



MAJOR CHANGES ON HORIZON?

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Working anywhere, generational shifts, and declining mental health and well-being are among the megatrends that could shape the future world of work and workers.

That's according to *Career Development in 2040: 10 Major Changes Impacting the Futures of Work and Workers in Canada*, a report by CERIC, a Toronto-based charitable organization focused on career development education and research.

CERIC board chair Candy Ho, a career development scholar and an educational studies faculty member at Kwantlen Polytechnic University in B.C., helps make sense of emerging workforce realities:

■ **WORK ANYWHERE:** The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the transition to remote work among knowledge workers. Though it's unlikely to disappear, it has pros and cons. On the plus side, fully-remote employees can work for any company. Employee satisfaction and productivity have increased because workers can better manage their time since they're no longer commuting or are commuting less, Ho notes.

But if you work from home, you may experience a "collision of all your life roles in the same space, which could be a stressor," Ho says. Those who want to socialize and need to work closely with others might not have enough face time with colleagues and especially managers, who might not have a good handle on what their team members are doing.

■ **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI):** Though many workers are concerned AI and robots will take over their jobs, they don't need to worry, Ho assures. Though routine physical and cognitive tasks like those in production and office administration are most vulnerable to full automation, most jobs won't be fully automatable. AI and tools like predictive analysis are expected to create a productivity boom and may be able to produce high-quality work in half the time.

■ **GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICTS:** War and natural disasters have displaced millions and have also created supply chain issues. "A big part of this trend is looking at how we take care

How work, career development may evolve between now and 2040



Candy Ho, chair of the board of directors of CERIC. SUPPLIED

of those people who are traumatized," she says.

Ho is interested in how to better capitalize on and utilize the talents of skilled refugees and immigrants, many of whom are underemployed. "Also, because of all the uncertainty that's happening in the world, there's higher emphasis on job security as people crave stability and need further career development support."

■ **ECONOMIC PRECARITY:** Many Canadians have a "job and a half" as they supplement their full-time income in the gig economy. In the wake of economic uncertainty, many organizations are "quiet hiring" to address business needs with existing employees or short-term contractors. At the same time, people are "rage applying" and sending their resumes to numerous open positions with higher salaries and better perks.

■ **RECONCILING IMPACTS OF COLONIALISM:** "This is really important as we continue to respond to and enact

on the calls from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission," says Ho. Career development professionals may need to play more active roles in supporting the decolonization of workplaces, and to better support workers who are Indigenous, Black and People of Colour.

■ **EDUCATION, DISRUPTED:** As employer requirements and hiring practices evolve to focus on skills over credentials – with companies like Google offering six-week career certificates accepted instead of four-year degrees – post-secondary education is undergoing a transformation.

"A lot of this is around the idea of reskilling and upskilling and what educational institutions can do to help facilitate some of that, such as working closer with employers to develop programs that are more relevant," she says.

■ **GENERATIONAL SHIFTS:** With four and five generations in the same workplace,

More megatrends

The following are three additional megatrends impacting the future of work and workers in Canada, according to a CERIC report:

■ **Living with climate change.** As part of this trend, career development practitioners may need to pay more attention to the "green skills revolution" to support clients whose jobs are being transformed to achieve a net zero economy.

■ **Globalization under pressure.** As some countries adopt protectionist policies in a bid to create stability from global economic dynamics, workplaces and employment opportunities may become more localized. Fewer people may start new businesses in the face of global economic uncertainty, resulting in less demand for career-oriented services of mid-career and late-career workers.

■ **Declining mental health, well-being.** According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, one in two Canadians will have faced a mental health challenge by the time they're 40. CERIC suggests some workers may be unable to work full-time due to mental health challenges and believes it may become more common for mid-and late-career workers to take sabbaticals or make major career transitions, opting for less stressful jobs.

Ho hopes there will be "lots of opportunities" to learn from and mentor one another, especially from the older generation as it moves towards semi-retirement and/or retirement. As life expectancy grows, some workers will stay in the labour force longer. This trend also underscores the importance of considering the types of conflicts that might arise because workers were born in different times that shaped their beliefs.

STAYING COMPETITIVE IN BUSINESS

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Despite the current economy, small business owners still feel able to compete thanks to proactivity, according to ADP Canada's Workplace Insights Survey conducted by Maru Public Opinion.

Fifty-three per cent of small business owners report feeling negatively about the Canadian economy. Though 19 per cent say it's a primary source of stress, 47 per cent still feel optimistic, the survey finds. Recruitment and retention are key challenges: 32 per cent face challenges finding employers, while 21 per cent have had to let employees go due to inflation.

Of those finding it difficult to attract and retain talent, 69 per cent said they were taking action to combat it, such as offering higher wages, flexible work models to improve employee retention and increasing benefits, such as more vacation and perks.

Forty-nine per cent of small business owners reported not feeling worried about their ability to compete. Further, six in 10 reported taking action to ensure they're still meeting operational needs: 19 per cent have tried to make their processes more efficient to optimize productivity and reduce costs, 17 per cent have become more personally involved in the end-to-end running of the business and 15 per cent have hired individuals with skill sets previously unexplored.

Small businesses also recognize the value of cultivating a strong workplace culture and loyalty. Some benefits of working at a small business might include a closer relationship with management, a stronger team bond and a better work-life balance, the survey finds.