

The next generation of jobs won't be made up of professions

To prepare for the future, we need to shift from thinking about jobs and careers to thinking about challenges and problems, reports Alina Dizik.

By Alina Dizik

24 April 2017

When Jean-Philippe Michel, an Ottawa-based career coach, works with secondary school students, he doesn't use the word profession. Neither does he focus on helping his young clients figure out what they want to be when they grow up—at least not directly.

For him, there's really no such thing as deciding on a profession to grow up into.

Rather than encouraging each person to choose a profession, say, architect or engineer, he works backwards from the skills that each student wants to acquire. So instead of saying, "I want to be a doctor", he'll aim to get students to talk about a goal, in this case "using empathy in a medical setting".



Students today should focus on a collection of skills, rather than a particular profession, says Jean-Philippe Michel (Credit: Getty Images)

It might seem a bit esoteric, but the twist in language helps boil down real objectives. And sometimes those don't jibe with a single profession or even the career choice you might have imagined wanting at the start. Instead, Michel says deciding the skills you want to use leads to a career that's more targeted—and thus more likely to bring you satisfaction. It also might be less a job and more a set of projects and work situations that lead you from one thing to the next.

They need to shift from thinking about jobs and careers to think about challenges and problems

"They need to shift from thinking about jobs and careers to think about challenges and problems," Michel says. Easier said than done for, say, Gen X or even older millennials, but it's not so out of the realm of thinking for younger people, who are already narrowing down their university studies.

The purpose, above all, is to prepare the next generation for a career in the future, which for many will be made up of numerous micro-jobs aimed at well-paid skilled workers, and not a single boss and company, he says.

Ultimately, developing precise goals helps teenagers plan for what many call a ‘portfolio career’. This type of career is made up of somewhat disparate projects or roles and will be more prevalent in the next decade, says Michel, who is based in Ottawa, Canada.

“They are going to have to carve out a niche that’s more specific than it once was,” he believes.



The ‘portfolio career’ isn’t a new idea – but improving technology is helping it enter the mainstream (Credit: Getty Images)

The demise of traditional

Futurists and human resource executives say that our work lives will consist of doing several long-term projects or tasks at once.

Instead of identifying your job role or description, you will be constantly adding skills based on what is going to make you more employable

“Instead of identifying your job role or description, you [will be] constantly adding skills based on what is going to make you more employable,” says

Jeanne Meister, New York-based co-author of *The Future Workplace Experience*.

If you're younger, this will likely mean the ability to pursue flexibility and passions rather enter into a more traditional role, say in accounting or marketing or finance.

The precursor for this shift is already here; it's becoming more common to take on various roles even within one company, says Esther Rogers, who helps publish a quarterly journal about insight and foresight in the workplace, in addition to client work, as part of her role at Idea Couture, a Toronto-based innovation and design firm. Out of office hours, she also takes on voice acting roles. There's "a real mishmash of tasks within a role. It's already becoming difficult to come up with [job] titles," says Rogers.



A mash-up of micro-jobs can make you feel more entrepreneurial – even if you work for a large company, says Jacob Morgan (Credit: Getty Images)

Internal freelancer?

The idea of building a portfolio career has been around since the late 1980s, tapping into the dreamy interest many of us have in forging a one-of-a-kind

career path. But, until recently, the idea has been more theory than practice since a lack of technology made it time-consuming to find out about new opportunities, says Meister. Now that the technology has created more opportunities in the gig economy—think Uber, Instacart or Taskrabbit—the micro-job concept is making its way up the professional ranks.

More traditional companies are catching on and offering freelance-like project opportunities to their own employees, says Meister. For example, both IT giant Cisco and financial services firm MasterCard are testing so-called “internal mobility platforms” that allow employees to cherry-pick projects to fill specific gaps for the company rather than staying in a more structured role, says Meister. Instead of continuing in one department under a single supervisor, workers are encouraged to choose their next projects based on their skills, or skills they want to develop, which can mean working in a different part of the company. She says it’s working, although they’ve yet to study return on investment of the effort.

Michael Stull, a senior vice president at Manpower Group, a global human resource consulting firm in the US state of Wisconsin, says more firms are demanding similar setups.



Our professions can influence our identities – so what happens to that in a micro-job life? (Credit: Getty Images)

For companies, the payoff for experimenting with internal project-based opportunities means workers are less likely to jump from one company to the next, says futurist Jacob Morgan, author of *The Employee Experience Advantage*, based in the US state of California. Micro-jobs can inspire a sense of entrepreneurial spirit and autonomy within a company, he explains, which in turn might keep us from job-hopping to the competition.

Forging a career path

Choosing where and how you work seems fun, right? But when it comes to forging a long-term career, there are drawbacks to creating a portfolio of work, say experts.

The biggest barrier to adapting to a micro-job is mindset

If you constantly hop from one project to the next, the change can be jarring and leave you without a clear path to benchmark success. With fewer promotions and changes to job titles, it can be more difficult to feel like you're succeeding even if you're regularly completing projects, says career coach Michel. What's more, our identity is often wrapped up in the type of work we do, which doesn't really fit the micro-job collecting life.

And, of course, even though some companies are experimenting, steering past a traditional mentality on what constitutes professional growth can take years to change.

"The biggest barrier to adapting," says Meister, "is mindset."

To comment on this story or anything else you have seen on BBC Capital, please head over to our [Facebook](#) page or message us on [Twitter](#).

Fonte: BBC

<http://www.bbc.com/capital/story/20170424-the-next-generation-of-jobs-wont-be-made-up-of-professions>