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Evolving your Career Into a Digital Future

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Summary

In a world continuously changing by technology, our lives, jobs and communities are continuously being impacted. With the majority of jobs being considered obsolete in the future, how will we continue to be gainfully employed? Are we at risk of an uncertain future?

Over the last 14 months, I have been on a journey to help as many people pivot their careers both towards technology and meaning, through the creation of multiple projects, but most noticeably Careers In Technology. CITI is a community dedicated to helping people pivot their careers towards technology and has helped over 60 people do so.

In this presentation I will frame the problem and opportunity, demystify what is taking place, and outline a path to embrace the opportunity ahead.

Digital Transformation

Artificial Intelligence, Crypto Currencies, Web3, Blockchain, SaaS, AR/VR, and Metaverse are all terms that we may have heard of but not fully understand when we think about our digital future. And yes, this is the bleeding edge of where technology is going, and can be very intimidating, but it doesn't have to be!

Let's start from the beginning. The rise of computers has reshaped our everyday lives. They have increased our productivity, allowed us to exchange information, and more recently have been a primary means of collaboration and communication.

But this wasn't always the case. At its infancy computers were large, expensive machines only corporations and research departments could afford. And what was their primary use? To warehouse data.

The computation power of a large industrial scale computer back in the 50s and 60s has the equivalent power to some everyday calculators today. Everything has to start somewhere.

And as Moore's Law – computing power becomes smaller, faster, and cheaper (Tardi, 2022).

Then came the renaissance, the personal computer. We start seeing computers in people's homes with typewriters and graphic cards. We are able to create and design in the digital world. Allowing us to save digital files and data.

Then came the birth of the internet. The interconnected web of all computers. Allowing us to find a piece of real estate in the digital world to share our digital creations. The interconnected web of digital documents and people begins.

And that brings the acceleration of the digital world we see today. We see large companies centralize products and offerings and build technologies that can be shared with their world.

The graphics get better, the user experience more friendly, and computers become more accessible.

Then one by one, the experience becomes more connected and more efficient: social, mobile and cloud. Create the internet native world we have today.

And in some way, these are all very natural things for us today, as we adopt new technologies.

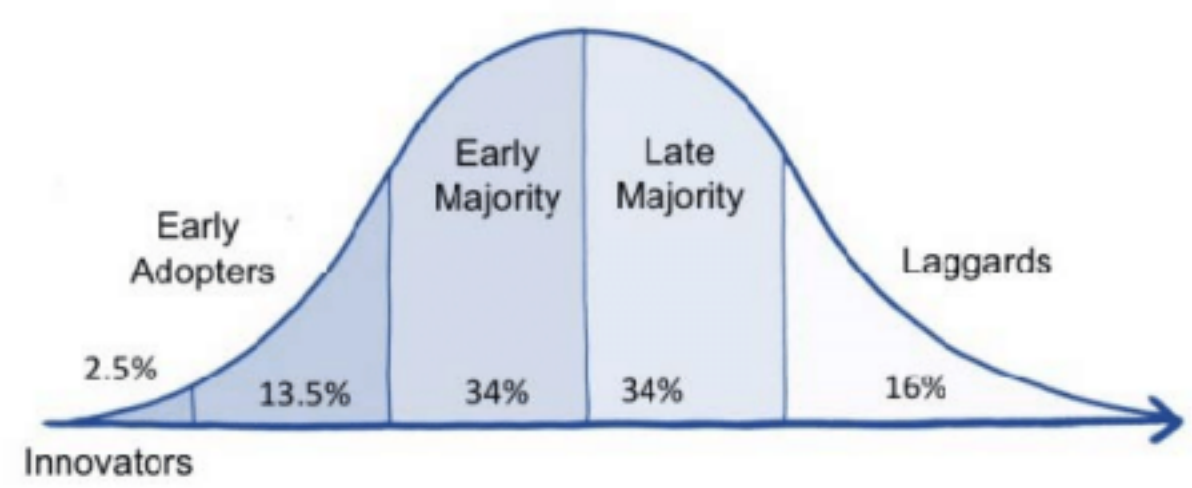

Figure 1. Adoption Curve (Source: Research Gate)

The Digital Impact on Career

The first impacts that digital had on our careers are:

1. What tools we use to be efficient
2. How we are able to access data
3. How we communicate

It started with personal computers. Now almost every job must have some sort of computer or mobile device. Think of your current work environment, imaging trying to do the work you currently do with pen and paper?

As the ecosystem grows, the possibilities of technologies we can use to be proficient is endless. And it is no longer only to be use a computer, but must be competent in many applications that come along with it.

How many applications do you use on a daily basis? How many at work? How many are on your phone? How many are on your computer?

We continuously are learning how to use new applications. And why do we use such applications?

1. To be more efficient
2. To be utilize data
3. To communicate better

See a theme here?

Why digital is simpler than you think

Yes, digital technology can have a lot of jargon, and big words and can be scary at times. But it is simply an extension of humanity.

Extraordinarily humans are able to develop new technology. When cavemen thought they needed something sharp to hunt, they cut the stone and made a tip of a spear.

When we wanted to exchange goods in a more efficient way we created money.

We needed to communicate better, so we created language. I would argue the birth of modern language to be likely the most complex invention we have ever made.

Through our evolution we continue to build technologies. And the technologies enable us to reach new potential. Simply technology helps us to do things better and reach new potential.

What is tech anyways? Today, the term technology has been determined to be based on computers. Particularly software and hardware. Hardware is the electronics that stores and senses data and may physically move (like robots and cars), the software is the code base interacting with the data and collecting data.

And ultimately that technology is storing large amounts of data, and presenting that data in usable ways to people. This allows us to make better decisions, and you guessed it, communicate better.

And ultimately, if I asked you do you want to:

1. Get your work done faster
2. Make better decisions
3. Collaborate more effectively

Would you say no?

So, I want to you to think of digital as three things:

1. Improves efficiency or productivity
2. Allows us to utilize data for decision making
3. Connects us together

How to leverage yourself in a digital future

Yes, learning new technology and how technology works is incredibly important to your future career. You need to become more productive, make better decisions, and communicate effectively.

But ultimately digital technologies amplify what you already have. Technology amplifies the person.

So the skills that will be the most important tomorrow, are still the most important today. Notice this graphic from the World Economic forum that demonstrates the most important skills in 2015 and 2020. Notice that these are all skills we use in our everyday lives.

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

Top 10 skills

in 2020	in 2015
1. Complex Problem Solving	1. Complex Problem Solving
2. Critical Thinking	2. Coordinating with Others
3. Creativity	3. People Management
4. People Management	4. Critical Thinking
5. Coordinating with Others	5. Negotiation
6. Emotional Intelligence	6. Quality Control
7. Judgment and Decision Making	7. Service Orientation
8. Service Orientation	8. Judgment and Decision Making
9. Negotiation	9. Active Listening
10. Cognitive Flexibility	10. Creativity

Source: Future of Jobs Report, World Economic Forum

Figure 2. Top 10 Skills. World Economic Forum.

Looking forward, this same graph is for 2025, and yes, technology and technology use has entered the mold.

But learning technology consists of the skills at the top, Analytical thinking, active learning, complex problem-solving, creativity, resilience, reasoning.

Figure 3. Skills of the future. World Economic Forum.

So how do you stay relevant in a digital future? Keep doing what you are doing by understanding your unique strengths, skills, and how you uniquely contribute value.

And embrace a growth mindset, having the confidence in yourself to learn new things.

How do we ensure we are confident to learn new technology?

Continuously ask ourselves, can I utilize technology to:

1. Be more productive, quicker, faster, smarter
2. Make better decisions with data
3. Collaborate and communicate more effectively

Everything we do, we should come back to these questions. If it feels like it is too hard there has to be a better way.

So where do we go to learn?

1. Online courses – Udemy Coursera
2. Social Media – Twitter and LinkedIn
3. Blogs and Podcasts
4. Books
5. Communities and Meet Ups

Ensure you're at the front of the adoption curve by actively seeking out new learning opportunities. If there is one thing that will build resilience and growth into your career is a positive mindset, hard work, and the beginner's mindset.

Acknowledgements

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References

Tardi, Carla (2022, February 6) What is Moore's Law https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/mooreslaw.asp