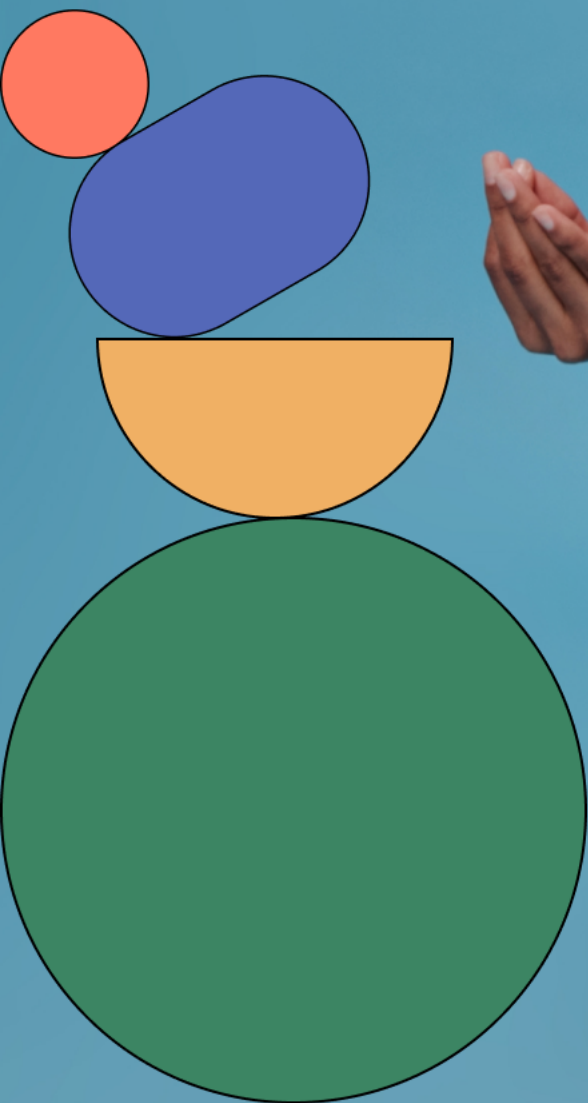


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Developing foundational skills for the future of work



Chapter 1

The foundational skills you'll need in 2022

In recent years, there has been plenty of discussion about how to develop 'future-proof' skills. That is, skills that will be in constant demand, surviving any technological or workplace evolutions. The thirst for future-proof skills is understandable, given [some estimates](#) show that 37% of workers are worried about losing their jobs due to automation.

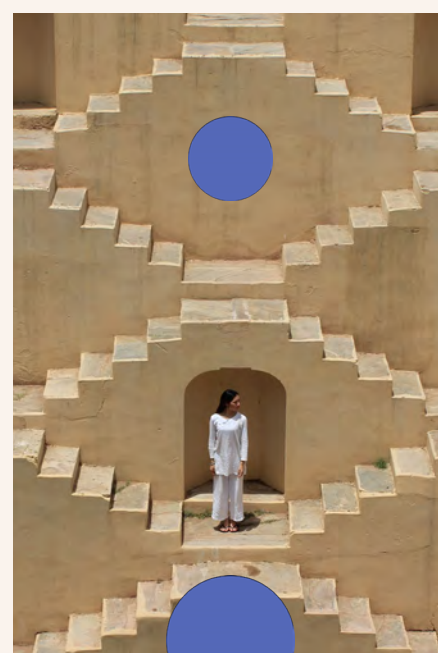
For context, the [World Economic Forum](#) finds that 71% of total task hours are currently completed by humans, compared to 29% of total task hours completed by machines. However, if [current trends continue](#), these numbers are expected to shift to just 58% of total task hours completed by humans and 42% completed by machines within four years.

Perhaps most alarmingly, McKinsey believes that by 2030 "375 million workers — or roughly 14% of the global workforce — may need to switch occupational categories as digitisation, automation, and advances in artificial intelligence disrupt the world of work."

So, we thought we'd lend a helping hand to your learning journey by examining the foundational skills you'll need in 2022. Whether you're learning to upskill at work, future proof your career, or just for the sheer love of knowledge, there are a few essential skills that you'll need to succeed in 2022 and beyond.

We'll set the scene by analysing an in-depth [report by McKinsey](#), which outlines the skills we will all require.

Following this, we'll take you step-by-step through the interpersonal, leadership, digital, and cognitive skills you'll need to get ahead in 2022 and beyond, ensuring you have a comprehensive overview of the foundational skills you'll need for the future of work.



Future skills, now


Recently, many workers have focused their upskilling efforts on developing foundational, future-proof skills. A [report by McKinsey](#) sought to define the skills citizens will need in the future world of work by identifying these foundational skills. Following a survey of more than 18,000 people in 15 countries, they landed on 56 'distinct elements of talent' (DELTAs) that will shape the future world of work. They then divided these DELTAs into four categories: Cognitive, Interpersonal, Self-leadership, and Digital.

According to [McKinsey's report](#), these DELTAs are vital to the future of work because "these skills showed that higher proficiency in them is already associated with a higher likelihood of employment, higher incomes, and job satisfaction." Examples of DELTAs include resolving conflicts, collaboration, digital learning, empathy, self-confidence, data literacy, active listening, and many more.



You can read the full report, including all 56 DELTAs, [here](#). However, we have identified the top three foundational skills from McKinsey's DELTAs that stand above the rest in their importance to the future of work.

Digital literacy



According to [McKinsey's analysis](#), digital literacy is "the ability to handle digital data, use popular software, access digital services, and interact with AI...individuals regularly use the internet, access services digitally, use popular software, and understand that online activity creates data that others can use." Notably, McKinsey also found that the digital literacy DELTA had the highest correlation to education.

We've discussed [digital literacy extensively in the past](#), but it's worth reemphasising how significant digital literacy will be as a foundational skill for many years to come. Given the sheer volume of new technologies we are now exposed to at work — from video conferencing and chat tools to word processors, AI, clouds, and everything in between — a foundational level of digital literacy is imperative to thrive in the future world of work.

Without a working understanding of digital literacy, many employees are likely to be left behind as new technological trends continue to arrive

88% of organisations have not taken any action to address their employees' lack of digital skills.

at breakneck speeds and the demand for digital skills grows exponentially.

Despite this, many teams have not yet taken action to improve their digital literacy. For instance, 39% of L&D teams say they are overwhelmed and under-equipped due to the pace of technological change.

More alarmingly, [digital literacy expert Elizabeth Marsh](#) recently found that 88% of organisations have not taken any action to address their employees' lack of digital skills. Given this, while digital literacy is clearly in demand, many people still lack this skill,

Adaptability and coping with uncertainty

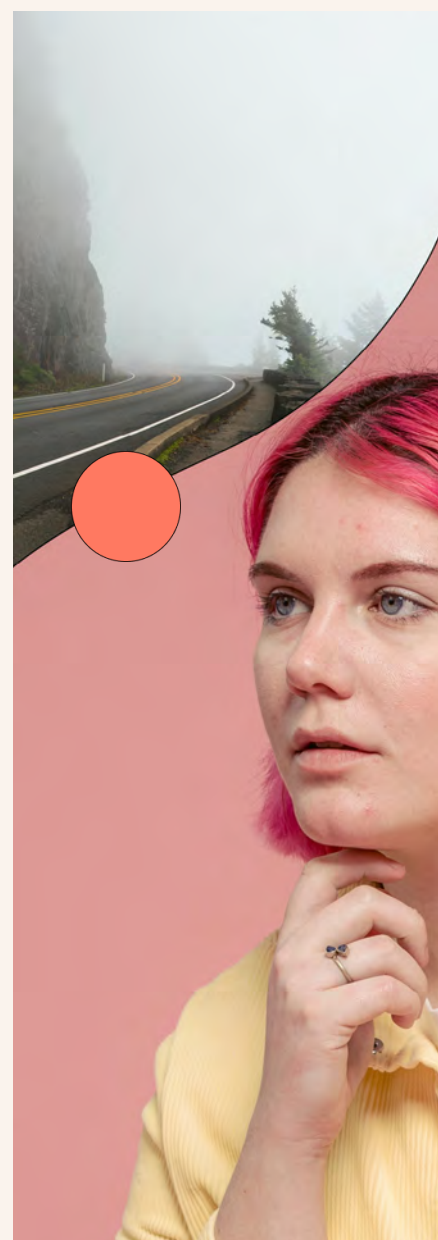
It should be no surprise that these two skills are in particularly high demand in 2022. Given the challenges of the pandemic, adaptability and coping with uncertainty are now non-negotiable skills. This trend shows no signs of slowing down in 2022, meaning adaptability and coping with uncertainty will continue to be essential foundational skills in the future world of work.

In fact, according to [McKinsey's research](#), adaptability and coping with uncertainty are the two highest indicators of employability. Respondents with a high level of adaptability were 24% more likely to be employed, while respondents who scored highly in the 'coping with uncertainty' DELTA were 18% more likely to be employed. Notably, 'self-motivation and wellness' was the DELTA with the highest indicator of job satisfaction. Respondents who scored highly in this category were 23% more likely to be satisfied with their jobs. Further research

demonstrates how important adaptability is in the modern workplace. According to PWC, [63% of CEOs](#) are unable to find talent that can adapt to the requirements of the business. Likewise, [Barclays Lifeskills](#) finds that 60% of employers believe adaptability has become more important this decade than ever before. Despite this, only [8% of employers](#) actively offer adaptability training. What's more, just [15% of people](#) list adaptability as a skill on their CV.

As such, there is a significant disconnect between the skills employers crave and the skills that many employees are currently developing. If COVID has taught us anything, it's that adaptability is now one of the few constants in life. Therefore, adaptability and coping with uncertainty are vital foundational skills to hone in 2022.

However, the foundational skills you'll need for the future of work don't stop there. Let's start with a deep dive into interpersonal skills.



Chapter 2

Why interpersonal skills will be vital in the future of work

From a friendly hello in the morning to astute conflict resolution abilities, interpersonal skills have always been valuable in the workplace. It is these skills, such as empathy, collaboration, and adaptability, that keep a workplace running smoothly and bring a distinctly human touch to any organisation. However, in recent years, [demand for interpersonal skills has skyrocketed](#). Now, many predict these skills could define the future of work.

With that in mind, we'll take a closer look at the interpersonal skills needed for [the future of work](#). We'll start by defining interpersonal skills, before tracking the rise of soft skills and detailing which interpersonal skills are most in-demand.



What are interpersonal skills?



Interpersonal skills (sometimes known as soft skills) are the ability to communicate and build relationships with others. Examples of interpersonal skills include communication, collaboration, conflict resolution, leadership, adaptability, patience, and empathy.

According to Skills You Need, "interpersonal skills are the skills we use every day when we communicate and interact with other people, both individually and in groups. They include a wide range of skills, but particularly communication skills such as listening and effective speaking. They also include the ability to control and manage your emotions."

Interpersonal skills often contrast with hard skills, which are the technical knowledge needed to do something. Examples of hard skills include speaking another language, SEO expertise, or Salesforce knowledge. [Indeed](#) provides a handy contrast between soft skills and hard skills, explaining, “**hard skills** are related to specific technical knowledge and training while **soft skills** are personality traits such as leadership, communication or time management.”



In recent years, demand for soft skills has risen sharply. One key reason for this is that interpersonal skills are evergreen, whereas hard skills can become outdated quickly. As [LinkedIn explains](#), “the shelf life of technical skills is relatively short — less than 5 years — while strong leadership, creativity, and communication skills are always in demand.”

Accordingly, strong interpersonal skills are now vital to stand out to employers and get ahead in the workplace.

“The shelf life of technical skills is relatively short — less than 5 years — while strong leadership, creativity, and communication skills are always in demand.”



The rise of soft skills

Recently, there has been a paradigm shift between soft skills and hard skills. In the past, hard skills were coveted. While this is still true for many specialist skills, [trends suggest](#) the era of hard skills is coming to an end. Now, soft, interpersonal skills such as empathy, collaboration, conflict resolution, and fostering inclusiveness are in high demand. In the coming years, demand for these skills is likely to continue rising.

Of course, some hard skills will always be necessary to perform certain tasks. However, hard skills alone may no longer be enough to excel at work, as has been the case in the past. Rather, a healthy mix of hard and soft skills is now essential. As [IBM](#) puts it, “a shift is occurring; executives’ views regarding the priority of critical skills have taken a turn from digital and technical to behavioural.”

Already, [93% of employers](#) believe soft skills are “very important” or “essential”, while [97% say](#) interpersonal skills are key to business growth and success. Further, [91% of organisations](#) say they want more soft skills.

Similarly, a [recent study of Fortune 500 CEOs](#) found that 75% of long term job success relies on people skills (soft skills), compared to just 25% that depends on technical skills (hard skills). Many executives now prioritise soft behavioural skills over hard technical skills, recognising these skills will be crucial to gaining a competitive edge in the future.

The rise of soft skills should come as no surprise, as [89% of recruiters](#) say when a hire doesn’t work out, it usually comes down to a lack of soft skills. On the other hand, [McKinsey finds](#) that people with strong interpersonal skills are 14% more likely to earn a top-quintile income. Therefore, developing strong interpersonal skills is vital to workplace success.



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What's more, a [recent analysis of more than 82 million job ads](#) found that the top five soft skills are requested 3.8x more than the top five hard skills, while seven of the ten most requested skills are soft skills. 64% of job postings ask for soft skills, including 36% that want at least three soft skills.

Despite this, there is plenty of room for growth as companies define their processes and identify which soft skills are most important to their business. For example, [although 97% of employers](#) say soft skills are essential, only 37% say their entry-level employees possess the necessary soft skills.

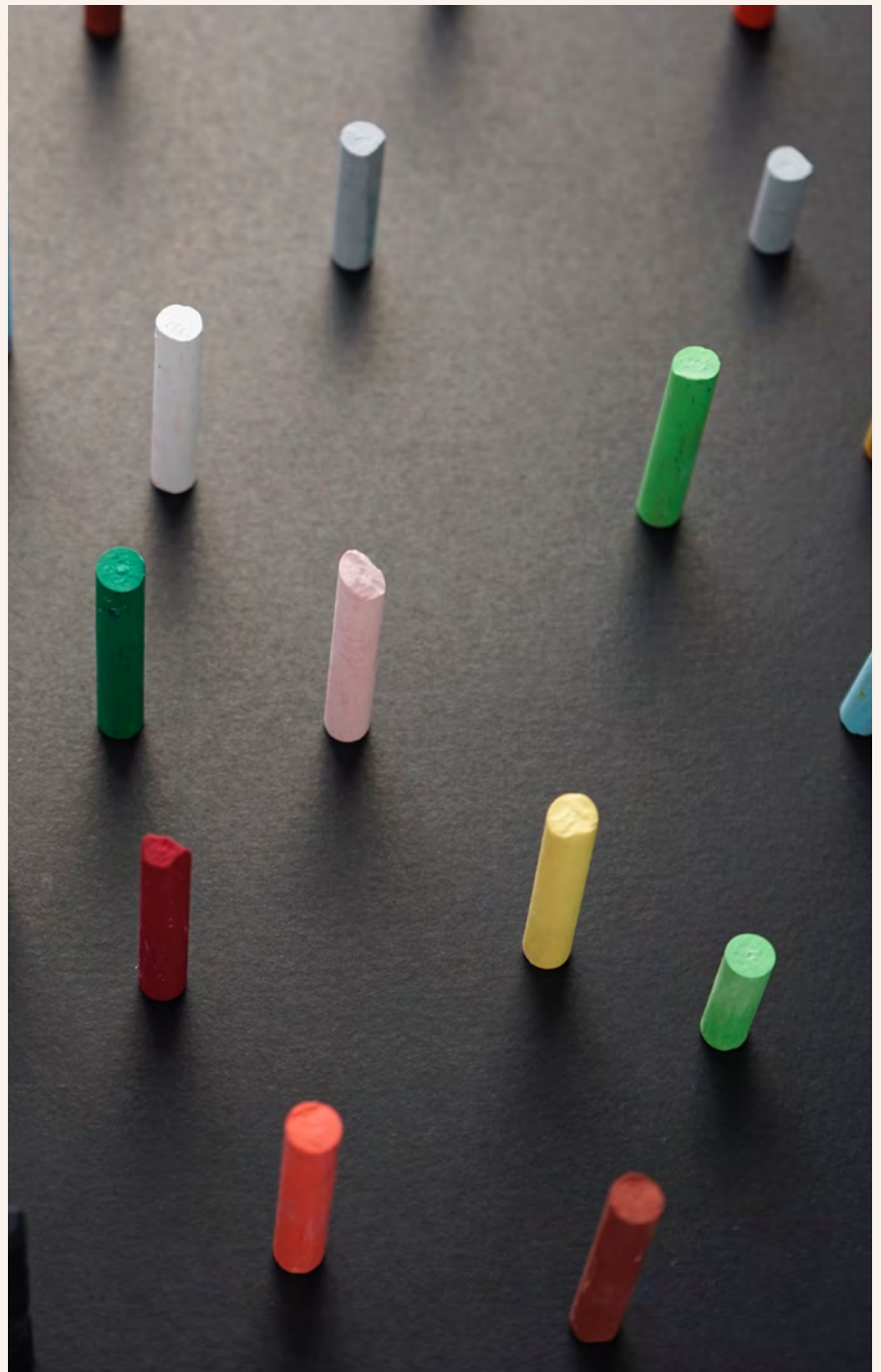
Additionally, only [51% of employees](#) believe their company understands the soft skills they want, while just [31% of employers](#) provide soft skills development training to their employees. Given this, there is still significant room for expansion and refinement, suggesting that interpersonal skills will only become more influential in the future.

More than 82 million job ads found that the top five soft skills are requested 3.8x more than the top five hard skills.

What interpersonal skills are most in-demand?

Now that we understand the rise and significance of soft skills, it's time to answer the question on everyone's lips: what interpersonal skills are most in-demand? What skills should I focus on to stay relevant or get ahead in the future?

[LinkedIn's 2021 Workplace Learning Report](#) identified the highest priority skills for L&D professionals based on the percentage of surveyed professionals who are developing these skills. Unsurprisingly, soft skills came out on top, with leadership management (57%), creative problem solving and design thinking (42%), and communication (40%) leading the way.



LinkedIn's report also took this a step further, identifying the top five soft skills for L&D professionals. These were:

- 1 Creativity
- 2 Persuasion
- 3 Collaboration
- 4 Adaptability
- 5 Time management

Similarly, a survey of more than 30,000 recruiters found the most in-demand interpersonal skills are dependability, problem-solving, teamwork, collaboration, and flexibility.

Finally, a report by Wiley Education Services identified the interpersonal skills that employers have the most trouble finding, including critical thinking (36%), communication (36%), and creativity (34%). Developing these skills is likely to give you an excellent head start in the future world of work.



Need a hand developing your team's interpersonal skills?

Check out our playlist
on [Why Interpersonal
Skills are More Important
Than Ever](#) to access
leading courses on
empathy, collaboration,
leadership, inclusion,
and much more.



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Chapter 3

How will 'self-leadership' influence the future of work?

In an era of [rampant change and uncertainty](#), strong organisational leadership is more important than ever. With [adaptability at a premium](#), businesses are crying out for secure, steady leadership to guide them through these restless waters. Therefore, it should be alarming that [77% of organisations](#) currently face leadership gaps, while only [14% of CEOs](#) say they have the leadership talent they need to grow their businesses. Further, just [48% of people](#) think their company's leadership is high quality. While figures paint a concerning picture of the state of top-level leadership, they also offer vital insights into an emerging trend: self-leadership.

While widespread leadership gaps are concerning, they also present opportunities for

people with self-leadership skills to get ahead in the future of work. Let's look at one more telling statistic to demonstrate this: [63% of millennials](#) don't think their leadership skills are being developed properly. So, employees have said enough is enough and taken leadership into their own hands. As they say, if you want something done right, do it yourself. Enter: the era of self-leadership.

With this in mind, we thought now was the perfect time to analyse self-leadership by casting an eye over how this trend will influence the future of work. We'll start by asking 'what is self-leadership?' before moving on to essential self-leadership skills and finally examining five need-to-know facts about self-leadership.



What is self-leadership?

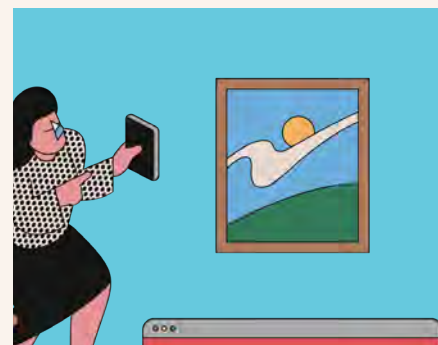
On a basic level, self-leadership is a fairly self-explanatory term. Self-leadership means taking leadership into your own hands — leading yourself, rather than relying on others to lead you. While this serves well as a basic definition, in practice, the term encompasses many nuances.

According to [Lead Grow Develop](#), self-leadership is “the deliberate action to influence one’s thinking and action to achieve an objective...self-leadership teaches one how to manage themselves in complex and uncertain situations. To lead a team or group of people, one must be good at self-leadership.” They elaborate, explaining that mastering self-leadership requires four main skills: **intention, self-awareness, self-advocacy, and self-confidence.**

Accordingly, [Forbes](#) has dubbed self-leadership “the most important form of leadership”. And it shows. A massive [69% of employees](#) say they would work harder if leaders recognised their efforts. In contrast, companies with high employee engagement are [22% more profitable](#). It should be no surprise that robust self-leadership programs play a central role in employee engagement.

It also makes sense that developing capable organisational leaders first requires self-leadership skills. As [Birkman puts it](#), “traditional ‘leaders’ can not be truly successful at managing or leading others until they can effectively manage and lead themselves.”

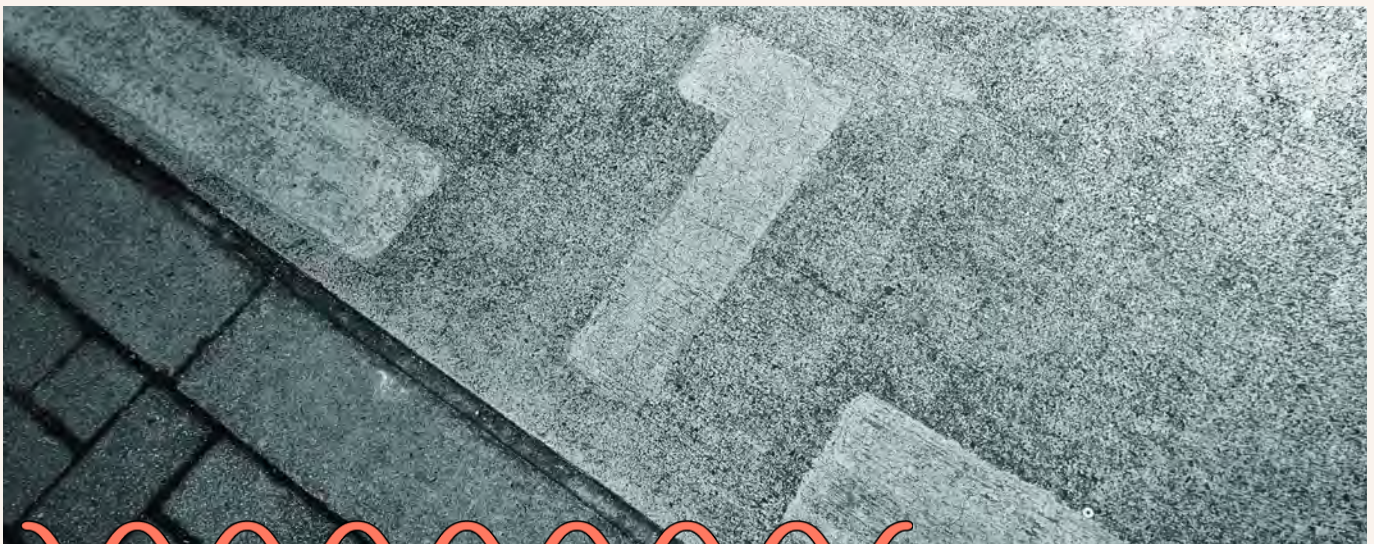
Notably, ‘self-leadership’ is not a new term. Rather, it was coined in 1983 by [Professor Charles C. Manz](#). Prof. Manz defined self-leadership as a “comprehensive self-influence perspective that concerns leading oneself toward performance of naturally motivating tasks as well as managing oneself to do work that must be done but is not naturally motivating.”



69% of employees say they would work harder if leaders recognised their efforts. In contrast, companies with high employee engagement are 22% more profitable

Building upon this definition in 2019, [Professor Marieta Du Plessis](#) took a more modern approach, recognising that self-leadership could influence all walks of life, not just business. She explained that “positive self-leadership refers to the capacity to identify and apply one’s signature strengths to initiate, maintain, or sustain self-influencing behaviours.” Similarly, [Positive Psychology](#) says self-leadership involves “what we do, why we do it, and how we do it.”

In many ways, self-leadership is one of the most important but neglected life skills. Too often, people sit back and allow others to make decisions for them or quietly follow paths with which they disagree. While this is sometimes unavoidable, self-leadership and self-advocacy always come in handy. After all, if you aren’t looking out for your growth and development, who will?



Essential self-leadership skills

Self-leadership includes many skills you would expect from a traditional leader — motivation, management, emotional intelligence, decision-making, a vision for the future, self-awareness, and a [growth mindset](#). The only difference is that these skills are focused exclusively on leading yourself to bigger and better things.

A [recent report by McKinsey](#) sought to define the skills citizens will need in the future of work. Following a survey of more than 18,000 people, they landed on 56 'distinct elements of talent' (DELTAs). According to [McKinsey's report](#), these DELTAs are vital to the future of work because "these skills showed that higher proficiency in them is already associated with a higher likelihood of employment, higher incomes, and job satisfaction."

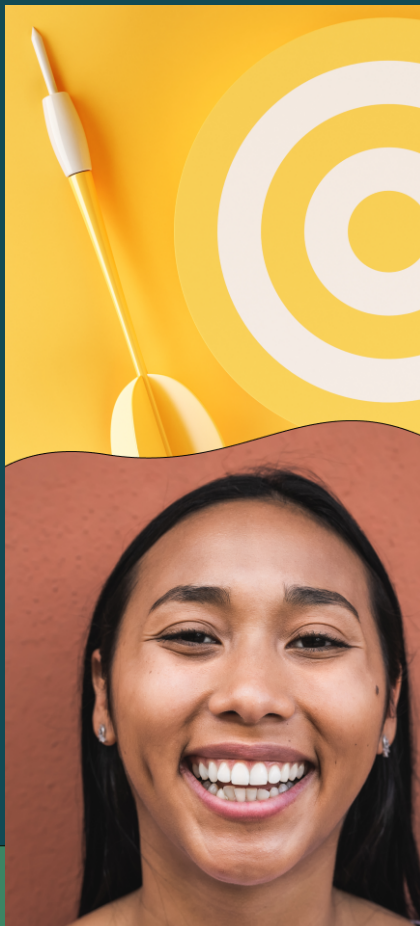
McKinsey then divided these DELTAs into four overarching categories: Cognitive, Interpersonal, Digital, and Self-leadership, thereby reiterating the importance of self-leadership skills.

In doing so, McKinsey effectively created a checklist of self-leadership skills. The following skills and proficiencies fall under McKinsey's self-leadership DELTA:

- Self-awareness and self-management
- Integrity
- Self-confidence
- Understanding own strengths
- Self-control and regulation
- Understanding own emotions and triggers
- Courage and risk-taking
- Energy, passion, and optimism
- Breaking orthodoxies
- Driving change and innovation
- Ownership and decisiveness
- Achievement orientation
- Persistence
- Coping with uncertainty
- Self-development
- Ownership and decisiveness



5 need-to-know facts about self-leadership



Now that we understand what self-leadership means, let's dig into the benefits of self-leadership. Here are five need-to-know facts about self-leadership:

1. High correlation with employability

According to McKinsey, self-leadership skills such as adaptability, coping with uncertainty, synthesising messages, and achievement orientation all correlate highly with employability. These skills were the top four indicators of employability, per McKinsey's survey.

Respondents who scored highly in adaptability had a 24% higher chance of being employed, while those who scored highly in coping with uncertainty had an 18% higher chance of being employed, and those who scored highly in synthesising messages had a 12% higher chance of being employed.

2. High correlation with job satisfaction

Not only does self-leadership correlate highly with employability, but it also correlates highly with job satisfaction. People with excellent self-leadership skills are more likely to be employed and more likely to be happy with their jobs — a true win-win!

McKinsey finds that self-confidence and coping with uncertainty — both self-leadership skills — correlate with job satisfaction. As they explain, “job satisfaction is also associated with certain DELTAs, especially those in the self-leadership category.”

Specifically, respondents with high proficiency in coping with uncertainty and self-confidence are 20% more likely to be satisfied with their jobs. As a bonus, respondents who scored highly in self-confidence are also 22% more likely to earn a top-quintile income.

3. A gap in the market

As mentioned above, 77% of organisations face leadership gaps, while only 14% of CEOs think they have the leadership talent they need to grow their businesses. What's more, just 33% of employees feel engaged at work.

Together, these statistics reveal a leadership deficit — perhaps more like a chasm. Such leadership gaps only make self-leadership more important, presenting an opportunity for people with advanced self-leadership skills to get ahead in the future of work.



4. Taking matters into your own hands

More and more, employees have been encouraged to take leadership into their own hands. This trend is a classic case of the right outcome happening for the wrong reason. For example, 50% of employees have left a job to get away from their boss. Likewise, 79% have quit because they felt unappreciated.

Moreover, only 36% of non-managers feel their managers assess their performance based on results, and 67% of non-managers say their leaders don't meet their expectations for checking on their mental wellbeing.

Put simply, employees are dissatisfied with the current state of organisational leadership. So, they've taken matters into their own hands and turned to self-leadership. Again, these statistics reveal an opportunity for savvy employees with well-developed self-leadership skills to thrive. As they say, if you want something done right, do it yourself.

5. Self-leadership leads to more innovation and engagement

Finally, studies show that self-leadership results in more innovation and engagement. One study, published in Current Psychology, found that self-leadership “translates into higher work engagement and further leads to higher...performance.”

Additionally, they found that “in the presence of self-leadership, employee’s work engagement, commitment to the organisation, and overall work performance elevated significantly.” To reiterate, in a workplace with advanced self-leadership skills, engagement, commitment, and overall performance all increase significantly.

Forbes corroborates, finding that “employees are more engaged in their work and more productive when their managers are more positively engaged with them. Incredibly, managers account for 70% of the variance in employee engagement scores.” This 70% variance highlights how vital leadership — especially self-leadership — is to engage employees.

Similarly, a study from The International Journal of Manpower concluded that self-leadership is “positively associated with both self and supervisor ratings of innovative behaviours.” In other words, managers and employees both believe that employees are more innovative when they have a high proficiency in self-leadership. This study also recommends that if companies want to encourage higher levels of innovation, they should “recognise the importance of building up self-leaders who can successfully meet the required expectations and standards of innovative behaviour.”

Ultimately, these findings reveal that more self-leadership equals more innovative and engaged teams.

Want to improve your team’s self-leadership skills? Go1 has you covered.

Explore our playlist on [Self-Leadership: Lead Yourself to Better Job Performance](#) to access world-class courses on confidence, innovation, emotional intelligence and more.

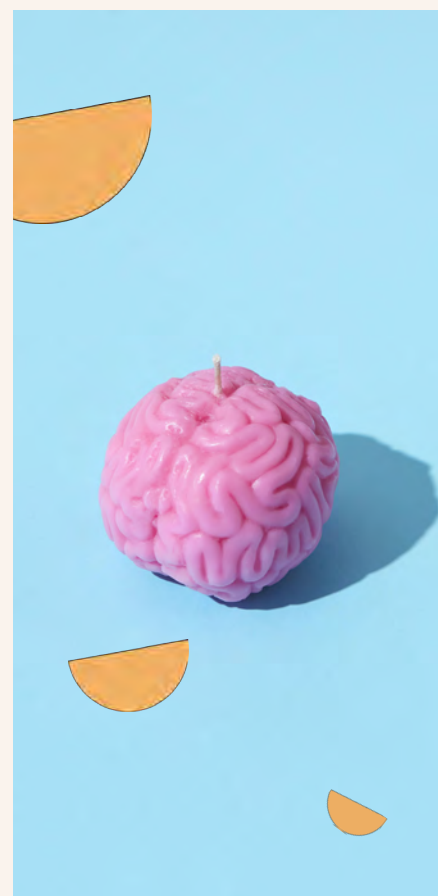


Chapter 4

Cognitive skills to focus on for the future of work

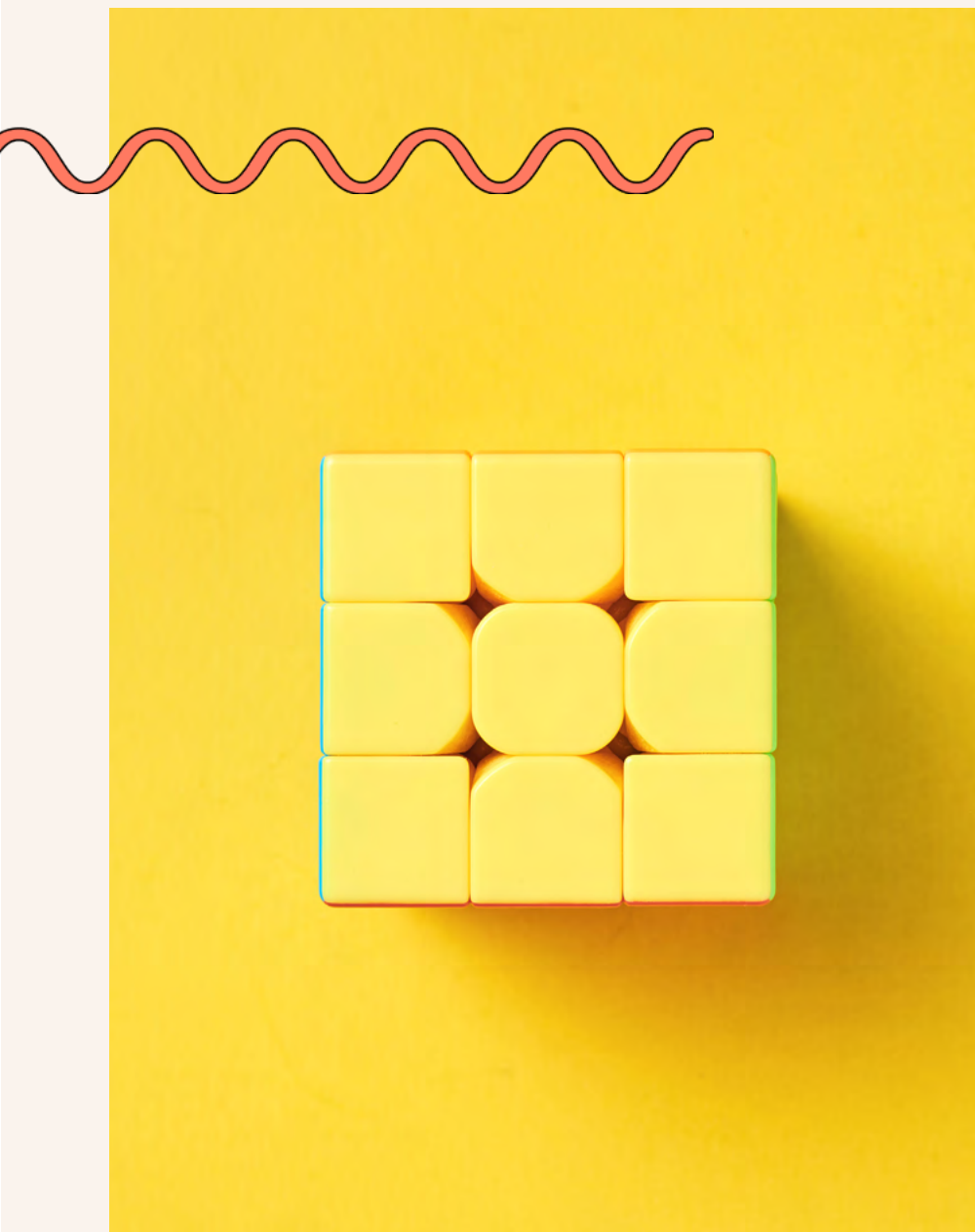
Whether it's a morning crossword, a daily brain teaser, or you're joining the Wordle craze, it's never a bad idea to keep your cognitive skills sharp. Yet, although we train our bodies through exercise and a balanced diet, it can be all too easy to overlook training your brain. However, neglecting your cognitive skills would be a mistake. With the demands of the modern workforce becoming increasingly fast-paced, well-developed cognitive skills are now vital. From [empathy](#) to creativity to attention span, it is essential to actively train your cognitive skills to stand out in a competitive workforce.

With this in mind, we'll analyse the cognitive skills you need to focus on to get ahead in the future world of work. We'll start by asking what cognitive skills are. Then, we'll look at how to develop your cognitive skills before exploring the specific skills you should prioritise.



**Ready to
train your
brain? Let's
get started.**

What are cognitive skills?



Cognitive skills are the mental skills such as attention, prioritisation, adaptability, critical thinking, and memory that we use to assess, perceive, process, and act in various situations.

As [Indeed](#) puts it, cognitive skills are “the ways that your brain remembers, reasons, holds attention, solves problems, thinks, reads and learns. Your cognitive abilities help you process new information by taking that information and distributing it into the appropriate areas in your brain.”

Similarly, [Sharp Brains](#) defines cognitive skills as “brain-based skills we need to carry out any task from the simplest to the most complex. They have more to do with the mechanisms of how we learn, remember, problem-solve, and pay attention, rather than with any actual knowledge.”

[Sharp Brains](#) also provides a concrete example of cognitive skills in action in the form of answering a telephone. While this may seem like an everyday task, it's easy to take for granted that answering the phone involves many cognitive skills. For example, you use perception to hear the ring tone, decision making to assess whether to answer the call, language skills throughout the conversation, and social skills to interpret the tone of voice and interact with another person.

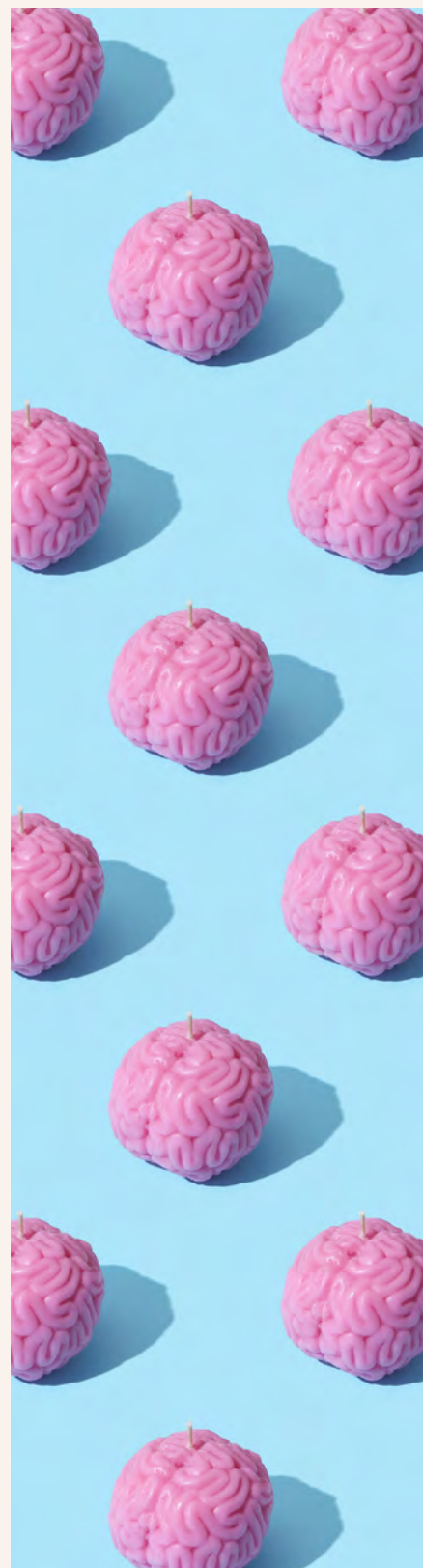
As such, we use cognitive skills daily — often subconsciously, without even realising it. Many cognitive skills are so ingrained that they become second nature like breathing. However, this doesn't mean you can't train your cognitive skills. Quite the opposite. It is vital to continually develop your cognitive skills to ensure you remain mentally sharp.

In a workplace context, well-trained cognitive skills are becoming increasingly important. In a recent report, [McKinsey](#) identified cognitive skills as one of four 'distinct elements of talent' (DELTAs) that will be vital to the future of work. Forward-thinking

workers would be wise to recognise this and focus on developing their cognitive skills.

Cognitive skills can manifest in many ways at work. From quickly interpreting and analysing data to paying attention and retaining information during meetings to [problem-solving and thinking quickly on your feet](#), cognitive skills are the backbone of any high-functioning team.

Think of it this way: specific knowledge and facts are often updated and can always be taught and shared. However, strong cognitive skills such as agility and creative thinking are evergreen, allowing you to stand out.



How to develop your cognitive skills

To start developing your cognitive skills, [Indeed](#) recommends taking three key steps. Firstly, it is critical to reduce stress and take care of your body. A clear, calm mind and a healthy body give you the best chance of developing your cognitive skills. So, focus on getting a good night's sleep, eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, and practising meditation to relieve stress.

Secondly, practice makes perfect. For instance, if you want to [improve your focus](#), practise focussing throughout the day. Try timing how long you can focus on a task before getting distracted. Then, set achievable goals to help slowly increase this number and improve your focus. The same theory applies to other cognitive skills, such as memory and problem-solving.



Finally, to develop your cognitive skills, you need to [actively train your brain](#). Like any other muscle, your brain needs regular exercise. Training your brain to expand your cognitive skills can take several forms, such as reading more frequently, solving puzzle games like crosswords, Wordle, or Sudoku, or even downloading a dedicated brain-training app. You can also check out our blog on [carrying the cognitive load of learning](#), which is packed full of tips from guest expert Lauren Waldman.

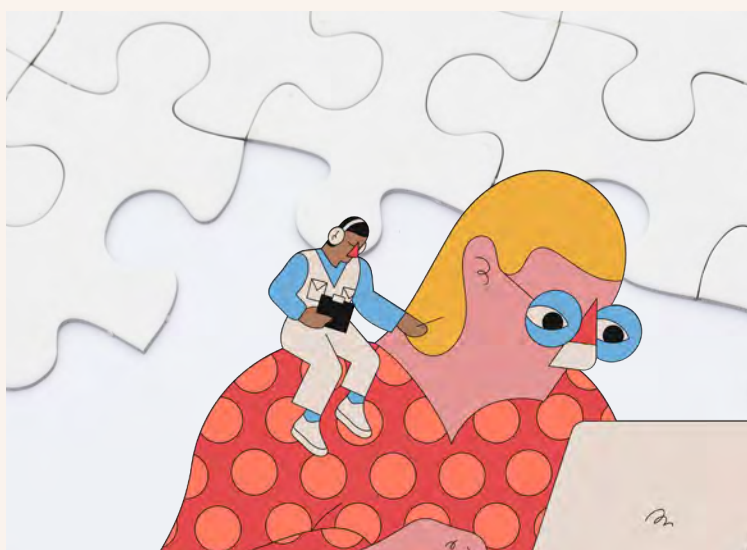


Which cognitive skills should I focus on?

According to [Mind Matters](#), there are six distinct types of cognitive skills: long-term memory, working memory, logic and reasoning, auditory processing, visual processing, and attention.

[McKinsey](#) offers further insights into the specific cognitive skills that employees will need in the future world of work via a survey of more than 18,000 people. According to their research, the following cognitive skills will be essential for high-performing employees:

- Structured problem solving
- [Understanding biases](#)
- Logical reasoning
- Agile thinking
- [Time management and prioritisation](#)
- Active listening
- Synthesising messages
- Work-plan developments
- [Creativity and imagination](#)
- Adaptability
- Ability to learn



That's not all, as [McKinsey](#) also found that many of these skills correlate highly with [employability](#), job satisfaction, and even income. For example, people with high proficiency in [understanding biases](#) are [10% more likely](#) to be satisfied with their jobs. Similarly, those with high proficiency in work-plan developments are [27% more likely](#) to earn a top-quintile income, making this DELTA the top indicator of a high income.

Moreover, those with excellent adaptability skills are [24% more likely](#) to be employed. Again, this cognitive skill was the highest indicator of employability. Overall, respondents with high proficiency across all cognitive skills were 30% more likely to earn a high income, per [McKinsey's findings](#).

We've drilled down further, identifying the top four essential cognitive skills you should focus on.

4 essential cognitive skills you'll need for the future of work



1. Attention:

According to Indeed, attention is the most important cognitive skill to get ahead at work. As they explain, “strong cognitive skills can help you resist diverting your attention to something else and stay focused on the most important task.” Attention can be divided into three sub-skills: **sustained attention** (focusing on one task for a long time), **selective attention** (maintaining focus despite distractions, such as replying to emails or chatting with co-workers) and **divided attention** (attending to multiple ongoing tasks in a day without losing track of your progress).

2. Adaptability:

It should come as no surprise that adaptability is one of the most vital cognitive skills in 2022. After years of COVID-related disruptions, adaptability is now the norm in many workplaces. As a result, adaptable employees will be highly sought after in the future world of work.

3. Agile thinking:

Going hand in hand with adaptability, agile thinking is also an essential cognitive skill. As McKinsey puts it, employees who can “quickly and independently learn competencies beyond their area of expertise” will stand out to employers. In the modern workplace, agile thinking involves thinking laterally at a moment’s notice, always having a backup plan (and a backup plan for your backup plan!), and being willing to learn from past mistakes to grow.

4. Prioritisation:

Excellent time-management and prioritisation skills have always been important. However, with adaptability and agility also at a premium, the ability to juggle and prioritise multiple tasks, often with short lead times, will be a vital cognitive skill to get ahead in the future world of work.



Need some help developing your team’s cognitive skills? Go1 has you covered.

Check out our playlist on [Cognitive Skills: Thinking Towards the Future](#) to access world-class courses on mindful listening, critical thinking, problem-solving and more.



Chapter 5

The importance of digital literacy for your workforce

If you were born this century, digital literacy might be a skill you take for granted. You're a digital native, after all. However, digital literacy isn't something that comes naturally to everyone. As such, it is important to be aware of the varying digital literacy levels within your organisation and continually strive to improve your team's digital literacy.

Even younger generations can always upskill their digital literacy. Remember, nobody's perfect. There's always something new to learn, and, in many ways, digital literacy is no different to traditional conceptions of literacy. It is a skill that can be continually honed throughout your career, playing a significant role in your ongoing professional development.

Unfortunately, many organisations overlook digital literacy when crafting their learning and development strategies, meaning it is a skill that can stagnate quickly.

With this in mind, we've decided to look at the digital literacy skills that your team will need to succeed in the future world of work. We'll start by asking what digital literacy is and why it's important, before offering tips on how to improve your team's digital literacy.



What is digital literacy?

Digital literacy is similar to traditional forms of literacy. The medium may change, but the basic skills remain the same. Where we traditionally think of literacy as the ability to read, write, interpret, and critically evaluate the written word, digital literacy asks us to apply similar skills to digital mediums.

According to Common Sense Media, “digital literacy is part of media literacy. They’re both included in the idea of ‘information literacy’, which is the ability to effectively find, identify, evaluate, and use information. Digital literacy specifically applies to media from the internet, smartphones, video games, and other nontraditional sources.”

Developing Employability expands on this definition, adding that digital literacy is the ability to “identify and use technology confidently, creatively and critically to meet the demands and challenges of life, learning and work in a digital society.”

Finally, McKinsey defines digital literacy as “the ability to handle digital data, use popular software, access digital services, and interact with AI.”

As such, a few key indicators of digital literacy include being able to:

- Confidently identify and operate different technologies
- Access, interpret, and critically evaluate information in digital spheres
- Communicate with others using online tools
- Manage your online identity while being conscious of security, safety, and privacy
- Create digital content, not just consume it

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Why is digital literacy important?

Digital literacy is important for many reasons. For starters, digital literacy is important because we live in an increasingly digital society. From social media to Zoom meetings to online payments and more, much of our society is now filtered through a digital lens. Further, the widespread move to remote work has demanded an increase in digital skills for many employees.

According to the Digital Skills Organisation, 87% of jobs in Australia now require some level of digital literacy. What's more, they find that 61% of Australia's training needs include the digital upskilling of the general population.

Similarly, a recent report by McKinsey identified digital literacy skills as one of four 'distinct elements of talent' (DELTAs) that will be vital to the future of work. Forward-thinking workers would be wise to recognise this and focus on developing their digital skills.

McKinsey also found that proficiency in their digital literacy DELTA had the highest correlation to education (32%). Plus, they noted that "a respondent with higher digital proficiency across all digital DELTAs was 41 percent more likely to earn a top-quintile income."

Despite this, digital literacy expert Elizabeth Marsh recently found that 88% of organisations have not taken any action to tackle their employees' lack of digital skills. On the other hand, 44% of workplaces have some form of digital program in place. Additionally, teams now use 16 SaaS applications on average, up from 8 in 2015. While this may come naturally to some, jumping from application to application can be a lot to get your head around if you're not as digitally literate.



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company has a clear strategy to train employees in the new digital literacy skills they will need in future. However, just 46% of non-managers think the same.

What's more, Ms Marsh finds that "the digital skills deficiency in the workforce is impacting on performance, with lost productivity and decreased customers the main negative impacts." These deficiencies should be highly concerning and could serve as a wake-up call for organisations to provide better digital literacy training.

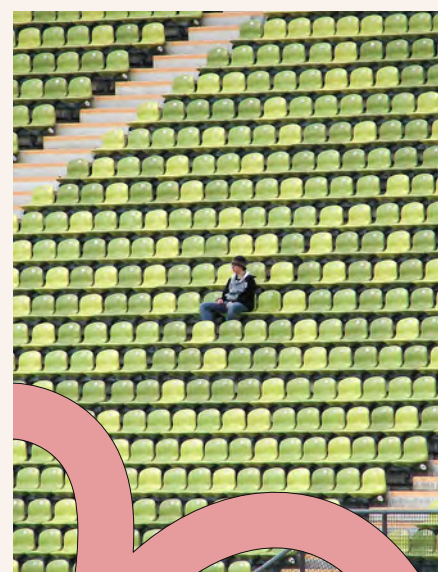
Along these lines, Emerald Works finds that 29% of L&D teams are concerned about the pace of technological change, with 39% adding that they are overwhelmed and under-equipped.

To put this into perspective, The Australian Digital Inclusion Index tracks and measures the rate of digital literacy in Australia. In 2020, the report saw a slight increase in Australia's ADII score, from 61.9 in 2019 to 63 in 2020. While it is encouraging that this score is trending in the right direction, this was a lower increase than in previous years.

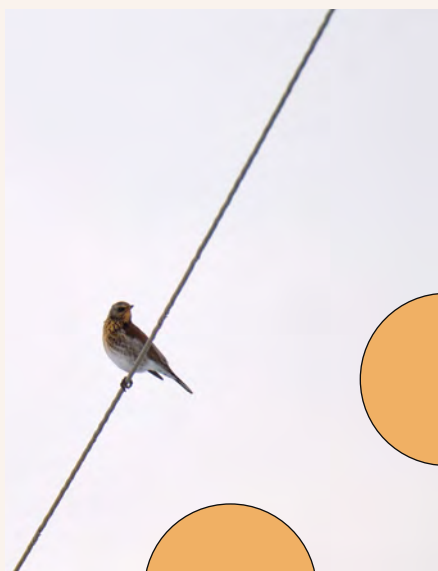
To underscore the importance of digital literacy and inclusion, the ADII explains some of the factors

that contribute to digital literacy, commenting, "across the nation, digital inclusion follows some clear economic and social contours.

In general, Australians with lower levels of income, employment, and education are significantly less digitally included. There is consequently a substantial digital divide between richer and poorer Australians." In addition, older people, Indigenous Australians, people with disabilities, and people who live in rural areas are all more likely to be digitally excluded. Given these findings, digital literacy is essential on three distinct levels. Firstly, a foundational degree of digital literacy is necessary to participate in an increasingly digital society. Without this, people may struggle to access employment and other basic needs.



Secondly, from a business perspective, a team that lacks the necessary digital literacy skills is likely to be less productive. It is incumbent upon L&D teams to ensure employees have access to robust digital skills programs, which will lead to both a high-functioning business and more productive, engaged employees.



Finally, and perhaps most importantly, improving digital literacy is vital from a diversity and inclusion standpoint. As the latest ADII report reveals, Indigenous Australians, people with disabilities, and Australians from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds are disproportionately affected by a lack of digital literacy. Therefore, improving access to digital literacy for these traditionally marginalised groups should be a priority to help bridge the digital divide.



Tips to improve your team's digital literacy

With these factors in mind, the question becomes, what can I do to improve my team's digital literacy?

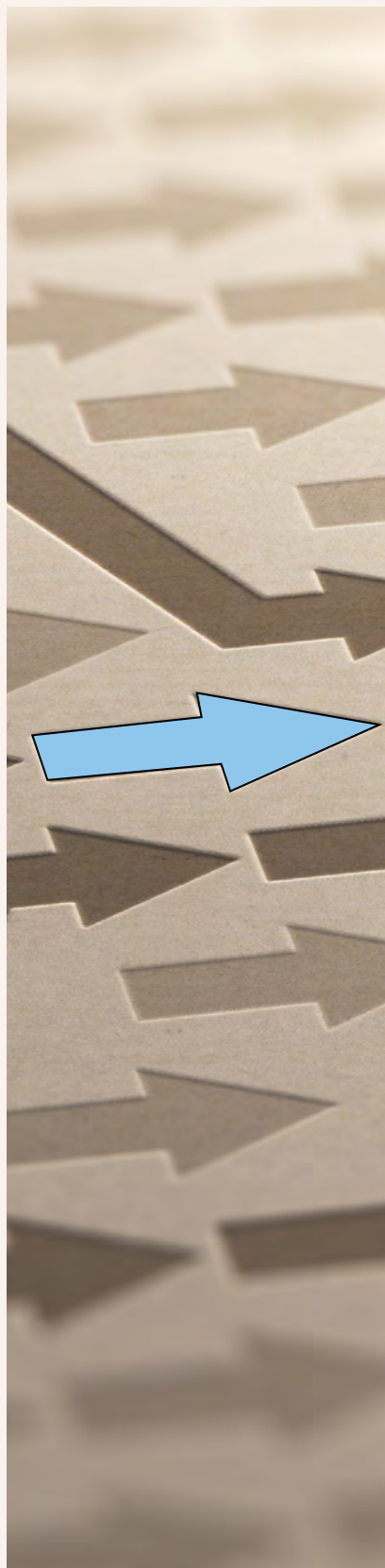
The good news is that many L&D teams have recognised that digital literacy is a growing priority and have taken steps to address this issue. According to LinkedIn's 2022 Workplace Learning Report, 26% of L&D teams see digital upskilling as one of their primary focus areas in 2022, making this the second-highest priority for L&D teams behind leadership and management training. Likewise, 30% of L&D teams plan to launch digital fluency or transformations programs in 2022.

So, how can teams digitally upskill? To start with, McKinsey offers insights into the specific digital skills that employees will need in the future world of work. According to their research, the following digital literacy skills will be essential for high-performing employees:



- Digital collaboration
- Digital learning
- Digital ethics
- Programming literacy
- Data analysis and statistics
- Data literacy
- Cybersecurity literacy
- Computational and algorithmic thinking

To put these skills into action, an excellent place to start is by clearly communicating the value of digital literacy to employees. In other words: what's in it for me? For example, you might explain that digital literacy can improve productivity, expand knowledge, offer new skills, and help people remain employable. You can also explain that digital literacy is vital to any successful professional development plan.



Once everyone understands the value of digital literacy, it's time to assess your team's current digital literacy levels. By doing this, you will be able to identify the specific areas that require improvement. The details of this process will vary from team to team. However, surveys that ask employees to assess their current level of digital knowledge, or even simple online tests, can be good ways to check your team's digital literacy.

Next, it is essential to set clear, measurable objectives to ensure you achieve the desired outcomes. These objectives will help you decide which digital literacy skills to prioritise. Collaborate with employees to design these objectives to ensure everyone's goals and perspectives are reflected.

WeLearn provides an example of setting digital literacy objectives, explaining, "if you're looking to build your digital skill set, you need to know what you are using technology for and if there are ways to use it more efficiently. Not everyone needs to know how to code to succeed at their job, but perhaps that's an important element of your position.

Whether it's learning how to create a podcast or make an Instagram account, defining your objectives will put you on the right track to reaching your digital literacy goals."

Finally, it is time to implement a training strategy to improve your team's digital literacy. eLearning Industry recommends that hosting live events, encouraging learner-generated content, creating an online resource guide, and including digital literacy simulations can all be helpful steps in this process.

It is important to note that creating training content to improve your team's digital literacy will not be a one-size-fits-all process. Rather, this process will vary from business to business depending on your organisation, goals, existing learning infrastructure, and your learners' specific needs.

Want to fine-tune your team's digital literacy skills? Go1 has your back.

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