



Co-working environments where the person sitting next to you may well be working for someone else.



the futures foundation

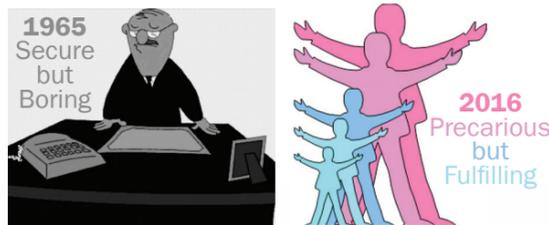
# WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF WORK IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

## GETTING YOUR FUTURE JOBS

Most people in your principal's generation stayed within the one profession, if not the one company, for their entire working life. That is very unlikely to be your experience, for two very significant reasons.

Firstly, the sorts of career paths that once existed within companies and professions have shrunk considerably. Your principal and their peers were encouraged to stay on a single career path because that is what their elders had done to be successful. As has already been noted, you are much more on your own in pursuing your career than they were.

Secondly, it is very likely that your interests will change during your life and the flexibility of the twenty-first century workplace makes it easier to successfully pursue your interests and to take the opportunities that present themselves, probably in quite different fields and with quite different working patterns.



Your principal probably also found that their interests changed as they aged, but the more structured world of work they grew up with did not encourage them to pursue their changed interests. The world of work you face is much less structured, much less predictable and much more uncertain; but it does give you opportunities your principal can barely imagine.

It is worth pointing out that large employers (meaning those who employ more than 200 people) employ less than one-third of Australian workers. Some of your classmates will definitely work inside glass-walled towers with a corporate logo on top, but most of you will spend your working lives in smaller, more flexible organisations. More than one in ten of you will

effectively be CEO of your own small business, perhaps working as a consultant or contractor or perhaps helping start up a completely new enterprise.

Even within central business district glass-walled towers the workplace itself is very different. Few employers guarantee every employee a particular desk to work at, let alone an office to work in. If you do work for a large employer, you will quickly learn the meaning of hot-desking.

If you work for yourself, or for a small employer, you may well find yourself working in one of an ever expanding range of co-working environments where the person sitting next to you may well be working for someone else.

You might even find yourself working from home, where you will need to learn a whole new set of skills balancing your work and non-work lives.

Your principal has most likely enjoyed a steady income, with a regular pay check in the bank account every month. Your income is likely to be much lumpier. Sometimes you will earn a lot, other times income will be sparse. Learning to budget and manage your short and long term financial needs is another set of skills you will need to learn.

## CONCLUSION

When your principal was at school thinking about their career they were under quite some pressure to "get a good job". Today's students often feel under great pressure just to get any job at all. The skills required to succeed in the workplace of the twenty-first century have changed a lot, but for those willing to learn them opportunities are still abundant.

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The more years you spend at school the more interested you become in what you will do when you leave school.

There is a lot to think about, but above most of it sits the question: "what work will I do"?

While the decision was no less difficult when your principal was at school, your range of choices has grown a lot bigger – and the world of work has become a whole lot more uncertain.

If your principal is a man, he faced two broad choices – either go into work where he mostly used his hands, or go to university and get a job that mostly used his brain.

If your principal is a woman her choices were even more limited. Most of the trades that required men to use their hands were closed to women, though some largely female specific trades such as cooking and nursing were available. If she did choose to go to university, society's expectation was that she would not work for very long thereafter, assuming that she would prefer to stay home, keep house and raise a family.

Those men and women who did have jobs overwhelmingly worked full-time, which was defined as somewhere between 35 and 40 hours per week. Almost certainly if they worked more hours than this they would have been paid overtime.

Chances are they spent their whole working week in a single place, which was probably in the centre of a town or a large city.

Compared with this picture, the choices facing young people today are positively bewildering. Firstly, although there is still a long way to go

to achieve full equality, young men and young women can equally choose from the same range of options.

There is still a distinction between hand-on trades' work and brain-based jobs, but this is shrinking and it is much easier than it has ever been to switch between these strands at almost any age.

*The choices facing young people today are positively bewildering.*

One-third of today's workers work part-time, with many holding two or more jobs simultaneously. Those who do work full-time are working longer hours and probably no longer being paid overtime.

Many fewer workers have fixed offices, some work from home, others from shared working spaces or even their cars.

Chances are your principal has never worked outside a school or an Education Department. By the time you are their age you will almost certainly have worked in at least two distinctly different types of jobs and workplaces.

## WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF WORK IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Learning to make your way successfully through an increasingly fragmented and rapidly changing jobs market is one of the biggest challenges you will face from the moment you leave school.

Where once your principal was told that hard work and diligent study would get them a good job, they cannot guarantee that the same applies to you.

For one thing the number of what were once considered to be 'good jobs' is shrinking, as is the idea of the sort of career path that saw your principal progress from managing a single classroom to managing an entire school.

At the same time, the length of time that someone might spend in any one job is reducing as companies and institutions of all kinds abandon tenured positions in favour of fixed-term contracts.

On the other hand, the types of jobs people do have increased quite a lot. When your principal was at school lots of the people hired by large employers were doing pretty well exactly the same job as others in their area. These employers didn't have computers that could crunch numbers and process data much faster than people. And they didn't have robots that could do repetitive manual work much quicker and with greater quality than human beings.

These large scale repetitive jobs were an ideal training and learning ground for new employees. Most of today's finance executives or chief engineers began their working lives doing small, often repetitive, jobs simply because these tasks had to be done by somebody. Employers had no choice but to hire people to do these jobs, and not surprisingly, they often chose to hire young people – often young people straight out of school or university.

Today electronic technology has replaced many of these entry level jobs, making it harder for a budding finance executive or chief engineer to get their first job. Since it is cheaper and easier to employ computers and robots to do this work, this issue is not going to go away.

The large scale disappearance of repetitive entry-level jobs has meant that many more jobs in the twenty-first century are unique. This means that getting a job no longer means presenting yourself, along with many others, to an employer seeking to fill many similar positions. Nowadays each job opportunity needs to be tackled individually.

Governments and employers have recognised the reduction in broad-scale entry-level jobs and have expanded the apprenticeship system, and created a whole new set of traineeship opportunities, but youth unemployment is still much higher than anyone would want it to be.

## GETTING YOUR FIRST JOB

As I am sure your careers advisors have told you, getting your first job begins long before you fill in your first job application.

Getting your first job also involves much more than choosing an appropriate set of subjects, or a particular vocational stream once you reach senior high school. Perhaps the most profound change that has taken place in the world of work since your principal left school is that no-one is guaranteed a job any more. Employers think long and hard about a whole range of new options before they hire a new employee, just as you will have to think long and hard about how you will choose between the options that present themselves to you.

A very small number of people are fortunate enough to know from a young age what they want to do when they grow up. For these people working out what, and who, they need to know is relatively easy; even if it doesn't always turn out to be as easy to turn their dream into a reality. If you are one of these people, great. Pursue your dream with all the vigour you can muster. But it is worth remembering that not all dreams come true, and perhaps reading through the rest of this article might help you create a back-up plan.

For the great majority of young people who do not automatically know what they would like to do when they leave school, getting their first



job means being adaptable enough to react positively to each of the opportunities that come their way.

This means doing what their parents and teachers have been telling them for years, and learning as much as they can while they are at school. But it also means taking the time to understand the sorts of things they like to do and are good at doing. The best schools give their students lots of opportunities to do different things, as well as learn lots of stuff.



Producing evidence of your ability to do things – to research issues, to work as part of a team, to use computer technology, to make presentations, to draw or make things, to sing or dance – is an essential part of your preparation for job interviews and other selection processes.

Building a portfolio of the things you have done at school – or outside school during your school years – is part of getting your first job.

Another part is recognising, and taking advantage of, the opportunities that come your way while you are at school. This is a little more difficult to explain. Too often in the past school students were told that their role was to passively absorb whatever their teachers put in front of them. Hopefully all modern teachers recognise that this is no longer the case and they encourage all their students to be actively involved in their education – to be making decisions about what is in their best interests.

Even if that is not the case, it is now up to every student to take responsibility for their own learning – which includes learning how to identify and secure their first job.

This means accepting school leadership roles when they become available. It also means that when you are given an assignment in an area of the curriculum in which you are particularly interested you might make contact with universities or employers in your neighbourhood who focus in this area. Not only might you uncover something of use for your assignment, but you might also establish contacts that could be useful later.

Establishing these sorts of contacts is what the business world calls networking, and it is an essential part of identifying and getting jobs. Some research suggests that up to 80% of jobs are never advertised. They are filled because

somebody knew or recommended someone. You might not realise it, but you already have quite an extensive network of contacts that might help you get a job. Most parents have had job experience, as have grandparents and aunts and uncles. Many teachers, even if they haven't worked outside a school definitely know people who do. Perhaps you already have a part-time job, are part of a sporting club or have volunteered to help somewhere.

If you or your parents came to Australia from overseas (as nearly half of us did) you may be eligible to work in other countries. Even those from long-standing Aussie families may be able to find international working opportunities. Working overseas adds greatly to your life experience, and looks good on your resume.

Almost everyone you come into contact with might be of help in getting you a job. But they won't do anything unless you ask them. So, working out what you might like them to do for you, and working up the courage to actually ask are two key skills you would do well to learn.

Another key part of getting your first job is to research the changing kinds of jobs that are continually being created and destroyed. This too is complex. A hundred years or so ago over half the working population were involved in growing, harvesting, processing and distributing food. Today doing all this requires fewer than 5% of workers. In the 1960s nearly 50% of workers were involved in making things, now fewer than 20% are. Both of these sectors of the economy still exist, and both can offer exciting and fulfilling jobs, but most jobs in the twenty-first century are in what is called the services sector – a phrase that means many different things.

Included in the services sector are jobs like accountant and teacher. But it also includes graphic designers, software engineers and dog walkers. Your careers teachers will have lots of lists of these kinds of jobs and suggestions on how to get into them.

<http://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/02/these-scientists-have-predicted-which-jobs-will-be-human-only-in-2035>

The important point is that new jobs are being created all the time, just as old jobs that are no longer needed continue to disappear. Flexibility and adaptability are nowadays more important than any particular set of vocational skills. Paying attention to the sorts of jobs experts think are going to be needed in the future is one pathway to your first job, but so are using your time at school well, and making the most of the people and the opportunities that cross your path.