



*The New
World of Work*

by

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What's Going On?



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From one end of the workplace to the others, people are either wondering what hit them or marvelling at their good fortune. Why has it become so difficult for some of us to plan or manage a career? What's behind all this seemingly endless restructuring? When is it going to stop? And, why are others doing "just fine, thank you"?

These are valid questions, all of them. Only nobody seems to have any answers.

One thing is certain, though. The workplace has changed, dramatically, and continues to change. Pick any field, explore it in some depth, and you'll find that it's more technical, competitive and complicated with each passing day. The more complicated it becomes, the more it tends to surprise us with unexpected twists and turns.

And the more there is that can go wrong.

As unprecedented change continues to reshape the job and career landscape, unemployment, under-employment and career upheaval and distress have become common.

Throughout the industrialized world, the same issues dominate agendas everywhere. On one hand, the rigors of global competitiveness; on the other, high levels of public debt and large numbers of displaced workers. In recent years, unemployment has become the world's "most urgent question," according to the head of Germany's Deutsche Bundesbank. Stronger economic growth is needed, he told leaders of the world's most developed nations, as Europe struggled to come to terms with its own shifting imperatives.

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While politicians and policy makers from all parts of the western world struggle to balance conflicting demands, business leaders, for the most part, search anxiously for their competitive edge. Will they find it in new technology? Or better trade agreements? Or maybe a massive re-engineering program?

As often as not, events conspire to outfox even the most capable planners. And, everywhere, the fallout is people. The International Labour Organization studied global unemployment as the changes began to take their toll and published results indicating that a third of the global workforce was either unemployed, or working, but not earning enough to make ends meet.



Statistics such as these paint a grim picture. And, yet, at the same time, a rather hazy one. The millions of workers who've experienced career distress over the past couple of decades are a symptom of a workplace in the throes of major upheaval - a revolution. And, in times of revolution, simple explanations tend to defy even the most accom-

plished thinkers. What is clear, however, certainly in Western industrialized societies, is that a chasm is splitting the world of work. A Great Divide between very different circumstances.

On the downside of this split we find people bewildered by change and disruption. People enduring possibly the worst time of their lives. "Years of loyalty meant nothing to them," one man says bitterly, of the firm he once worked for. "They didn't care one bit about what happened to me."

On the other side of the gulf, are people for whom times have never

been better, people who are enormously energized by the changes taking place. And to those struggling to make sense of today's world of work, they seem almost to have come from another planet.

In some ways, the workplace has always been divided along lines like these.

In yesterday's world of work, irrespective of which side of the Great Divide they were on, almost everyone who wanted work found it. The economy during the years following World War 2 was like a sponge, able to soak up the available labour pool. Today, we don't have this luxury. The sponge has contracted, and it's no longer able to absorb everyone who's looking.

For reasons like these, it's more important than ever to understand what's going on. Once you begin to comprehend the complicated factors underlying the volatility of our times, you can start to pull together the combination of skills, abilities and attitude that will help you to identify opportunities we simply might not have seen before.



And that's what this book and this Website are all about. It's a resource for people who, often through no fault of their own, have found themselves on the wrong side of the Great Divide. And, for others who've already leapt, or are attempting to leap, to the higher ground beyond.

It's not an easy leap, but it can be done. It's a matter of building your skills, your self-reliance, your personal resilience, your Survivability. And, like it or not, it's up to you.

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Change one number in any set of calculations, and every other number will also be affected. So it is in the New World of Work. Every company, institution or industry forced to restructure has had an impact on the job market as a whole, more appropriately referred to now as a "work market".

Before you can begin to develop career strategies, you'll need to sharpen your powers of observation. Take a step back. Evaluate the changes taking place as dispassionately as you can. Build your objective awareness. How, exactly, is the world of work being redefined?

For one thing, full-time jobs within large organizations are not as plentiful as they once were; and those that do exist are often highly demanding of time and commitment.

Opportunities are more often found in small and medium-sized firms. The work that needs doing in these firms is not always be defined or clearly articulated by a job description.

Instead, work is packaged now in units of every conceivable form, and sometimes not even packaged at all, existing instead as a gleam in someone's eye. And success on the job increasingly depends not on seniority, or longevity, but on performance.

With each passing year, changes like these become more pronounced and career paths no longer follow a steady, progressive climb. Instead, a typical career path now undulates in and out of different job markets and work marketplaces. Many people drop out of the workforce altogether from time to time to acquire new skills. And building Survivability (or self-reliance) skills is of key importance to overall career success.

Traditional Job Market Has Changed

One well established theory holds that the job and work marketplace, in which millions of workers attempt to sell their skills and expertise, isn't a single homogeneous market but instead can be divided into two quite distinct parts. Called, with due economy, the "Dual Market Theory," it defines those two parts as primary and secondary markets.

Primary/Mainstream Market

The first of these, the primary job market, has long been the arena in which managers, professionals, skilled trades people and technical workers play out their careers. Workers like these have been well rewarded for their loyal service. Healthy salaries and benefits, opportunities for advancement, and high levels of job satisfaction characterize the millions of positions found in the primary market.

However, this desirable career domain has been badly eroded (in terms of jobs, at least) over the past twenty years or so. When the economy is weak, slow growth mean fewer opportunities. When the economy grows and expands, mergers and acquisitions take their toll.

Employers in the primary market tend to be highly visible, their names sometimes emblazoned on the tops of tall buildings, their activities discussed in the business press. Researching employers like these is fairly straightforward. You'll find them listed in business directories. Many have home pages on the Internet. Business sections of large libraries usually have clippings and information about them. Their annual reports can be had for the asking.

Primary employers are the "big guys" in the world of work: the corporations, banks, utilities, governments and unionized workplaces

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that for many years have been the main career targets of anyone seeking a "good" job. Most have internal job ladders, and lots of careers experienced lift-off as people found their way onto the lower rungs of those ladders and began the slow upward climb. Nowadays, though, it's rarely so easy.

Major employers today are under tremendous pressure, on one hand to merge and become larger, at the same time to "do more with less". And they are re-engineering themselves in order to make it happen. The restructuring mania is predicted to continue. Already, literally millions of primary jobs have been lost. Some have gone the way of the do-do bird, made obsolete by technology. Others have moved off shore. Still others have been "outsourced," shifted to smaller employers where they often change their stripes, cutting salaries and rewriting or eliminating benefits packages altogether.

Large companies have been shrinking, at least in terms of numbers of workers. Entire industries have been shrinking at the same time. As the '90s began, over 650,000 people worked in the North America's auto manufacturing industry, for example. Five years later, the total was down to 500,000. Early in the 21st Century, the total had dropped to less than 300,000.

Although not all mainstream employers are shrinking their workforces, a good many are. Throughout traditional industries such as steel, mining, fishing, manufacturing and forestry, technology is often the culprit, as it improves and enhances the efficiency of production and extraction techniques. In fairness, new jobs are being created in industries like these. But many of the new jobs tend to require

advanced training, found in what's called the value-added areas that mostly require specialized skills: research, for example; design and engineering.

Secondary Market

The secondary job marketplace, like the jobs it encompasses, is another realm altogether.

Employers in this market are far less visible, for one thing. Most are the country's "wannabe's", the small and medium-sized firms struggling to remain viable and profitable in a shifting and changing regional, national and international marketplace. For the most part, these firms operate on tight money and lower profit margins, especially during the start-up years.

Positions in this less secure marketplace have been the starting point for many full-time careers. Most every one of us, at one time or another, has worked in a secondary job. Remember, for example, that part-time summer job you had while still in school? Or the first job you took after completing your studies? Most likely, they were secondary jobs.

Women know all about the secondary marketplace. It's the workplace of choice for lots of mothers who need to move in and out of work easily, subject to their family obligations. New immigrants also tend to find work here. Disabled workers, as well, are over-represented in the higher turnover jobs in this market.

While not all of the new jobs being created today are found in this secondary marketplace, the majority are. Most North American firms have fewer than fifty employees. And, it's here, among smaller firms like these, that the lion's share of "new" work is found.

Although some small businesses are well financed, many have to scramble to get off the ground. A great many fail altogether, suffering in the end result from a lack of financing, or because they aren't founded on a carefully developed business plan.

As a result, smaller firms generally don't have the money to offer top salaries and generous benefit programs; work in this secondary marketplace often takes the form of low-wage, commission, or part-time jobs.

The vagaries of the economy always have an impact on the quality of jobs created. In tight economic times, employers are slow to take on the commitment of full-time staff and often create short-term, seasonal or part-time jobs; secondary jobs, in other words, to tide them over.



We don't have to look any further than the rise in the numbers of part-time workers over the past few decades to prove the point. In 1953, just 4 per cent of the Canadian workforce worked part-time. By the mid '80s, it was 15 per cent. Today, nearly a quarter of our national workforce, or some 3 million people, are part-timers, their average income just over \$13,000.

This trend to part-time can be seen throughout the industrialized world. In the United Kingdom, for example, as many as three out of four jobs created in some recent periods have been part-time.

Temporary work, as well, is on the increase. With hundreds of thousands of people on their payrolls, temporary staffing agencies like Manpower Services and Office Overload have become North America's largest employers in recent years. In the United States, over the past decade alone, the number of people working for temporary agencies has grown from just under half a million to more than three times that many.

The shift of work and jobs from large organizations to small has gathered steam over the past couple of decades. It's likely to continue, as governments move some of the work they do into the private or non-profit sectors, and large organizations continue to re-engineer as they shed activities not deemed part of their "core" business or merge with other large organizations and look for efficiencies.

New Skills Can Open Doors

The secondary job market, once considered to be the launching pad for one's career, or a temporary stopping point while in school or raising kids, has become the only source of work for many people nowadays. Lots of workers who once felt "entitled" to primary jobs with large employers and protected by their accumulated experience or seniority now find themselves working at a string of McJobs, as they're sometimes derisively called.

Bouncing around this way in the secondary marketplace is soul-destroying, they say. But, they want to work, need to work, and, if taking on a series of part-time or temporary positions is the only way to work, that's what they have to do. Still, they keep trying to find one of those primary jobs that will get them off this treadmill. As the months go by, and they find they're not qualified to do much of the good work now being created, their sense of frustration grows.

As often as not, they discover that skills are the key to the primary marketplace.

By the time he was 28, Howard was depressed and discouraged. He'd studied data processing in college, but became disenchanted once he discovered that everything he'd learned was obsolete before he even graduated.

So, he shifted gears totally and for several years worked as a hairdresser. But his heart wasn't in it, and that work eventually became part-time. Before he could quite understand what was happening, Howard wasn't working at all.



In the end, it was training that turned his life around. He went back to school, this time studying computers in considerable depth. When an instructor pointed out that network management was a growing field, he decided to specialize in it.

Today, Howard's back in the primary marketplace, working as a network administrator, earning the salary of a junior executive. "I won't get sidetracked again," he vows. "I'm going to stay on top of changes with these systems."

A New Work Marketplace is Growing

As the traditional marketplace for work and jobs alters under the influence of trends such as these, an entirely new marketplace for skills

and expertise has been forming. And, it's growing, rapidly.

By dubbing this the independent work market and wedging it into a grey area between the primary and secondary markets, we've taken considerable liberty with the Dual Market Theory. But in the New World of Work there are three distinct employment markets, instead of two.

Independent Market

The independent marketplace for skills and expertise, which has also been described as the "freelance market," takes employers and characteristics from each of the other two markets. As is the case in the primary marketplace, success in this independent market demands both skills and experience. But, like the secondary work marketplace, security is not among its chief attractions. For anyone willing to take a risk, however, the new independent marketplace holds lots of opportunities.

Working in the independent marketplace is not for the faint of heart. Here's how one freelance consultant describes the challenges that confront him:

"One of the toughest things I have to do is get up every day and realize that I am my own marketing division, I am my own accounting division, I am my own operational division. But the thing that generates money and value is the marketing division. I need to look into the market and see what opportunities exist every day. How do you identify the opportunities that you and others can leverage? How do you add value?"

Come up with solid answers to questions like these and you'll find this

new independent, or freelance marketplace full of growth potential in the years ahead. Both primary and secondary employers in the New Workplace will be seeking experienced, competent help from a variety of "service providers" - though only as their needs dictate.

Lots of people, by choice, will market themselves as part-time or short-term workers. There's no denying, as well, that working in this way takes commitment and fortitude. Still, those who are able to muster the effort, who are patient and persistent in their approach, will build successful independent careers.

If projections like these are scary, if they confuse you even further, take some comfort in knowing that you're not alone. Lots of people are



feeling overwhelmed, convinced there's little they, as individuals, can do to protect themselves. As winds of change blow, they feel, what can a single leaf do but move in whichever direction the gale takes it?

Simply reacting to the currents of change leaves you vulnerable to them, however. And we can do a number of things to protect ourselves. We can plan, prepare, take control, build career strategies. And we can make these strategies flexible enough to adapt as needed. Even in a changing and shifting workscape, goals and objectives can be set, and met.

How To Prepare



How To Prepare

As the dizzying pace of workplace transformation continues, it's quite natural to feel overwhelmed. The issues reshaping today's world of work are so large and all encompassing. What can any one person do about globalization? About the pace of change? The level of our national debt? Or the advancing march of technology?

Despite the scope and complexity of such concerns, however, there are ways to protect yourself. You can inform yourself; and you can build the skills necessary to compete and thrive. You may not be able to affect what happens in the outside world, but you can determine your own best response.

Preparation is essential. The days when finding work amounted to little more than standing in line or waiting for the phone to ring are gone. The people landing "good" jobs nowadays have almost always taken time to put together a well considered strategy. They do their homework, weigh their options; they think long term; above all, they make sure they're prepared.

Imagine yourself in explorer Martin Frobisher's shoes, or those of William Parry, or Roald Amundson. Having decided you want to go exploring, what's your next move? Wait around for someone to tell you what they'd like explored, and how much they were prepared to pay you to do it? If any of those famous explorers had operated that way, we'd still be looking for the Northwest Passage.

It may not have quite the same high drama, but the new world of work is almost as daunting as the Arctic circle was back in Frobisher's day. And building effective career strategies to take you safely through its channels requires careful forethought.

Before you can begin to craft a strategy, though, you need to master two basic concepts:

Survivability in the new world of work will depend, in large part, on information; the more you have, the safer you'll be. You need information about the marketplace for your skills, and about employers, those mysterious beings who create the work. Without data of this kind, planning and preparation is next to impossible.



It will depend, as well, on knowing yourself very well. Most people have, within themselves, the qualities needed to lead productive lives and build successful careers, even in times of disruption and change. But before this is possible, it's essential to understand the complex of capabilities, skills, strengths and weaknesses that, combined, make up the

individual worker you are trying to market...yourself.

If you looked up and around, wondering who was going to help you with this, take a look in the mirror. As often as not, when it comes to creating a career strategy, you're on our own. Talking with a career counselor can certainly help you sort out your thinking. Tests and assessments can pinpoint your strengths and weaknesses. In the final analysis, though, only you can pull it together into a concrete plan of action. Only you can create and manage an approach that works for you. Your self, in other words is the cornerstone to a successful career. Self-confidence, self-reliance and self-management. These are the keys to Survivability® in the new workplace. Your job may not be secure any longer, but your career can be, if you consciously take control, keep yourself informed, keep adding to and improving your skills, and market yourself effectively.

Survivability today work is founded on and secured by information. And, only you can gather and assimilate it. You need a solid base of information about yourself, about today's world of work, about employers and their needs. You need a clear idea of the sort of worker you are and can be, and the opportunities you can explore.



The good news about information is that there's a ton of it out there. Start a couple of files. Open one for your Survivability Skills Profile. Open several others on the areas of today's workplace that interest you most. The more information you have, the more able you are to use it strategically, the greater your Survivability.

This document has been excerpted from Survivability® Career Strategies for the New World of Work, by Janis Foord Kirk. For information on how to obtain the complete book, or to take the on-line SurvivabilityPRO™ assessment, please visit www.survivability.net.