More Human Humans

SUMMARY: Automation will steadily increase the relative value of certain human qualities in work, including social skills and creativity. In the age of artificial intelligence, humans will remain relevant not by knowing but by thinking, listening, relating, and collaborating at the highest level.

Forecasts

- Economist Tyler Cowen forecasts that the human abilities that will remain important are "empathy, interpersonal skills, and who we are rather than what we do." According to author Edward Hess, a human will remain relevant by defining herself "as the quality of [her] thinking, listening, relating, and collaborating."
- Digital technology, by enabling collaboration, transparency, and flexibility, has the potential to democratize and humanize work, match it to individual strengths, and make it more meaningful.
- As valued characteristics in the workplace shift, women may have comparative advantages. Women tend to be comparatively stronger in emotional intelligence, empathy, storytelling, collaboration, and teamwork; some of these are "mission-critical skills for innovation and critical thinking."
- As automation takes over the production of a service, the human interaction offered by the service provider and the quality of the experience created will become more differentiating.

Key Uncertainties

Progress in "humanizing" technology through affective computing and machine learning

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Positive or negative impact of social media on interpersonal skills and the quality of social interactions

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Extent to which organizations adopt structures and leadership models designed to leverage uniquely human strengths

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Relative priority placed on human development versus economic growth, in society in general and political systems in particular

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Supporting Trends

- **Emotional intelligence in the age of AI.** In the age of artificial intelligence, humans will remain relevant not by knowing but by thinking, listening, relating, and collaborating at the highest level.
- **Human-machine hybrid work.** As intelligent systems permeate the work world, semi-autonomous systems that collaborate with humans—rather than fully autonomous systems—may become more prevalent.
- **Affective computing.** Affective computing integrates emotion detection and simulated psychological sensitivity into computers.
- **Predictive analytics.** Companies are adopting predictive analytics to turn their data into anticipatory knowledge.
- **Women's professional standing.** Women are advancing in professional and management positions.
- **Smartphone dependence.** Smartphone users report heavy dependence on their devices.
- **Connecting online and real-life lives.** People are taking their online friendships offline into the real world via apps.
- **Learning to learn.** Rapid changes drive the need to learn how to learn.
- **Mentoring 2.0.** Mentoring programs help retain millennials.

Related Drivers of Change

- Automating Work
- Bifurcated Workforce
- New Forms of Work
- Human-Machine Cooperation
- Empowered Women
- Mentoring 2.0

Notable Data Points

ESSENTIAL KSAS

In a 2016 survey of essential knowledge, skills, and abilities for the UK workforce, **cognitive and social skills rose to the top.**

Source: Deloitte

PROFESSIONAL WOMEN

In 2015, women in the U.S. represented 46.8% of the national labor force but held **51.5% of all management, professional, and related positions.**

Source: U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics

REAL-LIFE FRIENDSHIPS

Meetup.com, an app that enables people with similar interests to convene in real life, boasts more than **288,000 interest groups and over 30 million members across the world.**

Source: Meetup.com

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Strategic Insights

- As collaboration becomes more essential, the value of the network of relationships that associations can foster will increase.
- Mentoring programs could become a key association benefit because they help workers nurture relational skills and build professional networks.
- Associations will need to offer more proactive, anticipatory, personalized services that treat humans as valued individuals.
- Training needs to shift toward soft skills; education needs to shift from remembering facts toward social and emotional intelligence, creativity, teamwork, and learning to learn. Interactive, experiential learning will grow in importance relative to lecture-style content delivery.
- Association metrics will need to emphasize growth in human skills and relationships in addition to meeting numerical membership and income targets.
- Associations in historically male-dominated fields may wish to actively recruit women into their field and into leadership and volunteer roles in light of this new environment.
- In the coming climate, older workers' unique contributions—institutional memory, wisdom about best practices, lateral problem-solving, etc.—could grow in value.

Timing

- **Stage:** Growing demand for uniquely human skills, in parallel with the growth of automation
- **Speed:** Moderately paced growth in demand for emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills

Potential Alternative Futures

- **Affective computing:** Computers gain emotional intelligence and "human" skills, enabling them to assume more roles.
- **Less human humans:** Addiction to technology erodes human social skills when they are most needed.
- **Divided humans:** A wide variety of fears and divisions (racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and political) further divide and isolate people just at the point when collaboration is most crucial.
- **Healthy technology:** Consumers demand less-addictive tech products that encourage the growth and maintenance of emotional intelligence and social skills.

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Take Action

- **Take time to care.** Organizations need to have sufficient staff and time to deliver high-touch, empathetic interactions. High-productivity business models can push out the time for caring. Organizations may need to remove the wasted time in their processes to create time to care. Get boards off the operational issues and into generative discussions where they have more opportunity to relate to each other.
- **Reward the behaviors you want.** Are your staff and volunteers evaluated on and rewarded for empathy, creativity, and teamwork? If organizations want to see more trust, they need to reward these behaviors.
- **Emphasize leadership and soft skills.** Leaders need more self-awareness. Mentoring and training program can focus on soft skills. Learning to listen well and tell stories will distinguish humans from their artificial-intelligence counterparts.
- **Acknowledge diversity and privilege.** Associations need to become more sensitive to issues of diversity and inclusion and work effectively with humans in all the ways their talents and needs manifest. Boards need to incorporate a more diverse voice of the member into their strategic planning sessions.
- **Bring the human connection into remote work.** As more people work and volunteer remotely using online and virtual technologies, organizations will have to work harder to create environments that help people connect and recognize each other's gifts and needs.
- **Bake humanity into your culture.** Core values will deserve more than lip service. They need to be front and center in staff and volunteer development training, assessment, and countless everyday rites of engagement.

Keyword Search

To continue researching this change driver, use these search terms:
emotional intelligence, soft skills, emotional labor, machine collaboration, machine learning, botification, smart machines, symbolic analysts, creative professionals, automation

Who Will Be Affected

The need for more human humans speaks to the future of the human condition and directly affects the people business of all associations and the hospitality and service businesses that support them. Organizations of all types need to retain their humanity even while they take full advantage of future technological capabilities.

About ASAE ForesightWorks

ASAE ForesightWorks is a deliberate, evidence-based research program and emerging line of products to provide association professionals with a continual stream of intelligence about the changes facing the association industry, including:

- regularly updated action briefs;
- tools for applying insights from the research in your association;
- guidance in performing environmental scans; and
- opportunities to engage with peers around the research.

Ultimately, the program's mission is to empower association leaders to create a culture of foresight.

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