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EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

Job prospects charting new territory

DISTANT FUTURE: Are you ready for 'personal genome optimization?' ROMA LUCIW writes it just might by your grandchild's career

ROMA LUCIW

Forty years from now, a job hunter's morning could play out like this: Wake up, devour the coffee and scrambled eggs your home robot has prepared, and scan the Internet classifieds for new opportunities.

It turns out some new positions were posted overnight. The list includes underwater hotel manager, director of influence, experience designer, personalized entertainment programmer, computer-human interaction technician, intercommunity farmer, corporate historian and bioaesthetic coach.

They may sound farfetched, but these are the kinds of jobs that workplace experts gazing into the future expect today's children, and their children, will hold down.

For the past several years, Washington-based World Future Society has been publishing articles in its Futurist magazine about what tomorrow's workplace will look like. One of its latest predictions is that members of America's Generation Y will be the first age cohort to spend most -- if not all -- of their adult lives working overseas.

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Shifts in workplace values are expected to become more evident. The economic boom of the 20th century created a consumer culture obsessed with buying more stuff, but futurists predict tomorrow's workers are more likely to forgo higher salaries for extra time with their families.

Richard Samson, a director at New Jersey management consultant EraNova Institute, says that as computers and robots take on traditional work, there will be a rise in "hyperjobs" -- occupations requiring human skills, such as creativity, discovery, implementations, influence or physical action: that is, jobs that can't be automated.

For instance, Mr. Samson believes a worldwide shortage of oil will create jobs dedicated to shifting the global economy from crude and onto renewable fuels.

Another category of hyperjobs will focus on enhancing the human body by keeping it well, reversing the signs of aging, or implanting tiny computers that extend the brain's memory and expand cognitive powers. Human bio-enhancement promises to be a big field, Mr. Samson said, with crazy-sounding opportunities, such as bioaesthetic coaching, someaelectronic integration, experience design, and personal genome optimization.

Future generations also will find work fighting global pollution and the disintegration of local communities, Mr. Samson said. That movement could lead to the creation of an intercommunity farmer, someone who makes a living by providing fresh produce grown within walking distance of local neighbourhoods.

So how can young people prepare for jobs that don't even exist?

Joyce Gioia, a futurist who consults on workplace issues and is president of Herman Group, in Greensboro, N.C., said a formal liberal arts education, combined with skills gleaned through internships or other non-academic experiences are the best way to prepare for the jobs of the future.

"Job candidates with broad, interdisciplinary backgrounds have become increasingly attractive to employers, and this trend is likely to continue in the future as more professionals are called on to perform an increasingly expanding range of tasks," Ms. Gioia and fellow futurist Roger Herman wrote in a 2005 article in the Futurist magazine.

Obviously, not all of today's jobs will disappear, they said. As desperate recruiters facing a shortage of skilled workers try to fill critical positions, some will try to attract applicants by changing the job title. Garbage collector could be advertised as mobile accumulation sanitary engineer, while sewer workers might get reclassified as subterranean engineers.

"Competition for talent -- or even warm bodies -- will force employers to manipulate job titles in ways that will be surprising," Ms. Gioia and Mr. Herman said.

They provided some examples of the more radically different job types that could emerge:

Director of Influence, a "schmoozing" position that would involve everything from managing protocol and entertaining to coaching teams or individuals in persuasive sales techniques to close deals.

Corporate alumni director, someone who maintains relationships with former workers to attract boomerang employees and quality referrals.

Personalized entertainment programmer, an audio-visual expert who will design multimedia entertainment sequences to meet specific needs.

Transhumanist designer/technician will work with people who have suffered such disabilities as amputation, loss of hearing or eyesight, speech impediments, and/or lack of physical mobility.

John Challenger, the chief executive officer of Chicago-based outplacement agency Challenger Gray & Christmas, also has ideas on the potential job titles of tomorrow:

Manager of diversity, a staff member charged with getting the maximum benefit out of individual worker's traits, helping employees develop a culturally informed approach to customer service, and tapping new potential markets.

Offshore outsourcing co-ordinator, a job that would oversee the work being done by the outsourcing providers, as well as assisting workers whose jobs have been dissolved or moved abroad.

Corporate historian, someone who tackles problems by cross-referencing a company's database for similar past cases and creates a report containing possible strategies.

Chief health officer, an in-house health-care officer who could oversee a variety of corporate wellness programs.

Meanwhile, the underwater hotel manager job may already have materialized. The ultraluxurious Hydropolis underwater hotel is slated to open later this year near Dubai -- on the floor of the Persian Gulf. Underwater hotels, resorts and casinos are also being proposed for Las Vegas, Monaco, Dubai, Rio de Janeiro, Qingdao, and Oman.

Better update that résumé.

Future job titles?

How would one of these titles look on your business card?

Bioaesthetic coach

Experience designer

Health-enhancement mentor

Intercommunity farmer

Personal genome optimizer

Chief health officer

Manager of faith-based relations and initiatives

Chief innovation officer

Executive chef, space airline

Global work process co-ordinator

Skycar mechanic

Underwater hotel manager

Vice-president of experiences

Roma Luciw

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