Career series: The Future of Work: high demand skills

Futurist Alvin Toffler famously said: "the illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who can't read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn". The world we are in now is described by academics as VUCA – volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. The speed and complexity of change is increasing, and we have five generations in the workforce now – each with their own set of characteristics and traits. For most people over the age of 35, the education they received was to prepare them for a world of work that no longer exists or is rapidly evolving into something quite different.

Becoming aware of high demand skills and staying up to date as these trends change over time, is a useful way to plan your learning and development to make sure your skillset stays 'relevant' for the career you have or the career you want. Many organisations produce a Future of Work or State of the Workplace report at least once a year, which outline which skills are in demand. You could set up a Google alert for these, or keep an eye on communications from organisations such as Harvard Business School, Hays, Gallup, McKinsey, or Human Capital Management.

In 2024, the top ten in-demand skills according to the Head of Global Content from LinkedIn Learning, are:

1. Communication
2. Customer service
3. Leadership
4. Project management
5. Management
6. Analytics
7. Teamwork
8. Sales
9. Problem-solving
10. Research.

The same article says that the top skill of the moment is **adaptability**.

So many of the above skills relate to working with people, it's not a surprise then that a synthesised view of several other Future of Work reports indicates that the following skills are 'enduring' – as in, will be required for the future workforce for an indefinite amount of time. They are in no particular order:

1. Communication
2. Problem-solving
3. Critical thinking
4. Adaptability
5. Emotional intelligence
6. Teamwork and collaboration
7. Time management
8. Leadership
9. Initiative
10. Learning agility
11. Digital literacy
12. Creativity and innovation.

If any of these skills are development areas for you, then make a plan to strengthen them would be a smart career move. The LinkedIn article mentioned above includes some suggested LinkedIn learning courses (which are free to access through your local public library), or you could see what's available in your organisation.