is worth $13 trillion.[8] And representation in the boardroom is similarly skewed. There are currently no CEOs with a disability in the FTSE-100.[9]

The Valuable 500 brings together the CEOs of 500 of the world's most significant commercial and professional organisations, spearheaded by a subset of those companies who have committed to making material investments in developing solutions for the challenges faced by workers with a disability. These will in due course be available to be adopted by businesses generally.

Currently the Valuable 500 are engaged in developing lighthouse, 'iconic' solutions around three Cs and two Rs: C-suite, Culture and Customer and Reporting and Representation.

Youth Entrepreneurship

When the first Fledge fund started in 2025, investors were sceptical. Now it's one of the best-returning venture capital programmes in the world. In exclusively taking early positions in start-ups run by entrepreneurs under 30, the fund's managers accept a number of failures – just as they would from any other portfolio of early-stage businesses. But from the start, they have consistently landed a number of standout successes. They've succeeded in replicating early 21st century learnings from tech-focused venture capital to young entrepreneurs as a whole. Their young founders are often the first to see the potential of new , and they're uninhibited by any desire to protect legacy assets and businesses. They also seem better able to anticipate the needs of customers and end-users of their own age. Most of all, they're less worried by failure than many of their older competitors. Recent shifts in education have resulted in a greater emphasis on more entrepreneurial skills like creative

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[8] *The Global Economics of Disability*
[9] *The Tortoise Disability100 Report*, 2021

Youth Entrepreneurship – A Definition

Youth entrepreneurship is very simply defined as entrepreneurship by members of Generation Z (those born in the mid-1990s through to the early 2010s) and Generation Alpha (those born from the early 2010s to the mid-2020s). The concept relates to the context for, and levels of success experienced by, young people starting their own businesses from now onwards.

Youth entrepreneurship does not necessarily imply incorporation or formal capital-raising. Rather it reflects an increasingly pervasive requirement for self-starting and commercial initiative for anyone participating in the working world in any capacity. Entrepreneurship can stand for anything from being self-employed to operating an independent mom-and pop shop or a smallholding and founding a tech unicorn.

Why Youth Entrepreneurship is Important

Increasingly, entrepreneurship is looking different for young people. Our experts talked of the 'side hustle generation' – a cohort who do not necessarily give up their day job but do pursue a secondary interest. Airtasker, an online marketplace for outsourcing everyday tasks, published a survey of young Britons which suggested 70% have a second job of some sort, with over a third spending more than 20 hours a week on it.[10] One of their compatriots, 18-year-old Amelia Hitchcock-Merritt, launched a jewellery business on Instagram in the middle of lockdown, and then by partnering with a TikTok influencer doubled sales to reach turnover of $85,000 a month.[11] Generally, there is a trend towards young people having a diverse portfolio of revenue streams. [12] One potential consequence is that they become inherently more resilient.

Conversely, some traditional routes into the world of work are losing traction. The Summit heard from Ravi Venkatesan – UN Special Envoy for Youth and

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[10] See www.airtasker.com/blog/uk/70-of-young-brits-are-embracing-the-side-hustle/, 2021

[11] As recently reported in *Business Insider* ('This 20-year old's jewelry business makes $85,000 a month. This is how she used TikTok to grow it.', 20 January 2022).

[12] See Pinedo, O'Higgins and Berg, 'Young people and the gig economy' in *Is the future ready for youth?*, ILO, 2021.

Innovation - young people with college degrees are up to six times less likely to find a job than their uneducated contemporaries.[13]

However, young entrepreneurs are faced with some significant obstacles. In many parts of the world, entrepreneurship does not command social status and students can find it difficult to acquire the right skills and mindsets to succeed. Business can be seen as the enemy of achievement rather than its means.

There is an investment gap, for it is harder for young people to get the financial support they need to jump-start and scale their ideas.[14] And role models – particularly beyond the confines of digital technology – are often lacking.

Entrepreneurial success stories and learnings from different settings are not as sufficiently shared as they could be, and thus find it harder to scale up.

Here as elsewhere, there may also be a striking gender gap. During the Summit, while some 43% of men were confident that young people are currently learning the skills they need to be successful entrepreneurs in the future, only 8% of females shared the same view.

Three Big Opportunities for Youth Entrepreneurship

A Core Entrepreneurship Curriculum

There is significant latent demand for programmes that teach relevant core skills and mindsets such as business problem-solving and resilience. These need to be addressed in both formal settings (it should be possible for high school students to choose reputable options in business-building alongside traditional arts and sciences) and informal, self-serve digital channels.

Youth Investment Funds

Innovative, non-youth-discriminative funding structures (e.g., funds that require 50% of their investments to be made in companies whose founders are younger than 25) both to jump-start and scale-up funding. By mirroring venture capital

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[13] The all-India unemployment rate amongst postgraduates was 14.4% as opposed to 2.4% for literate workers who had completed their primary education (see *Periodic Labour Force Survey 2018-19*, National Statistical Office of India, Table 24, 253). See also *State of Working India 2021: One year of Covid-19,* Centre for Sustainable Employment, Azim Premji University (notably Figure 2.2, 42).
[14] See *The Young Entrepreneurship Review 2019-2021*, The Prince's Trust

practice, such funds could convene commercial experts, impact leaders and grant funders to support their investments by sharing best practices and learnings and providing some common services.

Big Brothers and Sisters

Larger employers can provide invaluable support in helping young entrepreneurs to develop infrastructure, skills and tools to scale, exchange and digitise initially physical businesses. Sometimes this can make broader commercial sense by nurturing partners in a broader ecosystem (e.g., retail platforms who provide the sheltered conditions in which their sourcing base can flourish).

Youth Entrepreneurship – Some Micro-Examples

GAME

The Global Alliance for Mass Entrepreneurship is a programme for young people operating in more than 1,000 schools across India and is one of the largest entrepreneurship initiatives in the world. Established just over two years ago, it is designed to work with three-quarters of a million young people from challenged

socio-economic backgrounds. It is a mandatory programme in the schools in which GAME operates.

Entrepreneurial mindsets and skills are taught in very practical ways, but these have their roots in some long-standing fundamentals. For instance, to encourage critical thinking, young people are asked to read a news article, separate the facts from the opinions, engage in debate and then five minutes later switch and advocate for the opposite.

U Can Grow Earth

U Can Grow is designed to give rural communities dignity and independence by developing new agripreneurs. It builds on the central concept of Ubuntu – our shared humanity – as the platform for collaboration and learning.

Critically, U Can Grow shows its participants how to make money and privileges its importance as a core skill. It uses an app-based platform to promote its '4M' system – standing for micro learning, micro jobbing, micro awards and micro credits. The platform is also the means of sharing inspiring examples and learnings between participants. By instilling the appropriate technical and business knowledge early on, U Can Grow can accelerate the development of young farmers and their businesses, and give them a greater chance of success.

Reskilling

Credentialing as brand strategy? People used to be sceptical. But increasingly, leading companies around the world are making training available beyond their own organisational boundaries and subjecting themselves not just to user ratings but external validation. It's good for building recruitment pipelines, but more broadly, it's becoming a powerful means of establishing their credentials as centres of expertise and effective people developers. It even drives share prices, not least after analyst research showing how training efficacy is a powerful forward indicator of corporate profitability and value creation. What's really driven the reskilling revolution, though, is the establishment of a not-for-profit certification body formed by the majority of leading corporate trainers. For the first time, something like a common language of course credits can be applied to the credentials awarded by several hundred of the world's leading companies.

Reskilling – A Definition

Reskilling or skill-building refers less to one-time retraining and more to constantly learning new things. The range of relevant skills is a wide one – the changing world of work will require us not just to do old things in new ways, but new things entirely. Many of us will have to acquire different problem-solving and

decision skills, not to mention the capacity to lead and develop others in different ways.

As the astronomer Carl Sagan observed, the introduction of the Model T Ford made it easy to predict mass car ownership, but harder to predict the rise of Walmart. So it is that while we know reskilling will be intimately connected with the opportunities of a more automated, digital and greener future, we do not yet know what all of those opportunities will be – and thus what they will require of human workers.

Nevertheless, a reskilling revolution is already under way. The World Economic Forum predicts that by 2025, 50% of workers will need to have reskilled as a consequence of the adoption of new technologies.

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Why Reskilling is Important

It's easy to talk about long-term changes as if it each were an autonomous phenomenon, but each industrial revolution has required first thousands and then millions of human beings to learn its skills and then been made manifest by their mastering them. When we look at the census records of the past, we see the multitude of jobs they abandoned in order to do so, some of which are now all but incomprehensible to us. Steam power, electricity and information technology were delivered this way, and so will be the Fourth Industrial Revolution, with its convergence of technologies in the physical, digital and biological worlds. And of course, like each of the industrial revolutions that precede it, this one will also require a transformation in energy production.

Having clear strategies for reskilling will enable employers and other stakeholders to make sense of the changes afoot, dynamically identifying the new skills required as we move through the 21st century and using some of these new technologies to themselves assist in retraining and skill development at scale and at speed. This in turn will require rigorous attention to funding and the courage to reallocate resources regularly.

Three Big Opportunities for Reskilling

Sectoral Consortia to Define Skills

By working in international sectoral consortia – or industry clusters – employers and other stakeholders can bring consistency to definitions, requirements and expectations for specific roles so that cross-sectoral moves are easier for the individuals who work in these sectors and industries. This degree of understanding is a vital foundation for a labour market that functions effectively and serves both business and the people who work in it.

Untapped Training Expertise

There is plenty of untapped real-time, hands-on expertise to draw on within and beyond most organisations. Connecting with shared platforms, assuring by light-touch editorial oversight and incentivising contributors by recognition and reward can both democratise and accelerate reskilling – not least in those areas where conventional training development or procurement may struggle to keep up.

Reskilling Levies

There are a variety of fiscal interventions available to governments in order to drive reskilling on a consistent basis. For instance, mandating a given proportion of payroll expenses for reinvestment in reskilling could apply a proportionate degree of pressure to those organisations responsible for the most people. Separately, specific national levies could be imposed to reskill in priority areas.

Reskilling – Some Micro-Examples

National Reskilling in Pakistan

Working in conjunction with the World Economic Forum, Parwaaz is a national accelerator working to close the skills gap in Pakistan. It is addressing a reskilling emergency in which the more educated its young people, the fewer opportunities they have: against a 16% unemployment rate across the country, graduate unemployment is 24%.[15]

Parwaaz adopted a highly-structured, five-step approach. First, business leaders organised themselves into six priority sectors. Then they worked in small groups to identify scale opportunities in the form of the fastest-growing new roles. Next, they defined these roles more concretely and set out specific programs for

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[15] Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (briefing to Senate Standing Committee, 2021)

training people. After that, digital pilots were designed and rolled out before conducting a rigorous impact analysis.

In one IT banking pilot, over 70% graduated successfully and those graduates then on average were being paid over 25% more.

The 'TikTok of Learning'

BigSpring, based in India, now has over a million global learners. It works with companies to deliver their skills curricula in a social media setting, encouraging user-generated content and harnessing attention through real-time feeds and instant feedback.

Using the smartphone as a learning platform gives BigSpring's customers the ability to deliver learning solutions to large, distributed workforces in a manner each individual learner can accommodate to their individual circumstances. Both content development (for instance, bite-sized videos) and delivery are quicker than conventional learning solutions, and the environment naturally lends itself to real-time analytics. Features like this may be indispensable in a learning environment subject to faster and faster change.

Upskilling for Two Million Associates

Retailer Walmart has over two million associates on its books. Its Live Better U programme is explicitly tied to the company's overall growth strategy and offers assistance to learners who want to progress at multiple points in their educational and training journeys, helping associates complete high school, get help preparing for the SAT and ACT, study for undergraduate degrees at accredited universities and undertake specialist skilled trade certification.

More than 65,000 students have participated in the programme to date, which is intentionally designed to fit with work schedules. Walmart pays 100% of the tuition costs – but sees its own reward in terms of impact. Live Better U alumni are twice as likely to be promoted at an accelerated rate as their peers....

Multistakeholder Partnerships for Youth Employment

In recent years, getting into the world of work has been revolutionised by greater sophistication in pulling apart intrinsic abilities, aptitude for different work tasks and environments and specific skill-based training. In the world as it was, all of these seemed to come along in whole bundles. If you were lucky, you either had or were credited with having all of these – and if you weren't, you might as well have had none of them. But now, by disaggregating these requirements and learning how better to measure them on a context-blind basis, public-private partnerships between educators and employers are increasingly able to match new and young workers with opportunities which fit their

abilities, and to select the training interventions which will most significantly enhance their employability. Some of these are online, and others in classroom settings. Still others involve work placements and on-the-job trainings. What's really made the difference is the idea that everyone gets exposure to a wider range of learning opportunities and work experience, By de-risking their initial contacts with the world of work, younger people are more likely to realise their potential.

Microstakeholder Partnerships for Youth Employment – A Definition

Of the nearly 2 billion young people in the world today,

only 200 million

Have completed secondary education and many haven't even attended a primary school

Perhaps it's better to define the challenge for these partnerships. Of the nearly 2 billion young people in the world today, only 200 million or so have completed secondary education and many haven't even attended a primary school. And when it comes to getting into the world of work, young people are especially vulnerable. That's because once they do, they significantly over-index their older peers in working on those activities which could already be automated using current technology.

Thus the reason we need multistakeholder partnerships around youth employment is that the problem is one of huge scale. And its urgency is heightened by the changing nature of work. Gig jobs will soon outnumber traditional ones, and young people are trying to enter a workforce which by 2027 will consist mostly of freelancers.[16]

Why Multistakeholder Partnerships for Youth Employment are Important

If businesses are to succeed in the future, they will need to access and engage this and succeeding generations of young workers. That requires their being trained and taught to participate in the workforce, and in a fast-changing labour environment, this isn't something educators can accomplish on their own (it's not even something many commercial training providers can do without partnership).

In addition, employers need help in 'seeing' potential young workers. That means both knowing who they are and what they've been trained to do. That's often hard

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[16] *Freelancing in America: 2017*, Freelancers Union & Upwork

in developing economies and constrained by out-of-date mechanisms in the developed world.

Finally, engaging collectively in this area will be vital if we are to overcome legacy expectations about who can do what (notably by gender) and how different sets of skills are likely to be bundled by different educational paths.

Three Big Opportunities for Multistakeholder Partnerships for Youth Employment

Open the Doors

Traditional education systems have operated in clearly-defined silos. There is a clear opportunity for them to open up to include peer-to-peer learning, community projects and other small enterprise endeavours. Side by side, there needs to be a concerted multistakeholder effort to replace historic biases with impact-based measurement and transparent reporting.

Speeddating for Skills

There's a lot that companies and entrepreneurs can do to enable and accelerate skills matching. Work experience schemes are a start, but they should be more of a rule and less of an exception – and they can be much more diverse in their delivery. Organisations can use peer-to-peer learning, hackathons and paid trials much more.

Further Scale Existing Successful Initiatives

We are in the fortunate position of having a number of examples of multistakeholder partnerships which are up and running and already running at scale. We talk about these in a little more detail below.

Multistakeholder Partnerships for Youth Employment – Some Micro-Examples

Generation Unlimited

Generation Unlimited is a global multi-sector partnership designed to meet the need for expanded education, training and employment opportunities for young people. Its mission is to dream, design and to deliver a roadmap for the future of work with the voice of young people at its core, and their active involvement in its

leadership and delivery. A wide range of volunteering opportunities is offered to young people in order to create rich learning opportunities across different regions.

Generation

Generation is a charity whose work involves learners being recruited, trained, and placed into careers that would otherwise have been beyond their reach. It has already worked with over 50,000 people and enjoys a very high rate of efficacy, with a job placement rate of 83% within three months of program completion. Their impact is being continuously measured in terms of retention, productivity and well-being.

Generation's success arises from its innovative methodology. It pre-confirms job vacancies with employers before learners go through a profession-specific boot camp experience that may last anything from 4-12 weeks. They then arrange demonstration-based interviews and provide continuing mentorship for the first three to six months of a new job.

Mesh

Mesh is an online community for entrepreneurs in the informal economy. It provides young people with access to a very wide network of peers who help with daily coaching in the right language and terms from people who've been there before. The community helps provide young people with opportunities, seed capital and access to formal sector partnerships with large companies. For

instance, Mesh has just formed its first partnership with Unilever Kenya to recruit, upskill and connect 10,000 young people to the company's sales and distribution networks.

Harnessing Technology

How it Could be

Over the last decade or so, long-standing assumptions about human potential have been overturned by teaming people with technology. Rather than the cyborgs of late 20th century science fiction, these are people who have intelligent software at their disposal, much of which is tailored to their individual working preferences and the coaching objectives they've agreed with their managers. In many ways, skilled workers are becoming more like elite sportspeople, using data to analyse performance and suggest improvements as well as providing objective data on achievement. That doesn't mean everyone is paid as well as Premier League footballers, but it does mean it's possible for people to improve their performance meaningfully, and that there's a more comprehensive basis for evaluating both potential and impact. And because it's possible to compare many of these measures on a like for like basis, managers and organisation scientists alike are beginning to understand the real-world distribution of key phenomena relating to presence, attention, morale and satisfaction. Equally, this means that individuals can present their qualifications and performance standards in a form that employers can recognise and understand – and verify against unique individual credentials.

Harnessing Technology – A Definition

Everyone connected with the future of work should be concerned with how technology enables us to realise – and extend – human potential. Harnessing technology here means not just using it to equip workers with next generation skills for next generation jobs, but creating an environment in which we are confident in our collaboration with machines.

Why Harnessing Technology is Important

Technology automates tasks, not jobs. One day your children may travel to school on an autonomous vehicle. While the task of operating the controls may be delegated or even taken over by technology, the task of adult supervision will remain. The challenge is to integrate technology in a way that overcomes uncertainty and fear and protects privacy while also preparing people to work with and make the best use of new systems. More broadly still, we are yet to shape the ethics of work which combines human and machine decision-making and implementation.

Three Big Opportunities for Harnessing Technology

A Common Governance Process

To build the trust we need, we need to establish a governance process that guarantees ethics, transparency and explainability about working with machines. For instance, we need continuing rigorous standards to uphold privacy and we need to establish and articulate clear values so that we can use AI confidently and effectively.

Skills Passports

By using open-source skills identification technology, each of us can be equipped with a portable, personal skills passport assured by blockchain technology. Only by having regularly updated definitions of skills and agreed proof of training or competence can this work effectively.

A Community of Practice for Human-Machine Ethics at Work

We can create a community of practice to share and explore learnings in a multi-stakeholder model that creates transparency around important case studies and proactively sets pathways and enablers for the beneficial use of technology at work.
Such case studies can be highly practical – for instance using tech-enabled learning systems and free education online to prepare people for higher-paying jobs without needing college degrees, or sharing best coding practices to enable cross-functional teams to work on new solutions very quickly.

Harnessing Technology – Some Micro-Examples

Unilever's BuildApp

BuildApp is the digital enabler of Unilever's manufacturing system and thus touches 210 factories and 50,000 colleagues. A 'single source of truth', it supports training for people in their current position as well as communicating colleague capacity and helping with safety, quality and productivity reviews.

LinkedIn for Blue-Collar Workers

Jobcase is an AI-driven platform for workers in crafts and professions historically overlooked by the first generation of networking tools. Like those platforms, then,

Jobcase allows employees to take information with them from place to place and helps establish communities of professionals. But it also enables people to switch jobs by getting help and advice from people in entirely different fields, and thus have better odds in surmounting the 'unemployment wall'. Partly this is because the platform allows potential employers to draw their own conclusions about workers' performance in different settings (like the Home Depot, for instance, who told Jobcase they were keen to recruit Uber drivers with particularly high driver ratings). Unlike other platforms in the career space, moreover, Jobcase doesn't have a paywall or premium levels.

Five Big Ideas

Over the course of the Summit, we heard from a remarkable range of experts from around the world and learned much from the wealth of knowledge they shared. The challenges of the future may be daunting, but we can be more than encouraged by the vigour and creativity of the solutions which are emerging and the determination of those advancing them.

It is very hard to evaluate these ideas systematically and comprehensively – and making lists or top 20s is rather to miss the point of appreciative inquiry. Sometimes just listening to each other encourages a special alchemy, especially when combining elements of different approaches can yield something new and more effective. Innovation is, as has frequently been observed, much more about recombination and improvisation than 'a-ha' moments.

Even so, as a group of partners engaged in organising and documenting the Summit, we have given thought specifically to those ideas we think may have the widest implications and in the near future. We have therefore identified five 'big ideas' arising from the Summit we believe are worth watching whether you are a business leader, policymaker, teacher, researcher or entrepreneur.

Democratise and Integrate Education

Formal academic and professional training will always play a critical role in enriching our communities. But there is a strong case being made to open up traditional education systems to include peer-to-peer learning, community projects and other kinds of small enterprise endeavours. Where possible, these can be made interchangeable and interlinked, both to confer appropriate prestige but also facilitate more diverse journeys through the education system. Such a model offers an important role for employer-led ecosystems that can play an ongoing role in enabling workforce transitions and reskilling. The Markle

Foundation's Rework America Alliance, for instance, is committed to the creation of digital job-matching platforms. Such efforts can start to dismantle layers of implicit bias and asymmetries of access through the concerted multi-stakeholder efforts of governments, companies, entrepreneurs and NGOs.

Open-Source Skills Passports

In order to capitalise on the richer variety of achievements and skills offered by a more diverse and work-related educational system, an open-source skills identification technology – for instance, one based on blockchain – could radically improve labour mobility and recruitment.

Talent Platforms

The history of the Internet has been one of repeated attempts to reinvent value chains and underlying economic processes. Some of these have been wildly successful and many others have not. There is nevertheless a great deal of scope for building platform technologies that automate agility, better matching skills with business needs and rewards with value created. These are not necessarily fated to be global behemoths. The more pertinent point is that a combination of credentialised skills and assured experience can achieve at scale what skilled managers often struggle to do in much smaller settings – and with far less choice. The critical enablers will be agreed and workable conventions for rate-setting and value-sharing, recourse, confidentiality and data security. Given that these already exist in multiple professional settings, their establishment may be more easily accomplished than at first appears the case.

Make the Case for Inclusions

The case for inclusion has what social scientists call 'high face validity'. It intuitively makes sense and accords with our own individual experience. But we also observe that where a powerful *business* case can be made for change, a virtuous cycle or flywheel effect can be established. This has been the case with gender equality and is becoming increasingly the case for diversity policies based on ethnicity. If a comparable case can be made for inclusive practices, there is clearly tremendous potential to change the world of work for the better. In turn, inclusion needs to be better served by a common language for its definition, description, measurement and promotion.

Coalitions for Inclusion

It is one thing to convince people of the merits of inclusion but another to equip them to transform their organisations.

Inclusion calls for a mastery of both organisational design and behaviour, and sets a high bar for leadership skills at every level. Although academic research can be a powerful stimulus to organisational practice, it is day-to-day practice which will establish what really works in real life, and personal testimony which will convince leaders to set bold ambitions and make meaningful commitments. Coalitions and consortia of companies who are prepared to collaborate, experiment together and exchange learnings and best practices may be able to generate momentum which then becomes contagious – much as is already the case with sustainability and diversity.

Inclusion calls for a mastery of both organisational design and behaviour and sets a high bar for leadership skills at every level.

Outlook and Next Steps

We have come away from the Future of Work Summit with a renewed belief in the claim that a Fourth Industrial Revolution is under way, not least because so many of the most exciting paths of development in working life rely upon technological convergence. We are also struck by a general sense of excitement and openness to collaborate amongst leaders in this space.

Recent changes in how and where many of us work represent just a small subset of what is under way in the world of work, but the COVID-19 pandemic has been a salutary lesson in just how fast change can happen, and how in turn, technological capacity both enables and constrains alternative ways of working. The broader picture is also one of uncertainty across multiple systemic fronts. Collectively, we are facing health challenges that go well beyond a single infectious disease, an environmental crisis, mounting inequality and an uncertain economic outlook after a period of genuinely unprecedented monetary policy and state intervention.

All of these complicate the horizon for business leaders, but they are not just a matter for strategy-setting. They also profoundly influence the societies in which all of us live and they shape the intentions and behaviour of everyone who participates in the world of work. Companies who do not keep up with the expectations of their employees, freelancers and partners will be at a significant competitive disadvantage. Change is here, and more change is coming.

How to Find Out More

[Good Work Alliance | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)](weforum.org)