

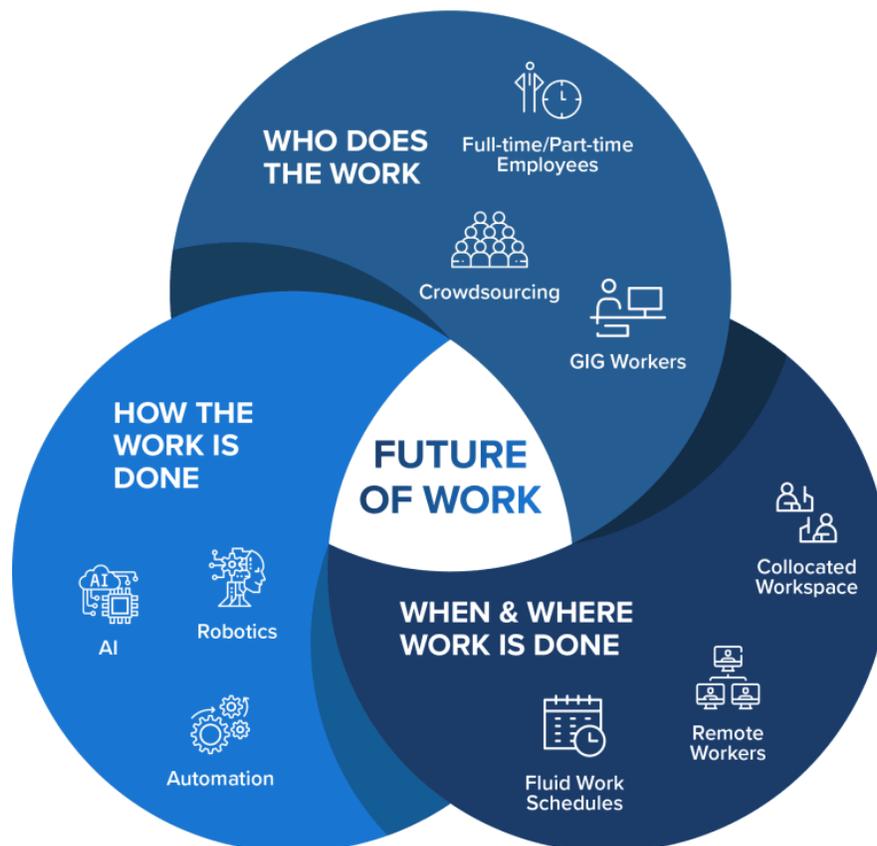
# What is meant by “the future of work”?

Simply put, the future of work is a projection of how work, workers and the workplace will evolve in the years ahead. It's a topic that keeps many CEOs up at night as they make decisions that enable their organizations to thrive today while they prepare for the future.

In order to support and confidently inform the C-suite, where strategic decisions are made based on where the work of world is heading, HR professionals and managers must be knowledgeable about how the future of work will impact their workplace.

While much focus is placed on technology in future-of-work discussions, other factors, such as remote employment and the gig economy, play a large role in not only how work will be done, but who will be doing it and from where. In addition, employers will want to consider what the work *is*, as a 2020 research report from the Society for Human Resource Management and Willis Towers Watson ([www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/documents/future%20chief%20people%20officer-imagine.%20invent.%20ignite.%20final.pdf](http://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/documents/future%20chief%20people%20officer-imagine.%20invent.%20ignite.%20final.pdf)) noted that "85 percent of jobs that will exist in 2030 have not been invented yet."

There are varying components that experts have outlined in models explaining the future of work, but most agree on three basic elements to consider: how the work is done, who does the work, and where and when work is done.



## How the work is done

This element focuses on employees collaborating with automation and artificial intelligence to get work done efficiently and innovatively. Tools can range from analytic software and chatbots to robotics with the power to learn and adapt using AI, natural language processing and machine learning. Rather than focus on replacing workers, forward-thinking employers will harness the power of this man-machine relationship to improve productivity, engagement and creativity among their employees.

## Who does the work

The future of work encompasses the need for traditional full- and part-time workers alongside leased employees, gig workers and even crowdsourced contributors. The movement of workers into, within and out of an organization due to changing skills requirements caused by advances in technology must be anticipated to meet future needs. Employers must prepare for new jobs and career paths through ongoing job analysis, advanced training and reskilling of the domestic workforce, and utilizing foreign labor where applicable.

Educational systems can be leveraged to help create pipelines of workers with needed skill sets based on future-of-work projections. Impact sourcing will also provide new talent with desired skills while helping to improve the economic status of communities.

### **Where and when work is done**

Although the global coronavirus pandemic pushed forward the large-scale need for employees to function successfully outside of a collocated workspace, the shift toward increased workplace flexibility has been ongoing for decades. The workforce will likely grow more dispersed as geographic and technological boundaries diminish. If work is done anywhere in the world, it will also be done at any time, transforming the remote-enabled workforce from the standard 9-5 workday to a more fluid design. Leveraging remote-work options will require a solid understanding of current and emerging state employment and tax laws, and mastery of immigration and global employment laws and requirements.

### **Workforce Planning**

Employers need to build an infrastructure that supports the future of work now, with HR leading the way in helping organizations identify and develop the types of workers they will need in the decade to come and beyond. This process may include the following:

- **Staying informed about new and developing positions that fortify a future-oriented structure.** Do you have an AI or coding ethics specialist, a human-technology liaison, or an automation recruiter? Others do, and staying current on these and developing positions will be critical to success.
- **Determining technology aspirations by department or division.** Leaders should identify which current or upcoming technology can improve performance and support creativity.
- **Conducting a jobs analysis to understand how work is currently done.** Use the data to determine how it could be done more efficiently in the future.
- **Conducting a skills analysis to identify gaps in future needs.** Use the findings to implement reskilling programs to fill gaps where possible. Source new talent where gaps cannot be filled.
- **Strengthening the employee value proposition—what employees get in exchange for what they give—to help retain talent in the most critical roles.** There is little point in reskilling if employees aren't going to stay.
- **Reimagining the talent model beyond attracting and retaining employees.** Include an emphasis on talent pipeline development, reskilling current workers and utilizing shorter-term work arrangements to achieve a more dynamic organization.

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