

# THE 21<sup>ST</sup>- CENTURY CAREER

Why Perpetual Career Preparation  
Is Necessary to Survive and Thrive in Today's Economy



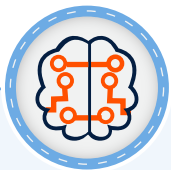
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# THE 21<sup>ST</sup>-CENTURY ECONOMY HAS SHATTERED TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS OF WORK AND CAREER

Throughout history, major economic transitions have always disrupted the labor market, requiring working adults to adapt to remain employable. We now find ourselves in the next major economic transition, which professor Klaus Schwab of the World Economic Forum calls the “Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).” Although we’ve gone through change before, the scope and exponential rate of change we now face is so disruptive, it’s redefining age-old concepts of work and career.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup>-CENTURY ECONOMY



AI increasingly automates predictable & routine work tasks.<sup>1</sup>



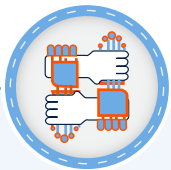
Access to global, mobile talent increases job competition.



Talent-as-a-service platforms make “gig work” a new norm.<sup>2</sup>



Longer life expectancies increase the average length of a career.<sup>3</sup>



Mobile robotics and computers take over & augment work tasks.<sup>1</sup>



The half-life of skills shrinks as the pace of change accelerates.<sup>4</sup>



Learning is continuous to adapt to exponential change.<sup>5</sup>



Average job tenure is lower. Career transition is more frequent.<sup>6,7</sup>

“

The future is already here – it’s just not evenly distributed.

- WILLIAM GIBSON

”

# THE TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF WORK IS DYING

For generations, work has been thought of as full-time employees performing sets of tasks, 40 hours a week, at a physical workplace, for a steady salary. Yet today, jobs are not only being outsourced more easily, they're being broken down into granular-level work tasks and distributed to a global, on-demand workforce to be performed for a fraction of the cost.<sup>8</sup> According to a study by Harvard and Princeton economists, 94% of net job growth between 2005 and 2015 was in the "alternative work" category, meaning nearly all of the 10 million jobs created were not traditional nine-to-five employment.<sup>2</sup>

Today, the tasks that machines cannot do are shrinking rapidly. Research from Oxford University concluded that about 47% of total U.S. employment was at risk of "computerization."<sup>8</sup> The old concept of work is dying as we move toward a future of work that will not only eliminate many jobs, but also significantly change existing ones and alter the way we compete in the labor market.

## SOME KEY DIFFERENCES IN THE NEW VS. OLD WORK PARADIGM

NEW WORK PARADIGM	OLD WORK PARADIGM
Institution as Client	Institution as Employer
Entrepreneur	Individual as Employee
Connected Networks	Top-down Hierarchy
Happens Anywhere	Happens at a Place
Happens Anytime	Happens between 9-to-5
Ambiguous Problems Are Solved with Unclear Processes	Prescriptive Tasks Are Performed with Defined Processes
Individuals Create Their Own Career Path	Institution Defines Career Path
Self-Directed, Lifelong Learning Maintains Market Relevance	Institution-Provided Training for Role Expertise Maintains Job Security
Innovation & Value-Adding Are Rewarded	Compliance & Loyalty Are Rewarded

“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.”  
**- CHARLES DARWIN**”

# THE TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF “CAREER” NO LONGER APPLIES IN TODAY’S ECONOMY

The traditional concept of career, rooted in old work models, is a lifelong, predictable, stable occupation with a steady salary and linear progression opportunities prescribed by an employer. However, LinkedIn research indicates that the number of companies people work for in the five years after they graduate has almost doubled over the last 20 years.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, research from the Foundation for Young Australians suggests that today’s youth will likely have up to 17 jobs across five different careers throughout their lifetime.<sup>7</sup> With increased ambiguity, instability, and insecurity, today’s professionals must be agile, lifelong learners constantly prepared to manage transition.

## SOME KEY DIFFERENCES IN THE NEW VS. OLD CAREER PARADIGM

NEW CAREER PARADIGM	OLD CAREER PARADIGM
Personal Brand as Identity	Job Title as Identity
Generate Revenue	Earn a Salary
Purpose Driven	Economically Driven
Work Experiences Amassed Over a Lifetime	Jobs Amassed Over a Lifetime
Integrated with “Life”	Separated from “Life”
Perpetual Preparation	Fixed Preparation
Evolving	Stable
Non-linear	Linear
Proactively Manage	Passively Manage
Skills & Reputation as Market Currency	Credentials as Market Currency

“You need to think and act like you’re running a start-up: your career.”

— REID HOFFMAN

# CAREER PREPARATION MUST BE PERPETUAL FOR WORKERS TO BE AGILE AND ADAPTABLE TO CHANGE

American author Eric Hoffer said, “In times of change learners inherit the earth; while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists.” The traditional concept of work encourages working adults to be the “learned” that Eric Hoffer refers to. Yet, in a world of exponential change, we need to be the learners. Today, career-readiness isn’t something achieved; it’s ongoing. Thus, career preparation is perpetual.

## THE LEARNING ZONE MODEL (SENNINGER)



Senninger’s Learning Zone Model helps us understand the shift in mindset that working adults need in order to thrive in today’s economy. Traditional concepts of work and career falsely promise stability and security, which encourage working adults to stay in their comfort zone.

Today’s labor market requires workers to habitually “vacillate between the learning zone and the comfort zone where we recover, reflect, and make sense of our learning.”<sup>10</sup> This continuous learning process helps individuals build skills and agility to perpetually prepare for planned and unplanned events.

Unfortunately, too many working adults stay in their comfort zone until a crisis such as being laid off or burnt out forces them into the panic zone. This is when many realize the market has changed and they haven’t paid attention. They’re forced to adapt, navigate ambiguity, take charge of their career, and compete in the labor market; yet they often discover they’re ill-equipped.

“ The illiterate of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, relearn and unlearn.   
 - ALVIN TOFFLER ”

# EIGHT HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES FOR 21<sup>ST</sup>-CENTURY CAREER PREPARATION

Given that our ideas of what career preparation should entail stem from outdated concepts of work and career, we need to rethink how working adults should prepare (and be prepared) for lifelong career success. Besides being a perpetual process, what does 21<sup>st</sup>-century career preparation involve? Below we offer eight high-impact recommendations that focus on empowering individuals to independently take charge of their own careers for lifelong career success.

## HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES FOR PERPETUAL CAREER PREPARATION



Cultivate a growth mindset that abilities can be developed to foster a love of learning.



Engage in continuous, self-directed learning from formal & informal learning opportunities.



Prioritize continuously building “soft skills” that transfer to success in any career.



Develop a personal brand from individual values and purpose, separate from employer.



Engage & connect in learning communities to exchange knowledge and build social capital.



Reflect on & document experiences to improve translating their value to the labor market.



Habitually curate and document evidence of learning, achievement & skill demonstration.



Continuously showcase and market a personal brand to find, attract & create opportunities.

Many institutions prepare people for the workforce, including colleges, universities, workforce development agencies, community-based organizations, trade associations, and career and technical student organizations. These institutions have an opportunity to help those they serve habitually engage in the eight high-impact practices exemplary of 21<sup>st</sup>-century career preparation by embedding these practices into the fabric of their institutional culture.

“ We work to become; not to acquire.  
- **ELBERT HUBBARD** ”

# About CareerPrepped

CareerPrepped is a lifelong career success system that empowers individuals to continuously build in-demand soft skills, prove their soft and hard skills with digital badges and portfolio evidence, and showcase their full set of abilities to employers through their own personal webpage. The system enables institutions that prepare individuals for the workforce to increase the career-readiness and employment outcomes of those they serve, scale career support, and provide lifelong opportunities for career success. Ultimately, CareerPrepped helps employers recruit and retain talent with the essential workplace skills they need. CareerPrepped is powered by MaxKnowledge, Inc., the leading provider of online employee training solutions for career education institutions.

Learn more about CareerPrepped at [www.careerprepped.com](http://www.careerprepped.com).



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