

How the thunderbolts of transformation impact the future of work

 By [Carmen Murray](#)

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Lately, there's been a lot of hype around the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), artificial intelligence (AI), robotics and what this means for our careers. A recent report announced that 56% of people are afraid of the future and how technology will impact their jobs. Then we have the likes of Mark Zuckerberg and Elon Musk giving us controversial perspectives of their ongoing dispute about the future of AI. Truth be told, these discussions about digital and technology transformation can be overwhelming.



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What is everybody so afraid of?

Alvin Toffler explains it best. We are in a state of Future Shock - the disorientation that affects an individual, a corporation, or a country when they or it is overwhelmed by change and the prospect of change. We are in collision with tomorrow. Too much change in too short a time. It is the idea of the future coming towards us and we don't understand it and this leads Future Shock.

Should we be afraid?

Definitely not. Let's go back to the start of the industrial revolution. Some unknown genius had the idea to plant a seed, tens of thousands of years ago. This was the start of agriculture. It was a very slow change across the planet, and agriculture extended an average of one kilometre a year. Thousands of years later the industry boomed and farming was adopted worldwide.

Then, about 300 years ago the Industrial Revolution erupted. The impact was enormously positive. More stable food supplies. Infant mortality decreased. More people had access to healthcare and earned wealth, not only the privileged

people who were born into wealth.

All of a sudden people were no longer peasants, they could create an urban life. New products and services were born, which led to cities being developed. Social inventions started booming from post offices, shops and services that ejected into the cities. Mass production and mass consumption became the new normal.

As much good it introduced, there were still many people who were negatively impacted by the Industrial Revolution. Living in cities, food and housing became more expensive, causing slums to rise.

What does this mean for us today?

1. Disruption doesn't just happen to industries, markets or companies; it happens to individuals.
2. Technology has evolved beyond the point where we can ignore it as a skill set to secure a career in future. According to MarTech from May 2016 to May 2017, over 1,500 new technologies, just in marketing, were introduced to the market. We will all become technology workers in future.
3. It took thousands of years for agriculture to evolve. It took only 300 years for the Industrial Revolution to happen. The human race is facing unprecedented change and we could achieve in 10 years, what previously took 300. If you think that today is moving too fast, this is the slowest it's ever going to be.
4. You and your company must be at the centre of that change but also empower your workforce. In fact, Peter Drucker, management guru and author, suggests that every four years, knowledge workers should do some additional studies. I would argue, it should be a frequent practice to create a culture of learning and to ensure you are always future-fit.

What does the future of work look like?

Sixty-five percent of jobs that will exist in future, have not been created according to a recent article by the [BBC](#).

Here are just a few jobs that will emerge from 4IR:

- 1. Personal data brokers:** Every like, comment or share you've made will become a commodity for personal data traders to compete within the stock markets. Josephine Buys, CEO of IAB SA, in an interview with the #WITEE Chatterbots recently, mentioned they are already seeing brands incentivizing consumers with data to engage with their brands. This is just the beginning of something very exciting and it will be in favour of the end user.
- 2. Digital tailors:** As an online shopper myself, there is nothing more frustrating when your clothing arrives and it doesn't fit. Digital tailors will use next-generation technology to measure you and individualise your clothing to your unique features.
- 3. Augmented reality journey builders:** Augmented reality superimposes our reality and AR journey builders will create vignettes to enhance our experiences with the real world.

These are just a few jobs to watch out for in future.

My encouragement to you would be, go out there, be curious, explore, adapt and learn. Technology is changing faster than

most can keep up with. You chose the outcome. Is it man against machine, or man working hand in hand with machines?

In closing, I quote William Gibson

“ *“The future is already here - it's just not very evenly distributed.”* ”

ABOUT CARMEN MURRAY

Carmen Murray is one of the most influential modern marketers in South Africa. Her strong background in content, digital, mobile, innovation, and data analytics allows her to identify emerging trends and conceptualise disruptive communication strategies deployed with precision. The customer and their needs are always at the heart of her approach.

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