

UNIT 18



The workforce of the future

Getting started

1 Work in pairs. Match the types of worker (1–10) with their definitions (a–j).

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 1 shop-floor worker | a person employed to work for a short period, while another person is absent or when there is extra work |
| 2 blue-collar worker | b person who works in an office, doing work that needs mental rather than physical effort |
| 3 project manager | c person whose work requires specialist knowledge |
| 4 freelancer | d person who coordinates and supervises different elements of a job |
| 5 knowledge worker | e worker elected by other workers in a factory or business to represent them in discussions with the management |
| 6 self-employed person | f worker in a factory |
| 7 semi-skilled worker | g worker who does not work for an employer but finds work for himself/herself or who has his/her own business |
| 8 union rep | h worker who does particular pieces of work for different organisations, rather than working all the time for a single organisation |
| 9 temp | i worker who does physical work rather than office work |
| 10 white-collar worker | j worker who has or needs only a small amount of training |



2 Discuss this question in small groups. Give reasons for your opinions.

Which of these types of worker do you think there will be more of in the future, and which will there be fewer of?

Useful language

Giving tentative opinions

I imagine/suppose/guess that ...

It could/might be that ...

It's a possibility / It's (very/quite) possible that ...

... are likely to ...

The millennium generation

Reading

- 1 Work in pairs. Decide which of these statements you agree/disagree with, and why.

'Young people joining the workforce now ...

- 1 are likely to take a short-term view of work.' ...E.
- 2 are more entrepreneurial.'
- 3 are not so worried about job security.'
- 4 find it easy to fund their own business ventures.'
- 5 identify with their own abilities rather than their employment situation.'
- 6 may continue their formal education when they are older.'
- 7 may have little time for people who avoid working with the new technologies.'
- 8 take advantage of work opportunities where they arise.'

A

Young adults are by nature well-suited for the unpredictable workplace of the future. They have less baggage and can therefore afford to take risks. People today get married later, and women have children three years later in life than their mothers did. Each generation is born into an era of more rapid change than their parents, making them ever better adapted for the frenetic world they are about to enter.

B

One of the most pervasive business trends of the past decade has been the rise of the 'free agent', caused both by the breakdown of the social contract between companies and employees, and by the growing share in the workforce of knowledge workers with portable skills. They define themselves by their skills, not the firm they work for. 'The overwhelming majority of graduates see their career at graduation not as a straight line of advancement in one company but as a zigzag path from company to company, job to job, skill to skill,' writes author Meredith Bagby.

C

With a booming economy, capital for the taking and unprecedented technological opportunity, it is no surprise that more young people have been striking out on their own. Rebecca Smith explains that when she arrived in New York last year, she had to choose between a job with a prestigious advertising firm and one with a tiny dotcom start-up. She chose the start-up, even though it paid \$10,000 a year less. 'It was a choice between being someone's assistant or getting real responsibility and challenges,' she says. 'I think that a lot of people in my generation are going to smaller companies that allow them to grow much faster.'

- 2 Read the five extracts (A–E) from an article about how young people entering the workforce now, or in the next few years, are different from older generations. Decide which paragraph each of the statements on the left refers to.

Vocabulary

Find words or phrases in the extracts which mean the following.

- 1 fewer commitments (text A)
- 2 extremely active, excited or uncontrolled (text A)
- 3 not in use any more, having been replaced by something newer and better or more fashionable (text D)
- 4 present or noticeable everywhere (text B)
- 5 especially values (text E)
- 6 move with no particular aim (text E)
- 7 growing quickly (text C)
- 8 starting doing something new, independently of other people (text C)

D

Where years of education, training and experience were once necessary to succeed, now they are increasingly seen as irrelevant, even a liability. This trend is already showing up in teenagers with self-taught technical skills. They know that they will never again be as quick-learning and full of energy as they are now. These young programmers are starting to question the point of university. In a technology industry changing so rapidly, goes the thinking, skills quickly become obsolete, and in this market four years of studying history – or even computer science at an academic pace – is just four years wasted. 'You can always go back to college, but you can't regain your youth,' says one.

E

According to Bruce Tulgan: 'All they've known is a technology-based economy that moves quickly, downsizes constantly and places a premium on change.' The daily *USA Today* makes a similar point: 'Raised on a diet of MTV and video games, young managers are quick to roam from job to job, hungry for quick results, willing to do things differently and intolerant of technophobes.' Margaret Reagan, a consultant, predicts that barely one-third of young people will take steady staff jobs with companies. Instead, most will freelance, work under contract or part-time.

From *The Economist*

Job sharing

Talking point

1 Match these ways of working (1–6) with their definitions (a–f).

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1 flexible working | a doing part of a job with someone else, so that each person works part-time |
| 2 part-time working | b doing particular pieces of work for different organisations, rather than working all the time for a single organisation |
| 3 home working/teleworking | c working at home, while communicating with your office by telephone, fax or computer |
| 4 job sharing | d working for a short period, especially in an office, while another person is absent or when there is extra work |
| 5 freelancing | e working for only some of the day or the week |
| 6 temping | f working without strict times for starting and finishing |

2 Discuss these questions in small groups.

- Which of these ways of working do you think will become more common in the future?
- Which of these ways of working would you welcome?

Useful language

Giving strong/direct opinions

It's quite clear that ... One thing for certain is that ...
 I've no doubt that ... It/He/They is/are sure to ...

Listening

You will hear an expert in organisational management giving a lecture about job sharing.

7 Listen and complete these notes by writing up to three words in each gap.

Advantages of job sharing for employees

- Provides 1 for employees with other interests
- Flexibility for workers with 2
- Gives people who have given up working opportunity to 3

Disadvantages for employees

- Have to 4 on a joint basis
- Receive 5, as this is more costly for two people
- Not eligible for 6

Advantages for employers

- Two part-time employees 7 than one full-time employee
- Reduction in 8
- 9 also reduced

Disadvantages for employers

- Less continuity of 10
- 11 between supervisors and job-share partners
- Training - though can be done by the 12



Speaking

1 Work in groups of three or four.

Discuss the advantages/disadvantages of one of these subjects for employees and employers.

- teleworking
- flexible working
- freelancing

2 Prepare a short talk on the subject.

3 Change groups and give your talk to your new partners.

How people feel about their jobs

Listening

You will hear part of a radio programme in which five people talk about how they view their present job and what their hopes for the future are.



8 1 Listen and complete the table for each person using the lists below.

| | Views of the present | Hopes for the future |
|------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Lechsinska | | |
| Ganesh | | |
| Francesca | | |
| Darron | | |
| Irenke | | |

Views of the present

- A not enough job security
- B not trusted enough
- C bad workplace atmosphere
- D underpaid
- E no career advancement
- F too much stress

Hopes for the future

- G to be self-employed
- H to start own company
- I to take a career break
- J to retrain
- K to go part-time
- L to be given a permanent contract

2 Discuss this question in pairs.

Whose ambitions do you think are the most realistic?

Vocabulary

1 Work in pairs. Complete the sentences below using the words from the box.

apart cut dire go going good run
stuck taken

- 1 Basically, I like my job, apart from the smell.
- 2 I'm hardly getting what's the rate for my job in this part of the world.
- 3 I feel I'm in a rut and stagnating.
- 4 I'm on the all the time and don't get much chance to wind down.
- 5 The job is pretty high pressure, and I sometimes worry that in the long, it will affect my health.
- 6 The place I'm working at the moment is pretty, actually – I mean, no one seems to speak to anyone.
- 7 My dream is to get on by the Royal Shakespeare Company.
- 8 The money's because we get a of the profits.

8 2 Check your answers by listening to the recording again.

3 If you are working, tell your partner which sentences are true for you and why, and which are not true for you and why. If you are not working at the moment, talk about a relative or someone you know well.

Speaking

1 Think about these questions and prepare answers for them.

- 1 If you are working at the moment, how do you feel about your present job? What things do you like about it, and what things dissatisfy you?
- 2 What would you like to be doing in the future, say in five or ten years' time?

2 Work with a partner. Interview him/her and ask the questions above which apply. Follow them up with extra questions where necessary.