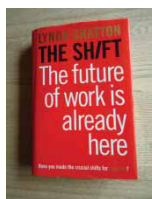


In the Bookstores



The Shift – The Future of Work is Already Here

by Lynda Gratton; HarperCollins Publishers, 2011.

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18.99 GBP. 374 pages.

Changes and developments in working lives during the next decades

The author of the book *The Shift, The Future of Work is Already Here*, Lynda Gratton, is a professor of management practice at the London Business School. She has been nominated by *The Times* and the *Financial Times* as one of the great business thinkers in the world today. She also takes an active part in a research project aimed at shedding light of the future of work together with 21 global companies and 200 executives. The book takes the reader on a journey to discover how working lives will take form over the next decades. It describes the positive upsides, but also the significant downsides that impact our jobs and careers, and the question is raised of how we will go about crafting our own future working life. The next decades will hold a force that will destroy forever many of the old assumptions of a traditional job and career.

The first part of the book describes five forces that have an impact on the way people's working lives will change and develop over the next decades: technology; globalisation; demography and longevity; society and energy resources. Over the next decades, technology will enable more and more people to work in a joined-up world. Technological advances will lead to mega-companies that span the globe and also millions of smaller groups and partnerships who will create value in emerging 'work ecosystems'. The globalisation opens up an increasing marketplace for cooperation and work. Some people may have the ability to move to creative clusters, but the darker side of change may be the breaking up of families and communities, which may lead to isolation. To reduce energy costs, movement of people and transportation of goods must be significantly reduced.

In the book there are fictitious examples of people living in 2025. There is Jill's storyline – a woman working in the 24/7 joined-up world that never sleeps, leaving limited time to concentrate,

observe, think, and even to play, certainly a fragmented world. Does Jill really have to 'be on' all the time? Then there is Rohan, an Indian brain surgeon. Rohan works from his home office in Mumbai from where he discusses holographic presentations of various brain injuries with a Chinese team. As he speaks, the Hindu language is automatically converted to Cantonese, the spoken language of his Chinese colleagues. For these purposes, he buys access to the Cloud on a day-to-day basis. We also meet Amon, an independent freelancer working from home. The first thing he will be doing is to check with his virtual agent if any new interesting projects are available. What Rohan and Amon share is that neither of them works together with real people during their working day – they do not experience any physical but solely virtual contact with other people throughout their day.

What these people living in 2025 have in common is that they all have a tendency to become isolated. And Jill also has, in addition, the problem of living a fragmented life. What the reader should give a thought is to how these people can learn to make their own choices and, at the same time, avoid succumbing to the pressure of what is expected from them.

In the last part of the book, the reader is given advice on the shifts to think about when aiming at taking the right career path. The first shift is about progressing from being generally skilled to becoming a serial master. Today people have access to the internet and can look up all the general information they want by using Wikipedia® and Google, and thereby they can become a Jack-of-all-trades, which means that they have the opportunity to obtain general skills inside several areas of knowledge. Therefore, if you want to join the talent pool, you have to obtain serial mastery in some specific areas. It is claimed, that it will take you around 10 000 working hours to master a specific discipline. The first shift is also about the ability to change according to the circumstances and to obtain visibility by self-marketing. The second shift refers to individualism and competitiveness versus connectivity with others, collaborations, and networks. You can build up a useful network by connecting with people who can give you new inspiration and ideas, people who are able to support and help you by giving good advice. By building up this

kind of network, you will have the possibility of creating a meaningful working life. The third shift deals with the transformation from being a consumer to becoming an innovative producer.

The book addresses how the future of work is likely to evolve. The ways in which people have been working for the last two decades is slowly disappearing. Having a 9 am to 5 pm working day, knowing colleagues at the office in the company you may have worked for many years and numerous other things will be replaced by new working cultures. This process will happen mainly through the effects of the five forces; the diminishing of carbon-footprints, developments in technology, globalization, demography and longevity, and societal

changes. To keep up with the development, the author poses the question to the reader as whether he or she has taken the necessary shifts towards preparing for the future. One final message in the book is that you 'should go with what you love', which will give you the opportunity to obtain a satisfactory working life. All in all, the book offers a good overview of the working challenges we might all face in future. More about the book, a 'future of work workbook' and interviews with the author can be found at the website: theshiftbylyndagrattton.com.

Reviewed by Christina Johnsen
Ballerup, Denmark

CJ@transmededit.com; www.transmededit.com



"It's the Hendersons. They have a 7:30 dinner date, and want to know if the birth of their son will be any inconvenience."