

The Australian workforce has to change

According to demographer Bernard Salt, job seekers need to be flexible, tech-savvy, and have well-developed soft skills to secure a role in tomorrow's workforce.

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So, here are three ways to make yourself ready for the workforce of the future:

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1. **Embrace the YOLO spirit.** Salt says only Generation Y could come up with YOLO – You Only Live Once. Since entering the workforce 10 years ago, Gen Y has brought with them an entrepreneurial spirit and a willingness to take risks.

“It’s our job to harvest that spirit. That technology, that social need, put it together and it’s very entrepreneurial. How can we harvest that natural entrepreneurial energy and innovative culture in our organisations?”

Answer such questions at your next interview, making sure you always provide specific examples, and you’re sure to stand out.

2. **Develop soft skills.** Salt attended a conference in Sydney in 2002 where a speaker discussed the introduction of digital cameras. He stated that film processing businesses would close down within 12 months. Salt thought he was overselling it. He wasn’t.

While digital disruption has undoubtedly changed the way our workforce operates, Salt says it emphasises the importance of job seekers developing softer, more social skills, so we can adapt and move on to a new way of working.

“At that time, around 5,200 people were employed in film processing. Not one of those jobs is around today. But they didn’t stand in unemployment queues, they actually found other opportunities,” says Salt. It’s this ability to identify transferrable skills and move between roles and industries that will ensure longevity in the workplace, no matter what position you started in.

3. **Be fluid, mobile and adaptive.** Approximately 700,000 jobs have been created in Australia since the year 2000, according to Salt.

So where are they? Salt says you won’t find them in healthcare or professional services, but in skills-based professions such as [construction](#), [manufacturing](#) and [agriculture](#).

Salt says the average 20 year old of today will have 20 jobs in 15 different organisations over a 45 year career. To succeed in this ever-evolving workforce, you need to be able pitch your skills succinctly, while being ready to adapt at any given moment.

“If you can’t express yourself and be fluid, mobile and adaptable in a world where business establishments change, then you will not survive,” says Salt.

Salt also points out that some of the largest companies on earth are found in America, and that they’re relatively young – including Apple, Google, Microsoft and Facebook. In comparison, Australia’s leading companies such as Telstra, Woolworths and BHP have been around since 1901, 1924 and 1885 respectively.

‘We talk about innovation and innovative cultures...But when you look at the biggest businesses on the Australian continent compared with America, we’ve got a long way to go in order to truly embrace the level of innovation that we see coming out of America,’ says Salt.

It’s time, he concludes, for Australia to start walking the talk.