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A GUIDE FOR NAVIGATING THE FUTURE OF WORK

For Youth and Employers



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Section 1: Assessing Your Readiness for the Future of Work	6
Section 2: 10 Trending Ideas	10
Section 3: 10 Stories from Youth and Employers	22
Section 4: 10 Really Useful Resources	33
About Tamarack and Vibrant Communities	36



INTRODUCTION

Welcome. If you are a youth or an employer who is looking at the future of work trends and wondering – what now? – you have come to the right place. There is so much out there on the ‘future of work’ these days that it can feel overwhelming to take it all in.

And that’s why we’re here.

This guide has been developed to help you filter through the noise and focus in on what matters to you as you navigate the shifting landscape of the future of work. We created it to be accessible and easy to use and have included the latest research, questions to consider and stories and resources throughout to help bring your learning to life.



Here's a little more about what to expect:

Section 1 includes an assessment of your readiness for the future of work for both a youth and an employer. It asks questions to assess where you're at across the 10 ideas the guide focuses on and acts as a guidepost for exploring where you are on your journey.

Section 2 provides 10 Trending Ideas when it comes to the future of work that affect youth and employers. It offers a high-level summary of the trend and some questions to consider as you navigate that idea in your own life.

Section 3 provides you with stories and reflections from real people – like you – who are currently navigating the future of work. It captures their responses to the trending ideas and offers perspectives on bringing these ideas to life in the present-day context.

Section 4 includes a list of 10 Useful Resources for both youth and employers to help you take the learning from this guide further – and to start taking action.

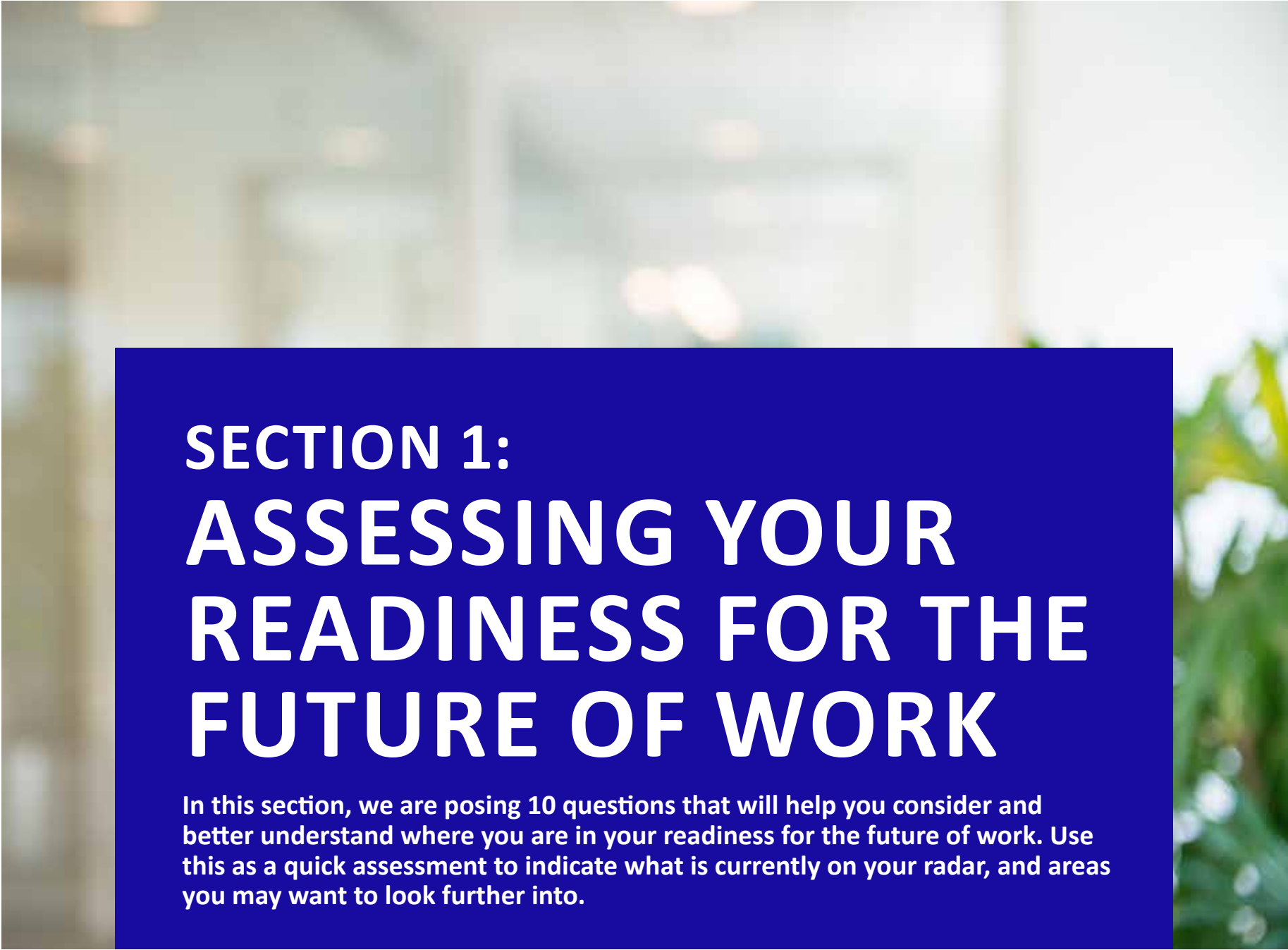
The text of this guide has also been informed by research conducted through a Literature

Review as well as a Survey of Youth and Employers in 2022. In December 2021, 300 youth and 350 employers completed an online survey on their perspectives about the future of work. To dive deeper into those resources you can access them here:

- [The Future of Work: A Literature Review](#)
- [A Snapshot: Future of Work – Survey of Youth and Employers by Tamarack, Co-operators, Youthful Cities and Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity](#)

The complete data set from the Future of Work – Survey of Youth and Employers will be added to the Youthful Cities Grid. [The Grid](#) is a free, open-source, intuitive data portal for young people, communities, planners, organizations, governments and more to improve our future, inspire further research and shape youth-informed policies. The Grid highlights youth voices across 3,000+ survey responses, 20,000 minutes of interviews, and an index containing over 23,000+ data points, allowing users to compare and contrast qualitative and quantitative data across 47 Canadian cities and 23 topics.

We hope that you find this guide to be valuable and that it helps you sort through the magnitude of information on the 'future of work' and gives you a tangible and digestible place to start.



SECTION 1: ASSESSING YOUR READINESS FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

In this section, we are posing 10 questions that will help you consider and better understand where you are in your readiness for the future of work. Use this as a quick assessment to indicate what is currently on your radar, and areas you may want to look further into.

FOR YOUTH

Use the following scale to score your responses: 1 = Not yet 2 = Just getting started 3 = I'm part way there 4 = I'm doing this 5 = I am there

Questions to Consider	Rank
1. Have you considered what work environment you would prefer in your life (remote, hybrid, in-person) and looked into the industries, or career paths, that would facilitate that lifestyle for you? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
2. Are you aware of both the hard and soft skills that are in demand in the line of work that interests you – and are they featured in your resume? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
3. Are you aware of your own mental health needs and the resources and triggers that affect your ability to support yourself in times of uncertainty? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
4. Have you considered what skills you might have that could set you up for success in the gig economy so that you are aware of your options when it comes to the different forms of work available? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
5. Have you considered seeking out a mentor who you admire to speak with about your career trajectory? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
6. Have you thought about what your values are as an individual and what values are most important to you from your future employer? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
7. Do you have a trusted friend or mentor that you can lean on to discuss challenges in the workplace so that you don't feel alone when up against challenging work cultures? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
8. Do you have ongoing access to technology or a technology backup plan so that you can continue to access what you need (computers, internet, etc.) if you lose access to your current resources (think – libraries, friends, supports in your community)? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5

Questions to Consider	
9. Have you thought about what is important for you when it comes to work-life balance and are you searching for jobs that accommodate that? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
10. Have you spent time getting familiar with the values that are important to you and which of these values are important to you in the workplace? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
Your Total	

10 – 25 points – No worries, start with a question that interests you and write down five ways you can get started right away. When you conquer that, try another one.

25 – 40 points – You are on your way, keep going!

40 – 50 points – Way to go! What are five new actions you can take to get you closer to your goal?

*Refer to Section 4 of the guide for a list of 10 Useful Resources to help you take your learning further

FOR EMPLOYERS

Questions to Consider	
1. Have you created a strategy around the work environment options for your team (remote, hybrid, in-person)? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
2. Have you reviewed your hiring practices to assess a candidate’s soft skills and what hard skills can be learned on the job? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
3. Are you aware of your own mental health needs and the resources and triggers that affect your ability to support yourself in times of uncertainty? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
4. Have you considered the roles or projects that could be outsourced to better support your team, or projects currently being outsourced that would be better done in-house? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5

Questions to Consider	Rank
5. Have you set up a formal mentoring program at your workplace? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
6. Have you created clear values for your organization and communicated how staff can bring forward questions, concerns or challenges around how these are being fulfilled as an organization? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
7. Do you have a clear process for understanding staff satisfaction and taking action on what's not working? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
8. Do you support your staff with the technology they need to do their job effectively? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
9. Have you engaged your staff in conversations around work-life balance and what it might look like in the future? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
10. Have you assessed how your organization is doing in terms of creating safety, belonging and inclusion in the workplace? Notes:	1 2 3 4 5
Your Total	

10 – 25 points – No worries, start with a question that interests you and write down five ways you can get started right away. When you conquer that, try another one.

25 – 40 points – You are on your way, keep going!

40 – 50 points – Way to go! What are five new actions you can take to get you closer to where you strive to be as an employer?

*Refer to Section 4 of the guide for a list of 10 Useful Resources to help you take your learning further

SECTION 2:

10 TRENDING IDEAS

In this section we have narrowed down the incredible amount of information available on the future of work to 10 Trending Ideas for youth and employers to pay attention to. Each trend is not happening in isolation, but together offer a picture of what this new world of work looks like and what that means for youth and employers today.

- 1. Hybrid Work is the New Normal**
- 2. A Change in Skillset - Re-Skilling, Up-Skilling and Harnessing Soft Skills**
- 3. Mental Health is a Must**
- 4. The Gig Economy is Growing**
- 5. Career Pathways Need to Innovate**
- 6. A Rise in Employee Activism will Require New Approaches to Leadership**
- 7. Toxic Culture Has to Go**
- 8. Technology is a Basic Need**
- 9. Work-Life Balance (For Real)**
- 10. Creating Cultures of Belonging and Bringing your Whole Self to Work**



1. HYBRID WORK IS THE NEW NORMAL

36%



of employers surveyed think hybrid working is more desirable if there is a set schedule for working at home vs in-office workdays, and if important meetings were conducted in-person.

Future of Work – Survey of Youth and Employers by Tamarack, Co-operators, Youthful Cities and Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity

When COVID hit in early 2020, thousands of workers who previously worked in an office made the abrupt transition to working from home. As we take the first steps to returning to pre-pandemic activities, many are asking - what will the new normal look like? The data overwhelmingly points to a Hybrid workforce moving forward – a flexible work

model designed to support both in-office and remote work.

The way this will play out will depend highly on the type of job you have, the industry you work within and even the department you find yourself in and who manages it. Some jobs simply aren't conducive to working from home and will remain in-person; some

have thrived during the pandemic and will continue to be fully remote; the remaining will fall into the category of working some days from home (likely two) and some days in the office (likely Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday) (Kelly).



This brings up some challenges to consider:

1. Managing Team Culture and Cohesiveness When some employees are in the office, and others are working from home, there is potential for the team to feel divided and for some to feel left out. Managing these two coinciding groups effectively will be challenging and may lead to poor team dynamics, a two-tier culture and less effective outcomes.

2. Engaging Staff in the Decision Working from home has served some employees extremely well – offering more flexibility, accessibility, and the ability to live where they want and minimize their commute – for others it has been isolating and inconvenient, and they are keen to come back to the office and be with their colleagues again. How employers engage and support their staff in the transition back to work will play a role in staff satisfaction and even retention.

3. Equity and Diversity in the Workplace Research shows that working from home while your colleagues are in the office can be damaging to your career and your opportunities for promotion. If people with young families or lower incomes (for example) choose to work from home rather than come to the office, strategies will have to be put in place to ensure they aren't held back based on their decisions.

The pandemic provided a mass social experiment on what happens when people work from home. Perceptions have changed, lifestyles have been altered and things will never go back to normal. But how this transition is navigated will play a huge role in how a business fares in a job landscape where a record number of employees are leaving their jobs in search of something better



2. A CHANGE IN SKILLSET RE-SKILLING, UP-SKILLING AND HARNESSING SOFT SKILLS

With these changing times, the skills one needs to adapt and get noticed in the work environment are also shifting. With major technological advances - like remote work, AI and automation - many jobs that have been previously done by people will disappear, and new jobs that will be more adapted to this new division of labour between humans, machines and algorithms will be created (Zahidi et al.).

In addition, 'soft skills' – interpersonal skills that characterize a person's relationships with other people – will gain increasing importance compared to the hard skills we so often shine focus on. Skills like empathy, emotional intelligence, kindness, mindfulness, adaptability, integrity, optimism, self-motivation, grit and resilience will serve workers and organizations in coping with future disruptive changes and

81% 

of employers surveyed believe their organization considers a candidate's experience equivalent to their education when hiring employees.

Future of Work – Survey of Youth and Employers by Tamarack, Co-operators, Youthful Cities and Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity

shifts in the labour market. As Zabeen Hirji, Executive Advisor on the future of work at Deloitte, states – “they're future-proof”(Fraser).

As youth think about entering the job market, becoming aware of the skills in demand will be paramount to your success in attaining and maintaining a successful career. For employers, re-imagining your hiring practices to better recognize the importance of soft skills will set your organization up to be more adaptable, resilient and poised for change.



3. MENTAL HEALTH IS A MUST

With the challenges of COVID-19 and the shift to working from home, the importance of addressing mental health in the workplace is more important than ever. Employees want to work at a company whose culture supports mental health – this is especially true for youth. In the Deloitte Global 2020 Millennial Survey, mental health was found to be one of the most requested benefits employees were longing for and nearly half of Millennials and Gen Zers around

the world ranked mental health as their first or second priority (Codd).

This will require a shift from the status quo. According to studies done in the US, nearly 60% of employees have never spoken to anyone at work about their mental health status and one-third of people with a mental illness get the treatment they need (Greenwood et al.). Less than half the respondents felt that mental health was prioritized at their company, and even fewer viewed their company leaders as advocates.

35%



of youth surveyed stated that their current employment contributes to better mental health, with 11% attributing flexibility in their workplaces as the reason.

Future of Work – Survey of Youth and Employers by Tamarack, Co-operators, Youthful Cities and Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity

The most commonly desired workplace resources for mental health included:

- A more open and accepting culture
- Training on mental health
- Clearer information about where to go and who to ask for support

Taking mental health seriously in the workplace is no longer something that can be ignored or pushed to the side, with the next generation of workers being more aware of mental health, more open to talking about it and more willing to leave their workplace because of it – companies that do not create space for these conversations and processes to support people will not keep up (Greenwood et al.).

4. THE GIG ECONOMY IS GROWING



The rise of the gig economy is a trend that began pre-COVID but has accelerated due to the impacts of the pandemic. This is especially true for youth. According to a Bank of Canada survey published in 2019, up to 58 percent of youth aged 17-24 were participating in some form of informal work, nearly double that of Canadians in general (Jackson). In a 2020 report published by Upwork, the world's largest remote talent platform, they found that 12 percent of the U.S. workforce started freelancing for the first time during the pandemic and 47 percent of hiring managers were more likely to hire freelancers (Wyman; Jarret).

While the gig economy can sound attractive due to its flexibility and the ability to set your own prices, for many – especially youth – it can mean temporary, contract or on-call work with lower wages and a lack of benefits and security. When considering gig work, youth must consider the type of skills, resources and connections you have in order to accommodate the risks that gig work requires to provide a reliable and consistent income. However, if you have specialized and in-demand skills and access to a support network, gig work may be a viable and preferred option to live a more autonomous and flexible lifestyle.

Over half the youth surveyed stated they were or are part of the gig economy. 30% of youth stated the gig economy was 'desirable' while 66% stated it was either 'very undesirable' or 'somewhat desirable.'

Future of Work – Survey of Youth and Employers by Tamarack, Co-operators, Youthful Cities and Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity



5. CAREER PATHWAYS NEED TO INNOVATE

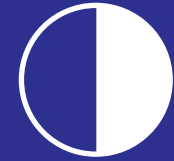
The idea of a career path is something that has also evolved and will continue to do so as new types of work opportunities emerge. No longer are youth looking for a life-long career straight out of University but are often looking for a values match with an organization where they can grow and learn more about themselves and the types of jobs they may be interested in as they gain more experience.

Employers need to be mindful of this mindset shift and work to support youth in their personal and professional development rather than seeing them

as an employee who will be with them for life. Empowering and mentoring young employees will play a big role in how their career takes shape and how long they imagine themselves working with one particular company.

That being said, it is widely agreed upon that formal education is not setting up young people with the skills and knowledge they need to find employment in the first place. In a report published by McKinsey & Company it is noted that even though 83 percent of Canadian education providers believe that youth are adequately prepared for the workforce, only 44 percent of youth

50%



of youth surveyed stated they were 'somewhat happy' at work, yet 30% chose 'very unhappy', 'somewhat happy', or 'neither unhappy or happy at work'.

Future of Work – Survey of Youth and Employers by Tamarack, Co-operators, Youthful Cities and Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity

and 34 percent of employers feel the same way (McKinsey & Company).

So who is responsible for equipping youth with the skills they need to thrive in the future of work? According to the 2022 Survey by Tamarack, Co-operators, Youthful Cities and Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity, youth reported post-secondary education providers and employers were responsible, while employers reported that the job seekers themselves were responsible. With these differing opinions between who is responsible for equipping youth and how equipped youth really are leaving education and heading into the workforce - it has become clear that for youth to be successful in gaining valuable employment, these gaps will need to be addressed.



6. A RISE IN EMPLOYEE ACTIVISM WILL REQUIRE NEW APPROACHES TO LEADERSHIP

Depending on the person, the word ‘activism’ can bring up a number of feelings. For some it may make them feel inspired or hopeful, for others it may bring up fear or violence – for some it may bring up both! However the word activism sits with you, the idea that workers are expecting more from their employers around the issues that matter to them is undebatable in the future of work and will require new approaches to how we view power and leadership.

The call for more inclusive, ethical and diverse workplaces is not a new idea – but creating work environments where all voices have the power to speak up and be heard by their employers is still a challenge many workplaces are navigating. For Millennials and Gen

When asked who in society is responsible for building employee skillsets, 30% of youth selected post-secondary institutions and 26% stated employers.

Future of Work – Survey of Youth and Employers by Tamarack, Co-operators, Youthful Cities and Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity

Zers, holding one’s employer accountable for issues outside of the organization’s direct mandate will become increasingly important. Things like climate change, gender and race equity, modern slavery, executive pay and whose voices get heard and whose don’t are becoming issues these generations will leave jobs over (Brown, “Age of Employee Activism”).

For employers, it will be critical to get clear on what your company stands for and how that is being governed, implemented and monitored internally. It will require a shift in leadership – whereby leaders are no longer expected to have all of the answers, but instead, are open to listening and learning from others to create a path forward together. That path forward will likely be messy and will require employers to create spaces where staff can feel safe to voice their concerns and challenge the status quo – with a clear understanding of how that input is being used.



7. TOXIC CULTURE HAS TO GO

According to a recent survey that looked at 600 companies across 39 industries, a toxic workplace culture is the leading predictor of employee turnover during the great resignation and is ten times more important than compensation in predicting turnover (Brown, “Toxic Work Cultures”). So what is toxic culture exactly and why does it have such a huge effect on staff satisfaction and retention? According to the same study the top five attributes

of a toxic work culture included cultures that were perceived by employees as: non-inclusive, disrespectful, dishonest or unethical, cutthroat and having abusive managers (Brown, “Toxic Work Cultures”).

The costs of toxic culture at the workplace are significant, both for employees and employers. For employees working in a toxic culture, mental health and physical health can suffer greatly. So much so that

employees working in a toxic culture are 35-55 percent more likely to be diagnosed with a major disease such as heart disease, stroke or diabetes (Brown, “Toxic Work Cultures”). It can also have significant effects on family and personal life - leading to insomnia, depression and relationship issues with kids and partners, for example.

For employers, the cost of having a worker suffering with these types of challenges has obvious ramifications on work progress and effectiveness. Outside of that, if an employee leaves due to toxic work culture it has a negative effect on company reputation, leads to poor company reviews and it becomes harder to replace these workers with new workers. While it can be difficult, especially in bigger organizations, to uncover the pockets of toxicity that may exist within the organization, it is well worth the investment to address it in order to succeed in the future of work.

8. TECHNOLOGY IS A BASIC NEED



When COVID hit and everything moved online - work, school, shopping, even access to our basic services – the divide between who had access and who did not became strikingly apparent.

Suddenly people who didn't have internet access at home and may have utilized resources like the library or their workplaces to connect, no longer had the option to do so. For others who lived in rural areas with slower internet speeds, trying to manage school and work online put them at a massive disadvantage with the new plethora of technology tools and bandwidth that was needed to participate. Outside of access to reliable internet, there are many who don't have the adequate hardware to keep up with new demands – such as owning a computer.

This 'digital divide' will have a significant impact on youths' ability to be successful in education, access mentorship and online learning opportunities and to keep up in jobs that are moving

41%



of employers surveyed state that their organization requires stable internet to work remotely, yet only 27% report providing it to their employees

Future of Work – Survey of Youth and Employers by Tamarack, Co-operators, Youthful Cities and Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity

to a remote or hybrid model. This will be especially true for rural, Indigenous and low-income populations. For example, the Indigenous youth population is growing four times faster than the rest of the youth population in Canada, and Indigenous people create new businesses nine times more often than the average population (Evans). However, a major reason these entrepreneurs remain largely underutilized is due to this growing digital divide - with three quarters of First Nations households still not having access to the internet (Evans).

While closing this gap will take significant investment by government, employers, educational providers and other services supporting youth, these organizations must also be conscious of this reality and ensure that access and support to what they offer is considered at every step of the way. Otherwise, too many valuable youth across the country will be left behind.



9. WORK-LIFE BALANCE (FOR REAL)

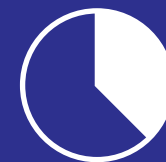
Work-life balance has been a topic for a long time now, but what work-life balance means is changing quickly and will continue to morph and transform as the future of work unfolds before us.

While the idea of working from home gave many the impression that work-life balance would improve drastically, this hasn't been the case. Many remote workers will tell you that one of the biggest challenges with working from home is learning how to 'turn off' and leave the workday behind. Working from home has led to a blurred line between work and life, and while it has offered opportunities to throw on a

load of laundry in between meetings or grab your kids from the school bus, it has also led to a 24-hour clock of being available to your colleagues that has led to less of the freedom workers were hoping for.

In 2021, the Ontario government even passed a law in response to this that gives workers the "right to disconnect" at the end of the workday. But what does work-life balance look like for real? And how do we navigate it moving forward? For youth, new frameworks around what a work day looks like will become more apparent. Research suggests that despite the fact that most employees

41%



of employers surveyed state that their organization promotes work-life balance by providing financial discounts for yoga, meditation and other services. 30% stated they provide counselling and coaching sessions.

Future of Work – Survey of Youth and Employers by Tamarack, Co-operators, Youthful Cities and Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity

are expected to work about eight hours a day, the average worker is only productive for about three hours a day. There is also growing research on the efficacy of the four-day work week with more businesses trying it out with much success.

With the next generation of workers valuing more time with family and more time for mental health and community, the way work and life intertwine in the future is going to need some reimagining. The keys to navigating this change for both the employee and the employer will be open communication, flexibility, trust, openness to different peoples' wants and needs and an overall re-focusing on the results of the work over how one gets there.

10. CREATING CULTURES OF BELONGING AND BRINGING YOUR WHOLE SELF TO WORK



It is common for employees to show up to work as a ‘persona’ of their authentic selves in order to appear more professional and capable, and to fit in with the culture of an organization. But with the push to build more resilient, innovative and inclusive teams, employers are starting to encourage employees to be themselves at work and finding new ways to show that it’s safe to make mistakes and come as you are.

When people are able to be themselves at work, it promotes higher levels of creativity, performance and social connection. It creates a space where people can be human and messy and this can often lead to more innovative ideas and stronger team

dynamics in the face of challenges. But showing up as your ‘whole’ self isn’t as easy as it sounds. For some the risk of saying the wrong thing or not being accepted is too great. To create a space where all people feel like they belong and can let their guards down will require small steps of courage and vulnerability from all levels of the organization.

But with the future of work upon us – there is no doubt that we will need the gifts and assets of our diverse, vibrant and unique workforce to play a role – and it will be everyone’s job to create an environment where that is possible.

SECTION 3: 10 STORIES FROM YOUTH AND EMPLOYERS

Here are 10 Stories that illustrate how youth and employers are experiencing and adapting to the future of work trends in their own lives. These stories give you a taste of how youth and employers are responding to the 10 Trending Ideas and offer examples and new perspectives on what participating in the 'future of work' really looks like.

1. **Valerie's Story: Re-framing Issues for Dialogue in the Workplace**
2. **Erick's Story: Engaging Youth Advisors to Attract Youth Candidates**
3. **Jessica's Story: Finding Balance in a Hybrid Work Setting**
4. **Elisabeth's Story: Welcoming your Whole Self at Work**
5. **A Young Person's Story: Putting Mental Health First**
6. **Delyse's Story: Bringing a Trauma-Informed Lens to the Workplace**
7. **Ipellie's Story: The Power of Mentorship**
8. **Katie's Story: Making Remote Work, Work**
9. **Estelle's Story: Cautiously Celebrating the New World of Work**
10. **Ellery's Story: Adapting Policies to Meet the Future of Work**

1. VALERIE'S STORY: RE-FRAMING ISSUES FOR DIALOGUE IN THE WORKPLACE

I was working for an international retailer while attending University. The retailer wanted to implement a new business model which presented some challenges in updating their business practices and compensation structure.

One day, my co-worker off-handedly asked me how much money I was making. I had no qualms about sharing as I had assumed our compensation would be quite similar given how similar our tenure, responsibilities and title were. But it wasn't, I was being paid significantly more than she was (about 30% more) and neither of us could really understand why that was. This sparked a larger conversation amongst staff where many of us came to the conclusion that there were sizable discrepancies in our compensation packages.

A group of co-workers (myself included) brought this up during a department meeting and unsurprisingly our leadership was not pleased as conversations around compensation were prohibited, not by law, but by internal policy and a culture of intentional ambiguity around compensation. We chose to re-frame our issue in an attempt to further a dialogue with leadership. We already knew we weren't being paid the same, and that wasn't necessarily the problem. The problem was that we did not understand why and leadership could not adequately justify this.

Previously, the organization categorized work in a very strict way, each person was assigned to a department with a singular

knowledge and responsibility set. Cross-functionality and responsibility sharing was not a factor in informing evaluation and compensation policy. As the business grew, the need for working groups to work cross-functionally made the previous compensation structure obsolete but it had never been fully revised.

In an attempt to bridge the gap, my working group formed a committee to discuss the issue more comprehensively, involving both staff and leadership. After reviewing the company's evaluation guidelines for our business unit, we realized that there were many gaps in correlating performance to development and compensation. The committee came up with several suggested revisions that would clarify the evaluation process and create comprehensive compensation ranges that would more adequately reconcile compound responsibilities and performance. After all, we worked in an environment where every individual wore many hats and had unique experiences. We also bolstered our suggestions with data from opinion surveys we collected from employees across several business units. Revisions were brought to senior leadership and some were eventually approved. The evaluation process and compensation structure was permanently updated to reflect the current state of employment operations and was eventually implemented across several business units. This would not have been possible without simply being open to having a conversation and engaging with one another on issues we all cared about.



2. ERICK'S STORY: ENGAGING YOUTH ADVISORS TO ATTRACT YOUTH CANDIDATES

As a person in the youth workforce empowerment sector, I have to constantly ask myself where youth unemployment even comes from in the first place. It seems like a complex story and yet it is the central question for our work at the Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity (CCYP). On one hand, we see Canada facing a labor shortage crisis where employers all across the country are scrambling to fill vacancies in all sectors. On the other hand, we see a prominent youth unemployment rate of 10.1% (as of April 2022), which is higher than pre-pandemic rates. So, what is happening?

While I wish this question could be answered with a simple sentence, it cannot. However, one thing is certain: there is a clear disconnect between what employers are looking for (or how and where they are looking for it) and what youth are providing. Youth and employers are not meeting on the same ground which has

become evident to us through conversations and collaborations we have had with a variety of stakeholders.

An example of this was a recent interaction we had with a stakeholder. They approached us with the following question: “why are youth not engaging with job opportunities in our sector?” and we set out on a quest for an answer. The usual suspects came to mind: lack of DEI practices, poor presence on up-and-coming social media platforms, environmental concerns... and yet the stakeholder already had programs in place to cover these three areas. Nonetheless, the common denominator was that all the programs were designed and developed with little to no primary youth involvement. For this reason, we have found that a main area of disconnect and where employers and career pathways need to innovate is in bringing youth to the forefront of their decision making.

At CCYP, we have designed a program to integrate youth advisors into organizations to bring about sustainable change. It only makes sense: if the programs in place are not helping youth integrate into the workforce, it is because they have not been designed accordingly by youth themselves. Youth are the only ones who know what is best for them.

If you are a stakeholder looking to attract youth, do not even think twice about placing youth advisors into the center of the creation process of such initiatives. If you need assistance in such an undertaking, do not hesitate to contact us as we would be happy to assist. Similarly, if you are a youth with the necessary skills to advise a partner organization, you can also reach out to us at coyn@ccyp-ccpj.org.



3. JESSICA'S STORY: FINDING BALANCE IN A HYBRID WORK SETTING

With the arrival of hybrid work, I started working 100% from home which changed my work-life balance. At first, I found it a little complicated but now that I am used to it, I can't see myself working five days a week from the office as there are many opportunities to gain back my time. For example, no longer having to commute which saves money, being able to sleep longer and being able to do little things at home during the workday. I also no longer feel the pressure of being surrounded by others who might be judging how hard I'm working. It improves my daily life.

That said, working from an office, you know that you can leave work when the day is done. Working from home, it is easy to work later. You can find yourself reading little notes you wrote yourself on your kitchen counter after work hours for example. Work has started to take more room in my personal life at home, work is in my space even during weekends. I know the importance of disconnecting and I appreciate working for an organisation where they have similar values. For example, they encourage us to leave earlier on Fridays and educate us on the importance of disconnecting. Since my

last vacation, I have de-activated alert notifications from my work app on my cell phone.

In the future, I will definitely look for jobs that allow hybrid work. My family lives abroad and being able to do work while being close to my family sometimes means I wouldn't have to use all my vacation time to go see them. I can work and still be close to them.

These days, we sometimes have in-person days at work, but they are rare. When they do happen, we are happy to exchange ideas and we know that lunch will be longer because we want to take advantage of being together. The last time I went to the office, I was able to concentrate on documenting and knowledge sharing with my colleagues. Since we are not together very often, I try to take full advantage of it when we are.



4. ELISABETH'S STORY: WELCOMING YOUR WHOLE SELF AT WORK

The obligation of remote work with the pandemic forced employers to have an entry into the private lives of their employees - there is always a child or a cat that comes to the meeting. Despite this, you can continue to be professional, so I think that this has encouraged the openness and fluidity of discussions. I have the impression that change happens slowly and happens with every generation.

You work every day of your life, so it's important to work for a company that has the same values as you. It's easier if you don't have the burden of censoring who you are so that way you can live as your authentic self. There are people that have a clear distinction between work and life, but for me, it's one

of the facets of my life. If I was an employer, I would say that people want to work together and grow the company while also developing themselves. It keeps the company young and allows them to keep a pulse on what is happening. To have diversity and to welcome everyone however they want to show up, it brings colour to the organisation.

I think that I will be more fulfilled and comfortable in the jobs that I'll have in the future. That might help me to stay longer at a job. Our generation is sometimes known as the "job-hoppers," but if you can be your full self at work, you'll want to stay longer. Your career can evolve if your employer listens and accepts you and your innovations. If they can welcome your whole self, they can welcome your ideas.



5. A YOUNG PERSON'S STORY: PUTTING MENTAL HEALTH FIRST

It's the subject of mental health that interested me. I had a burn-out once and I also had a boss who was harassing me psychologically (he spoke badly to me, put me down, called me after work hours, etc.). So, I've lived it.

When it happened, I went to the Normes du Travail (a Ministry in Quebec) website and there was a clear definition of psychological harassment. It also said what type of proof was necessary, how to manage your boss and how to put in

a complaint. There were numbers that I could call. I received support throughout the process to know step-by-step what actions I needed to take to put in a request for unemployment, get a phone number for psychological support, etc.

I was working for a company that did not have Human Resources, where the boss was also president, and where there were few employees. I had nobody to turn to. There wasn't a mechanism in place to complain. One day, after a conflict, I quit. I went to see someone with whom I had a good relationship and explained that I had

reached my limit and could not continue like this for the sake of my mental health. There was also a friend who worked with me that encouraged me to read about my rights and to put in a complaint to get compensation. It's because of her that I saw the site on the Normes du Travail.

With this experience, I understood where the line is between my mental health and work. It was my first experience as an engineer. It taught me to always have boundaries, even though I want to succeed at my career. It also taught me that mental health must come first.

Whenever there are employees, there absolutely must be human resources. There wasn't a service or someone to whom we could speak too when all of this happened. We must always have a resource to speak to when things like this happen. I also hope that managers can remember that we're humans. Hierarchy isn't only about being a boss but also about being attentive of your team. We must support small and large companies as much as possible in these areas.



6: DELYSE'S STORY: BRINGING A TRAUMA-INFORMED LENS TO THE WORKPLACE

My first reaction in hearing the future of work trend list, is if we can achieve the conditions to bring our whole selves to the workplace, then most of the other trends can be realized much faster.

The question is what is holding us back from bringing our whole selves to a space where we will spend more than 90,000 hours in our lifetime?

Given the research, one of the answers may be that we are well practiced at contorting ourselves to be 'with' power. But we are siloed and blocked from naming 'power over' practices that can result in workplace trauma.

For instance, how could one bring our whole self to the workplace when [64% of women](#) experience unnamed and unregulated

misogynistic micro and macro aggressions. Or when BIPOC Women expertise is questioned or rejected seven times more than their white male counterparts. Or what happens to an individual leading decolonizing processes? Do we require this leader to deal with their intergenerational trauma on their own while working full time changing the very system that exposes them to further trauma? Very few HR processes name or address these patterned bias responses.

With the commitment to see what are often invisible biases, I invited a Somatic Business Coach, [Shannon Dikkema](#), to help us name what may be holding us back from bringing our whole selves to the workplace. We started with a practical exercise of co-designing job descriptions. This was combined with voluntary somatic therapy sessions. The goal was to uncover what traumas were triggered in the workplace: what were ours individually to work on, and which were workplace based and needed to be redesigned.

It was surprising how quickly the team met the goal of developing clear job descriptions that elevated each of our expertise and focused on what brought us joy. And how the process eased many of the workplace tensions.

I believe it is critical to bring the principles of somatic practices into the workplace where so much trauma is initiated. It can help support individual and team boundary setting. It can build individual capacity to distinguish workplace vs one's own individual trauma triggers. And provide the necessary mental health support needed to address these triggers. But more critically, it begins to uncover, name and work toward dismantling the seemingly intractable patterned intersections that advantage existing power and disadvantage those based on gender sex, race, ethnicity, class sexuality. I believe this is critical for any of the future work trends to become the norm.

7. IPELLIE'S STORY: THE POWER OF MENTORSHIP

My mom grew up in Nunavut where the barriers for Indigenous people weigh heavily. They have the highest rates of mental health issues and sometimes don't have clean water. This is stuff that happens in every Indigenous family, it is not just a statistic. I didn't see my mother very much growing up; it was tough on our family. My father had to take care of four children and we didn't have much money. Sometimes it was hard to pay bills or get good food.

I played sports my whole life and was quite lucky because I felt happy with everything I had in Ottawa. But that was me and the positive mentality I bring; I can't say the same for other members of my family or other Indigenous people that go through this type of experience, it's tough on people's mental health.

In 2016 my mother passed away. I was 19 at the time. I was confused. I never really understood what it meant to be Indigenous, that all the experiences we went through were because of systematic barriers. I felt I had a lot to learn, yet the closest Indigenous person in my life was

gone. Since then, I've known I wanted to work in the Indigenous space to learn and to bring impact.

The educational barriers on reserves are very different from what we have in large Canadian cities. I realized that even if I didn't have much growing up in Ottawa, the fact that I had an education and sports was such a blessing. It helped me to see the importance of helping Indigenous youth in education and career development. There is a huge gap right now.

I experienced first hand how having mentors and sharing stories about mental health help with career development. Originally I was scared to reach out to a mentor, but got super lucky that someone reached out while I was participating in mentor sessions. I figured, "what's the worst that could happen if I connect with a mentor?". As soon as I broke that ice, I felt engaged.

I met my mentor Fiona at a Power of Mentoring event hosted by Mentor Canada, she's an incredible leader. She

helped lead me to a job where I could make an impact for Indigenous people. I was really proud of this positive experience of working at this job and it felt like my mentor, my friends, and my family were all proud of me. It impacted every single aspect of my life when I felt I was able to overcome my childhood and the passing of my mother. Mentors helped every step of the way. They helped with tough decisions, understanding what I wanted to do in the long-term, and staying focused and engaged in my goals.

I remember everyone would say to me, "network, network, network! You'll see where that brings you, it'll open up new doors". You don't know what's on the other side, but most of the time, if not every time it, it is something you won't regret.



8. KATIE'S STORY: MAKING REMOTE WORK, WORK

In 2021 I completed my first ever co-op placement - it wasn't what I expected. After a full year of online schooling, I also stepped into a remote role due to the global pandemic. I felt as though I was not prepared for this - but in reality, no one was. The only jobs I had ever worked were in-person and working online was not something I was familiar with. I quickly realized that as long as I was willing to put in the extra effort, remote and hybrid work

could be manageable. You just need to put yourself out there.

As a new employee, it can be easy to get forgotten or feel left out from the social environment that is so important for your social and mental well-being. To combat this, I made it apparent to my boss that I wanted to connect with others in the company. One simple conversation spurred meetings with many individuals whom

I got to know better in this unique work environment. What I learned most in this transition is that you shouldn't be afraid to voice your concerns. If you are afraid of missing out socially because of the work set-up, voice that concern. Likely someone will lend you a hand and try to help solve the issue or ease the transition for you.



9. ESTELLE'S STORY: CAUTIOUSLY CELEBRATING THE NEW WORLD OF WORK

Hybrid is here to stay. I feel like it has been a collective desire for decades. It took a crisis to create an employee market that finally undid the red tape and roadblocks maintaining the status quo. A lot of the trends mentioned are linked. Since you are no longer commuting, you have more time to focus on work. You have more space for upskilling, which benefits employers. If you need it, you can now have a safe space where physical interactions that may cause extra stress are limited.

I have been a working professional for over 10 years. Hybrid opens new possibilities for bridging the gap between personal and work

life in a way that felt so difficult previously. I think I will be able to find more happiness and more balance with the two worlds and overall, have a better experience in my career and career growth.

Both the hybrid work and mental health trends are important. I entered [the COVID-19] lockdown with one company, I am now with another company. The first company did a very quick turn-around to support our well-being, actively seeking employee feedback and adjusting hybrid work and mental health policies quickly. They installed internet and paid for it, gave us ergonomic chairs and hardware. When

reviewing feedback related to mental health, we came down to working 4 days a week.

Now I am working for a large corporation and received an automatic 50hrs personal time upon joining. We are still in hybrid mode, and they are in a Phase 1 pilot of offering employees the opportunity to work in a different region of the world. To see a corporate giant going in this direction is great. Companies cannot ignore the wellness and needs of their workers.

I feel like Canada is lagging, our resources should have been galvanized during this crisis to better prepare us for what is coming up in the next 50 years. Technology is a basic need for everyone, on the same level as food and water these days. But there are biases in where we make investment in terms of underserved communities, age, ethnicities and professional background. Funding is so uncertain and so dependent on political funding and willpower and that is not enough. I am torn, naively thinking that this is an amazing opportunity at the same time, being very conscious that a hybrid work model is being built upon existing infrastructure. Hybrid cannot solve fundamentally flawed systems. Wireless access should now be seen as the same as electricity, it is not a luxury, it is a necessity.

10. ELLERY'S STORY: ADAPTING POLICIES TO MEET THE FUTURE OF WORK

One of the future of work trends that I worry about is the precarity of the gig economy. At FoodShare Toronto, we have tried to address precariousness of employment through both internal structures and policies and external policy and advocacy work. For example, we host a [supportive partnerships platform](#) which offers support to smaller organisations through mentorship, capacity-building, strategic planning, governance development, financial management services, and resource sharing. [Gig Workers United](#) is a part of this platform and they are organizing for better working conditions and protections for gig workers. Internally, our [Combating Anti-Black Racism Plan](#) includes reducing dependency on casual staff by focusing on the creation of permanent employment and extending benefits to those working casual contracts. Every year, we look back at hours worked by those on casual contracts and if they have worked an average of 20+ hours a week over the previous year, they are then eligible for benefits. When extending a contract, we have protocols that could dictate when to convert a fixed term agreement to an indefinite agreement, leading to increased stability to the employment.

At FoodShare Toronto, we have been working on a lot of initiatives to support work life balance. Some of these begin before someone is even employed with us. The recruitment and selection process is where a lot of expectation and culture setting begins. At FoodShare we try to acknowledge and appreciate the time and energy of a potential applicant, knowing that respect of work-life balance can start even before you start working. We do this by including pay, benefits, the selection process, and selection

timeline in our job postings. We do not want to waste people's time and believe there is no reason not to share this information with potential candidates. It is also more efficient for hiring committees as candidates who are being interviewed already know many of the details of the job and offer. Folks who attend interviews receive an honorarium to acknowledge the time and labour they put into the interview and the knowledge they are sharing with us. If they are offered a position, we offer equal pay for equal work by not negotiating on benefits or salary (which is also explicitly stated in the job postings).

In addition to these trends, I would say that candidates and employees are putting increasing importance on DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion). Gen-Z cares about values and values alignment; many potential employees are asking to see what the organisation is doing in terms of DEI right from the job posting. The top advice I give here is that the E (Equity) and I (Inclusion) must come before the D (Diversity). You should not be focusing on bringing racialized and marginalized people into a white supremacist work culture where you are going to cause them harm. If your policies aren't equitable and your culture is not inclusive, it's not just the case that fewer diverse folks will see your jobs, apply for them, make it through the selection process, and choose to work with you, but also that diverse folks are more likely to experience harm and violence in your workplace. It's no surprise then that retention of diversity will become an issue. When DEI is preached and pushed without a foundation of inclusion and equity, the result is harm and violence.



SECTION 4: 10 REALLY USEFUL RESOURCES

This section includes a list of articles, blogs, reports and e-books that can help you turn your learning into action. Whether you are an employer or a youth, consider reading each resource with your own frame of mind and how you might apply what you read to your own situation; but also, we encourage you to put yourself in the shoes of your counterpart – either a youth or an employer – and reflect on the challenges they are up against and how it might inform the way you approach your own next steps, with an understanding of what they are going through.

Work Culture

[Hybrid Work Guide](#)

Voltage Control

This guide is for anyone curious about a hybrid workplace and implementing one into their organization. It will help you better understand and navigate the evolving and complex hybrid workplace so you can decide if it's the best fit for your team.

[How to Give Your Boss Feedback \(And Keep Your Job\)](#)

Fast Company

This article provides five pieces of advice for giving your boss feedback in a way that's respectful, focused and productive. In an environment where workers are expecting more from their workplace cultures and their leaders, having these conversations can go a long way in creating the change you want to see in your workplace – rather than ditching it prematurely.

Changing Skillsets

[A Guide to Soft Skills](#)

Indeed Editorial Team

Soft skills describe a variety of aptitudes and behaviours. Unlike “hard” skills, which often describe technical abilities, soft skills include any skills you developed beyond your technical competencies and intellectual knowledge. Identifying and improving your soft skills gives you abilities that apply to a variety of job roles and fields. This article defines what soft skills are and why they are important, provides examples of soft skills, how you can improve soft skills and how to highlight your soft skills when applying to a job.

[Shifting Skills, Moving Targets, and Remaking the Workforce](#)

Boston Consulting Group and The Burning Glass Institute

This report offers an analysis of more than 15 million job postings between 2016 and 2021 to reveal the significant changes in

requested skills – with new skills appearing, some existing skills disappearing and other existing skills shifting in importance.

Mental Health in the Workplace

[When Your Employee Discloses a Mental Health Condition](#)

Harvard Business Review

This article provides step-by-step advice on what to do when an employee discloses that they have a mental health condition. It offers ways to navigate the conversation in a way that ensures the employee feels heard and valued and at the same time assesses the implications to the organization.

[Not Myself Today - Home](#)

Canadian Mental Health Association

Not Myself Today is a social enterprise of the Canadian Mental Health Association. If you are looking to support the mental health of your employees, Not Myself Today is a workplace mental health program that can assist you.

Mentorship + New Leadership

[You've Graduated – Now, Go Find a Great Manager](#)

Leadership Contract Inc.

Hybrid and remote-work environments have created new obstacles in collaborative career management endeavours and have made it more important than ever for leaders to engage their employees in career conversations. This blog post offers four qualities to look for in order to ensure youth find a Manager who is committed to them not just as an employee, but as someone at the beginning of their career.

[Mentorship Guide](#)

CPRA Youth Employment Experience

Created in collaboration with Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, Recreation North and MENTOR Canada, this Mentorship guide was created to support organizations in developing quality

mentoring relationships in the workplace, and establishing a mentoring mindset amongst staff and leaders. The goal? Ensuring youth get hands-on training and have the opportunity to be paired with a mentor at their place of employment to benefit from an immersive learning experience.

Career Pathways

[15 Free Career Assessment Tools](#)

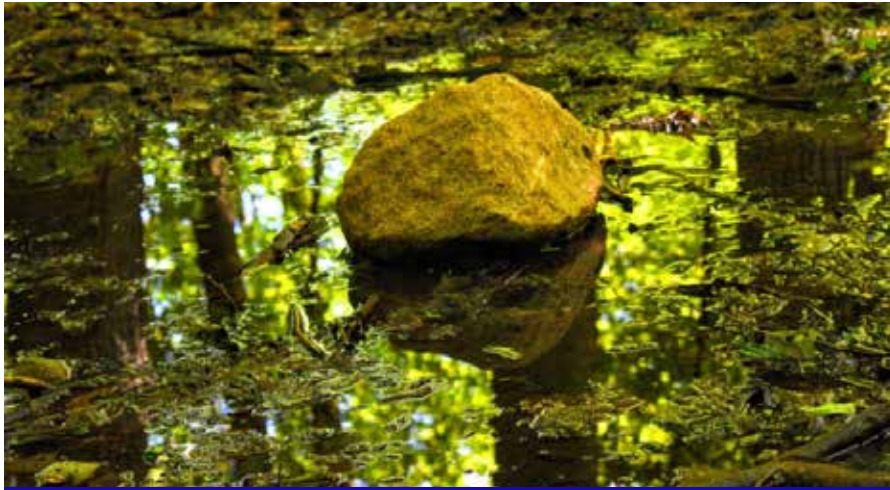
Charity Village

Career assessment tools can be helpful for sparking ideas and identifying strengths, whether you are just starting out in your career, or are ready to make a career change. While some career professionals may prefer to use only paid assessments, these are not always financially accessible to everyone. This article features 15 free career assessments to help get you started.

[Navigate Your Leadership Career – Advice for Young Leaders](#)

Leadership Contract

This e-book focuses on helping young leaders seize future leadership opportunities and make the most out of their career. It compiles advice from top executives and thought leaders across diverse fields and industries to create a blueprint for building a dynamic, rewarding leadership career. The eBook and video series is designed to help youth reflect on the career they want to have as well as take steps towards putting those insights into action.



ABOUT TAMARACK

Tamarack is a connected force for community change, building the capacity of changemakers in cities across Canada and around the world. Tamarack catalyzes collective action with diverse leaders to solve major community challenges including ending poverty, building youth futures, deepening community and addressing climate change. Our belief is that when we are effective in strengthening our collective capacity to engage citizens and lead collaboratively, our work contributes to building a more peaceful and equitable society.

Through our Learning Centre, we support over 38,000 active learners in the Tamarack community to engage in the interconnected practices of community change—Collective Impact, Community Engagement, Collaborative Leadership, Community Innovation, and Evaluating Impact.

Through Vibrant Communities, we apply lessons learned by supporting cities and local leaders to develop and implement

large-scale community change initiatives through several learning networks organized around specific themes.

Tamarack currently supports four pan-Canadian networks through:

- **Communities Ending Poverty**: A national movement to reduce poverty.
- **Cities Deepening Community**: A national movement to create stronger neighbourhoods and deepen a sense of belonging and citizenship.
- **Communities Building Youth Futures**: A national initiative to re-engage young people to successfully navigate educational transitions from youth to adulthood.
- **Community Climate Transitions**: A national movement to advance a just and equitable climate transition, aligned with the SDGs. These networks are active in nearly 400 cities and communities across Canada. They bring together diverse community members including municipal, community, faith, Indigenous, business and lived/living experience leaders to seek collective solutions.

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