

# How can leaders thrive in the future of work?

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It will soon become an organisational requisite for leaders to have the capability to hold effective career conversations.



The rapidly changing workplace propelled by technology advances and the continued rise of the gig economy requires leaders and their employees to be highly adaptable and resilient.

This is particularly true when facing emerging challenges and capitalising on future opportunities, according to Greg Smith co-founder of deliberatepractice.

The employment landscape is evolving fast with the pace of change accelerating everything from how business gets done to the new types of jobs and careers that will emerge in this reality.

Smith, who is also the author of *'Career Conversations: How to get the best from your talent pool'*, said the forces of change can feel like a high-speed train, however often "significant change is a catalyst for creativity and innovation".

"The future is bright for those who embrace the change rather than avoid it, visualising a future world full of amazing opportunities and developing their capability to match what will be sought after in the new reality," said Smith.

“New services will be required, new businesses and organisations will be needed, along with new skills and jobs to get the work done.”

### **Hold effective career conversations**

In a fast-changing world of work it will become an organisational requisite for leaders to have the capability to hold effective career conversations, according to Smith.

No longer will it be acceptable for leaders to delegate their responsibility for employee career development to HR or external providers with the expected growth demand for soft skills.

“That said, it never was acceptable but up to now some leaders have been able to escape this fundamental leadership responsibility, preferring to prioritise other management activities,” said Smith.

“Boundless job opportunities will emerge as redundant ones fall away however leaders and employees must be alert to the possibilities and align themselves with the workplace that’s unfolding at a great rate.

“This will necessitate the letting go of old practices and thinking, replacing these with fresh perspectives fueled by reskilling, retraining and new careers.”

### **Trust is great for business**

Proactively becoming involved in employee development through effective career conversations on an ongoing basis provides leaders with an exceptional opportunity to connect and build trust with their employees.

“Trust is fundamental to all functional and healthy relationships and is the foundation to the basic social norm of reciprocal commitment,” said Smith.

“When commitment is not reciprocated, the affected party usually withdraws from the relationship and financial considerations rise to the surface. In a work context, this phenomenon usually presents with employees complain about their remuneration when their discontent is often more due to factors other than money.”

Research by Professor Paul Zak from Claremont Graduate School discussed in his HBR article ‘The Neuroscience of Trust’ points to people at high trust companies when compared to low trust companies experiencing:

- Less stress and burnout
- More energy at work
- Higher productivity and fewer sick days
- Increased engagement
- More satisfaction with their lives

Importantly, trust enables learning which is vital to organisational success by avoiding making the same mistakes over and over, added Smith.

As a result, your organisation will operate faster and this is essential to beating the competition in an increasingly dynamic business environment.

### **Countering competitor approaches**

Having productive career conversations can also be an effective counter to unrelenting approaches from competitors and their headhunters to lure your talent away by being better and continuously connected in a trust held environment, added Smith.

If leaders are not connecting with their employees they can bet their competitors are with attractive offers to fill voids in their existing employment experience.

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“Building leaders’ capability to hold effective career conversations to guide the career development and satisfaction of employees and incorporating this into their everyday leadership skill set will become increasingly critical to individuals and organisations and their success.”

The upside is it’s a highly trainable, coachable and transferrable skill.

Smith said a great place to start is to commit to becoming a career coaching leader, continuously develop this capability and then make it a “burning priority in the workplace”.

“The rewards will make it all worthwhile for leaders and their employees to deliver organisational growth, sustainability and success.”

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