

# Brave New World of Work “Employees Switzerland” to Become “Intrapreneurs Switzerland”

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The ongoing change within organisations and their environment needs people who do not wait to be changed, but who take the initiative to change themselves and their field of responsibility.

It was in September 2013 when two economists from Oxford University, Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael A. Osborne, published the article “The future of employment: how susceptible are jobs to computerisation”. In their 72-page manuscript they stated that 47 percent of today’s jobs have a high automation potential. With that, they started the ball rolling. Although they never said that 47 percent of jobs are directly at risk because of computerisation – let’s not forget that many jobs are “just” augmented by new technologies – their study acted as a wake-up call. If robots and smart algorithms take over tasks that have until today been taken care of by humans, what will the “new” jobs look like, which skills do they require and how can the education system – basic education and further training – anticipate the ongoing transformation? There seems to be an agreement on one crucial point: it requires clear efforts from individuals and organisations to keep up with the speed of change and to set the right course now.

## Focus on individuals: new skills and mindset

Although created in 1987 by the U.S. Army, the “VUCA Model” is often used to describe the challenges of the digital age, where the acronym VUCA stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. These four forces describe the context in which organisations and individuals must take decisions, plan and act. Hence, how exactly can individuals respond to these challenges? By being aware of them, ready to respond and willing to adapt.

work  
~~hard~~  
smart

A very recent study by McKinsey about the Swiss labour market estimated that the demand for tasks that require basic cognitive or physical and manual skills could decline by around 20 percent and, conversely, the need for social, emotional or technological skills could rise up to 50 percent. The study concludes that the major challenge the Swiss economy faces in the ongoing transformation is not the loss of jobs – there seems to be a certain balance between jobs that will vanish and newly created jobs – but reskilling. Therefore, the question is, how easy will

those people, who are made redundant because a machine or algorithm can better perform a certain task or because a new solution makes an old one obsolete, find a new job? Although we speak of “reskilling” or “job mobility” it is obvious that another fundamental element also has a very big stake in that discussion: a person’s mindset. How do I react to upcoming changes? How comfortable am I in dealing with uncertainty? How flexible am I in dealing with volatility? Can I switch between different roles? Am I able to ask critical questions? Do I have a good self-reflection? Am I willing to learn and grow? Carol Dweck, an American professor of psychology differentiates between a “fixed” and a “growth mindset”. And yes, to survive in the digital age it is clearly an advantage to have a growth mindset where change is not seen as a threat but rather as an opportunity. If we take this one level further, the ongoing change within organisations and their environment needs people who do not wait to be changed, but who take the initiative to change themselves and their field of responsibility. It needs intrapreneurs, not employees!



Barbara Josef: The Employees Association 4.0 must be a learning organisation that changes as the world of work changes.

### Focus on associations: a platform for continuous learning

If the employee of the future is an intrapreneur, how does the role of an employee association need to change to cope with a fundamental change in the labour market? When jobs become more complex and thus more demanding, when the labour market shifts towards a freelance and gig economy where over 40 percent will soon be self-employed, when new generations enter the world of work with completely different expectations and career planning and when new technologies reshape the way we live and work together, it is obvious that associations need to change too. Especially if they want to stay relevant in the future and act as the advocate and voice of their members. Hence, how could they reinvent themselves? Here are a few thoughts on possible roles and offerings:

- Act as a community manager: whereas this is not yet a role known in organisations, it is the key differentiating factor in every coworking space. The community manager is not only the host and good soul of a place, but also the person who brings people into contact with other people in a targeted way and who creates platforms for members to meet, network, and exchange ideas or even start joint projects. After all, the network might be the biggest asset an association can offer – access to like-minded people and to experts.
- Create a peer learning hub: from speed-dating, to mentoring/ reverse mentoring, to shadowing – the term learning needs to be extended to all sorts of encounters that allow for fresh insights, a change of perspective, a challenge of current beliefs or self-reflection. People who are in similar development phases often find it easier to start with “low-threshold”

experiences before committing themselves to a more radical step or to a formal education programme.

- Co-create new services and offers: to cope with the challenges of the VUCA world and in particular a higher volatility, many companies open up their innovation process and involve customers and partners from the very beginning. This would not only increase the fit between members' needs and offered services, but it would also strongly increase identification and loyalty of members.
- Don't know? Find out! The best way to deal with a high uncertainty and ambiguity is to test out things, to engage in experiments and pilot projects – within safe boundaries. Why not seeing an association as a place, where new ideas can be tested in an interdisciplinary way and where the gained insights can be shared amongst all members?

So, what is the Employees Association 4.0? It must certainly be a learning organisation that changes as the world of work changes. And ideally it supports its members on their journey to intrapreneurs. And what is your personal contribution to this new world of work? Start by trying out something completely new today. And don't forget to “fake it till you make it”.

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