

What Has Been Happening To Manpower And What Is Learned From The Change?

Posted on August 24, 2019

Globalization has produced a major shift in the modern workforce. The original essay observes that manpower once appeared to operate within a relatively stable labor market, particularly around the early 1990s, when many organizations depended on traditional clerical and industrial staffing practices. Recruitment, recordkeeping, communication, and departmental operations were often slower, more localized, and more labor intensive. As companies expanded across borders and information technology developed rapidly, work became more integrated, competitive, and responsive. Organizations could coordinate activities across locations, share information quickly, automate routine processes, and reduce some administrative costs.

The word *manpower* has historically been used to describe the supply of workers available to an organization or economy. Contemporary writing often uses *workforce* or *human resources* because employment includes people of all genders and because workers contribute knowledge, creativity, relationships, and judgment rather than physical labor alone. The original question—what has been happening to manpower and what can be learned from the change—therefore concerns the transformation of work, staffing, skills, technology, and organizational responsibility under globalization.

The Earlier Stable Labor Market

The original essay describes an earlier period in which labor markets and organizational roles appeared more stable. Employees could expect clearer occupational boundaries, longer tenure with one employer, and a predictable relationship between education and career. Clerical workers processed documents, maintained files, scheduled appointments, and communicated through telephone or paper. Industrial employees performed production tasks within locally organized factories. Managers relied on separate departments and face-to-face supervision.

This stability should not be romanticized. Many workers faced discrimination, unsafe conditions, limited advancement, and repetitive labor. Employment security also varied by country, race, class, gender, industry, and union representation. Nevertheless, technological change occurred more slowly in many workplaces, and one set of skills could remain useful for a longer period. Global competition and digital systems later shortened this cycle and required organizations and employees to adapt more frequently.

Traditional Staffing Approaches

Traditional recruitment and staffing often involved newspaper advertisements, physical applications, local employment agencies, paper résumés, telephone screening, and in-person records. These methods could be costly and time consuming. A company might take weeks to advertise a position, receive applications, sort documents, contact candidates, and arrange interviews. Geographic reach was limited, which reduced competition but also restricted access to specialized talent.

Clerical and industrial staffing agencies helped employers respond to temporary demand. They supplied workers for offices, factories, warehouses, and seasonal operations. The model remains relevant, but technology has changed its speed and scale. Digital platforms can search large databases, conduct remote interviews, verify information, and match candidates with positions across regions. The basic staffing purpose remains the same—placing an appropriate person in a role—but the process now produces more data and involves a wider market.

Globalization and the Employment Landscape

Globalization connects markets, investment, supply chains, communication, and labor across national borders. A company can design a product in one country, source components from several others, provide customer support from another region, and sell globally. This structure creates employment and access to new markets, but it also increases competition among firms and workers. Jobs may move when organizations search for lower costs, specialized skills, market access, or favorable regulation.

Employees no longer compete only with applicants living nearby. Remote work and digital contracting allow organizations to recruit internationally for some tasks. This can create opportunity for people previously excluded by geography, but it may also place downward pressure on wages or weaken employment protection if companies classify workers as independent contractors. Globalization therefore expands the labor market while making its protections and responsibilities more complex.

Technology and Unified Operations

The original essay correctly states that technology can unify operations and reduce costs. Earlier organizations often maintained separate systems for finance, payroll, inventory, human resources, customer records, and production. Employees entered the same information repeatedly, and managers struggled to obtain one reliable view of performance. Enterprise systems, cloud platforms, databases, and shared communication tools can integrate these functions.

Integration improves decision-making when data are accurate and employees understand the system. A manager can compare staffing, production, sales, and cost without waiting for separate reports.

Human-resource systems can support recruitment, attendance, learning, performance, and workforce planning. Customers can interact with several departments without repeating every detail. These advantages explain why organizations continue investing in digital transformation.

Unified systems can also create new risk. An error can spread across departments, a cyberattack can interrupt the whole organization, and central monitoring can become intrusive. Software may encode poor procedures rather than improve them. Technology should therefore be selected according to business need and accompanied by security, governance, testing, and human oversight.

Competition and the Need for Effective Approaches

The original essay notes that competition is changing and organizations need effective approaches to preserve an advantage. Companies compete through price, quality, speed, customer experience, innovation, and the ability to learn. A workforce that can use new tools, solve problems, and coordinate across cultures becomes a strategic resource. Simply reducing headcount may improve short-term cost while weakening knowledge and service.

Competitive advantage also depends on how technology is implemented. The same software is available to many firms. The difference lies in process design, employee participation, data quality, leadership, and the ability to turn information into action. An organization that buys fashionable technology without changing its workflow may gain little. A competitor using a simpler system effectively may perform better.

Departmental Subsystems and Organizational Silos

The original essay describes separate subsystems operating in different departments and the difficulty of producing unified results. Organizational silos develop when departments use different definitions, priorities, and technologies. Sales may promise a delivery that operations cannot produce, finance may focus on short-term cost, and human resources may lack information about future skill needs. Each department can appear efficient while the whole organization performs poorly.

Integrated systems can reduce technical separation, but they do not eliminate political or cultural silos. Departments may still protect information or resist shared accountability. Cross-functional teams, common goals, data standards, and leadership are required. Employees need to understand how their work affects others, not only how to complete their local task.

Automation and the Changing Meaning of Work

Automation replaces or supports tasks through machinery, software, algorithms, and artificial intelligence. The original essay uses robots as an example and predicts unemployment. Automation can indeed displace jobs, particularly when work consists of predictable physical or clerical routines. Machines can operate continuously, process large data volumes, and perform dangerous tasks without fatigue. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023)

However, automation often changes occupations rather than removing every position. A warehouse worker may shift from manually locating goods to supervising automated systems. An accountant may spend less time entering transactions and more time interpreting anomalies. A graphic designer may use generative tools while remaining responsible for strategy, quality, ethics, and client communication. New roles can emerge in maintenance, cybersecurity, data analysis, system training, and process design.

The effect is not automatically positive. Workers may lose employment faster than new opportunities become accessible. Productivity gains may flow mainly to owners unless wage, training, taxation, and social-protection policies distribute benefits. Ethical management should consider transition support rather than treating displaced employees as an unavoidable cost.

Resistance to Change

The original essay identifies resistance as a major challenge. Employees may resist because they fear job loss, reduced status, unfamiliar tasks, increased monitoring, or failure. They may also possess valid knowledge about weaknesses that managers have ignored. Labeling every concern as irrational resistance can cause an organization to miss safety, usability, privacy, or customer problems.

Change management should begin with explanation. Employees need to know why change is necessary, what problem it addresses, how roles will be affected, and which decisions remain open to participation. Training should occur before performance is judged, and managers should provide time for practice. Visible support, feedback channels, and fair treatment reduce uncertainty. Employees are more likely to accept change when they have influenced the design and believe benefits and burdens are distributed honestly.

Implementation Costs

The original essay correctly states that organizations must allocate the costs associated with new technology. The purchase price is only one component. Implementation may require consultants, integration, hardware, data cleaning, cybersecurity, training, workflow redesign, temporary productivity loss, maintenance, subscriptions, upgrades, and support. Legacy systems may need to

operate in parallel during transition.

A business case should include total cost of ownership and realistic benefits. Claims that technology will reduce labor costs may overlook new specialist roles or service contracts. Savings may appear only after several years. Management should define performance measures in advance and review whether the system produces the expected value.

The Need for Appropriate Skills

Technology improves efficiency only when people possess suitable skills. The original essay emphasizes this lesson. Technical skills include operating software, interpreting data, protecting information, and troubleshooting. Human skills remain equally important: communication, critical thinking, creativity, ethical judgment, teamwork, adaptability, and the ability to learn.

Organizations should not expect employees to acquire every new skill independently. Training is a shared investment. Older workers, whose knowledge-management needs are discussed by Slagter, may possess deep organizational and customer knowledge even if they need support with new tools. Effective programs combine this experience with digital learning instead of replacing workers simply because they were trained under an earlier system. (Slagter, 2007)

Choosing the Right Technology

Investing in the wrong technology is a major risk identified in the original essay. Companies may buy systems because competitors use them, vendors make impressive claims, or leaders want to appear innovative. A tool may be too complex, incompatible with existing processes, inaccessible to employees, or unsuitable for customers. Artificial intelligence can also produce biased, inaccurate, or unexplained recommendations.

Selection should begin with the problem rather than the product. The organization should define requirements, involve users, compare alternatives, test a limited pilot, assess security and accessibility, and establish exit arrangements. A smaller technology that solves a clear problem may create more value than an expensive platform attempting to transform everything at once.

What Has Been Learned From the Change?

The first lesson is that adaptation must be continuous. Global markets and technology will not return to a permanent stable state. Organizations need systems for learning, experimentation, and review. The second lesson is that people and technology should be designed together. A technically successful implementation can still fail if employees do not trust it or customers cannot use it.

The third lesson is that knowledge is a long-term asset. When experienced workers leave, organizations can lose relationships, practical judgment, and historical understanding. Knowledge transfer, mentoring, documentation, and mixed-age teams can protect this value. The fourth lesson is that efficiency should be evaluated alongside quality, fairness, resilience, and employee well-being. A process that is faster but produces more error or burnout is not truly effective.

Please Locate and Identify Yourself in the Global Picture of the Workforce

In the present business environment, technology shapes almost every work process. I locate myself within a global workforce in which jobs, clients, information, and competitors can cross national borders. My employment possibilities are no longer determined only by local companies. I may work remotely, collaborate with people from different cultures, learn through international platforms, and provide services to clients in several markets. This creates opportunity, but it also means that I must demonstrate value in a larger and more competitive environment.

The original reflection states that robots may reduce employment because employers use technology to cut costs and improve profitability. This possibility affects me because routine tasks in almost any profession can be automated. Instead of assuming that my current role will remain unchanged, I need to identify which parts depend on human judgment, creativity, trust, context, and responsibility. I should also learn how automation works so that I can use it, evaluate it, and recognize its limitations. (International Labour Organization, 2024)

Adaptability

Adaptability is one of the most important qualities I need. It does not mean accepting every organizational decision without question. It means being able to learn new methods, revise assumptions, and apply existing knowledge in a changed environment. When software replaces one task, I can focus on the higher-value work around it. When a market changes, I can research new expectations and adjust my skills.

Adaptation also involves emotional resilience. Change can create uncertainty and temporary incompetence. I must be willing to become a beginner and ask questions rather than hide confusion. Employers should support this process, but I am also responsible for maintaining an active learning habit. (World Economic Forum, 2025)

Technological Capability

The original essay describes being “techno-savvy” as protection against career disruption. Digital

competence is valuable, but it should include more than operating popular applications. I need to understand data privacy, cybersecurity, the reliability of automated output, and the ethical effects of technology. I should be able to learn new systems without becoming dependent on one brand or platform.

Technological knowledge should complement domain expertise. A tool cannot tell me which business question matters unless I understand the field. My value comes from combining digital capability with communication, judgment, and knowledge of users or customers.

Lifelong Learning

Globalization makes lifelong learning necessary. Formal education provides a foundation, but skills require renewal through courses, professional reading, practice, feedback, and collaboration. I should monitor changes in my profession and select learning based on evidence rather than chasing every trend.

Lifelong learning also includes unlearning. A procedure that was effective under an earlier system may become inefficient or unfair. I need to examine whether habits still serve their purpose. The ability to release an outdated method can be as important as acquiring a new one.

Professional Networks

The original reflection identifies networks as a space for learning. Professional relationships can provide information about new tools, opportunities, standards, and problems. Networks also create support during career transition. They should be built through genuine exchange rather than only contacting people when a job is needed.

Global networks require cultural awareness. Communication styles, time zones, legal expectations, and workplace norms differ. I should avoid assuming that one national practice is universal. Listening and asking respectful questions will improve collaboration.

Predicted Effects on My Career

I expect technology to automate more routine work and increase the importance of analysis, creativity, client understanding, and ethical supervision. Some positions will disappear, while others will combine tasks that were once separated. Remote and project-based work may increase flexibility but also create less predictable income and weaker boundaries between work and personal life.

These changes are not guaranteed to benefit me simply because I am open to information. Confidence must be supported by action. I need a learning plan, evidence of my skills, savings for

periods of transition, and awareness of labor rights. Adaptability reduces risk but cannot remove economic conditions outside individual control.

Conclusion

Manpower, or the workforce, has changed through globalization, technology, integrated systems, automation, and intensified competition. Traditional clerical and industrial staffing has not disappeared, but its methods and required skills have transformed. Organizations can unify operations and reduce cost, yet they also face resistance, implementation expense, cybersecurity, skill gaps, and the danger of selecting unsuitable technology.

The most important lesson is that successful change depends on people as well as machines. Employers need clear strategy, employee participation, training, fair transition, and accurate evaluation. In the global workforce, I must remain adaptable, technologically capable, connected with professional networks, and committed to lifelong learning. These qualities do not guarantee that automation will never disrupt my role, but they improve my ability to respond, move into new responsibilities, and contribute value within a changing economy.

References

International Labour Organization. (2024). *World employment and social outlook*.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2023). *OECD employment outlook 2023: Artificial intelligence and the labour market*.

Slagter, F. (2007). Knowledge management among the older workforce. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 11(4), 82-96.

World Economic Forum. (2025). *Future of jobs report 2025*.