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Can Technology Create a More Equitable Future of Work?

ILO Future of Work Podcast

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Take-Aways

- Every job that shows potential for future growth depends on technology skills.
- Green skills also represent an important area of growth.
- Lack of access to training, employers' insistence on traditional education and lack of access to opportunities hamper equity in filling roles.
- Employers will take extraordinary steps to obtain skilled people.
- Technology can help people overcome the network gap.

Recommendation

In this episode of the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s Future of Work podcast, LinkedIn co-founder and vice president of product management Allen Blue discusses technology's potential to increase employment equity for workers around the world. Sophy Fisher, a senior communication and public information officer at the ILO, hosts.

Summary

Every job that shows potential for future growth depends on technology skills.

By studying information in its network, LinkedIn has discovered insights into the future of work. All the jobs that are growing the fastest now and that show the highest potential for growth in the future depend on technology: jobs in engineering, data, machine learning, marketing and customer service. Marketing has become dependent on technology skills such as targeted advertising on Google and Facebook.

"It's obvious that every job we're looking for in the future is going to be either a technology job or a technology-enabled job."

The majority of these jobs represent full-time roles that organizations consider vital. People in these technological or tech-enabled roles can hold substantial power in their employment relationships.

Green skills also represent an important area of growth.

The move toward a green economy will alter many industries and roles, including roles not directly associated with green energy. For example, investment analysts will need to be able to evaluate investments in the context of climate change risks.

"We are looking at a substantial transition in many industries and within many specific skills towards the world of green energy."

Over recent years and into 2021, companies are looking for candidates who bring green skills. A recent International Labour Organization report shows the global green economy will generate 24 million new jobs.

Lack of access to training, employers' insistence on traditional education and lack of access to opportunities hamper equity in filling roles.

The high demand for skilled workers means the potential exists to bring opportunities to workers around the world in an equitable fashion. But three obstacles stand in the way.

1. **Poor access to training** – Many people around the world lack adequate access to training. Online education could help, but these same people may lack access to technology as well – such as broadband internet, computers and even electricity.
2. **Employers insistence on traditional education** – Many employers still insist on education pathways such as bachelor's degrees, which often don't have much relevance to the role. In reality, many

people already possess most of the skills necessary to work in tech-enabled jobs, due to the overlap between these jobs and jobs in, for example, hospitality.

3. **Network gaps** – Many people lack access to opportunities for technology and tech-enabled jobs because their networks don't include people in tech jobs. Bartenders tend to have networks full of other bartenders. The lack of diversity in people's networks limits their access to opportunities.

Employers will take extraordinary measures to obtain skilled people.

Employers' high demand for certain skills means they will go to extraordinary lengths to obtain talent. The situation resembles that of the introduction of the telephone, when Bell Labs needed people who could work with this new technology. Rather than waiting for educational institutions to provide these workers, Bell Labs trained them in-house. Today, companies around the world are finding themselves in a similar situation, including LinkedIn.

"The real question for us needs to be, how do we make sure that the incredible demand for these roles is something which finds its way equitably through the workforce?"

In response, LinkedIn has created two new initiatives – a program for apprenticeships in engineering and a program that combines learning and hiring. Many employers are now looking beyond their usual sources and processes to obtain skilled workers. As a result, the private sector will likely participate broadly in investing to close training and employment-opportunity gaps.

Technology can help people overcome the network gap.

Leaders at many organizations recognize the need to increase the diversity of their workforces, and they want to change their hiring practices to help contribute toward diversity the overall economy. Many individuals are also becoming aware that their own networks lack diversity and that they could support equity by helping less advantaged people gain access to opportunity. Technology can help these people extend their networks, and technology itself can serve as a network.

"Without diversity inside your network, your access to opportunity is actually substantially lower."

Leaders at LinkedIn recognize their own potential to help close the network gap. In one effort to that end, LinkedIn promotes the "plus one pledge," where individuals pledge to bring one person into their network specifically to increase equity in opportunity.

About the Podcast

The **International Labour Organization (ILO)**, a specialized agency of the United Nations, works to bring social justice and decent work to all women and men. **Allen Blue** is co-founder and vice president of

product management at LinkedIn. **Sophy Fisher** is a senior communication and public information officer in the ILO's Department of Communication.



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