

IT & management expert Andreas Lechner on the digital transformation in the field of education, the constant evolution of job descriptions, and willingness to learn as a killer feature on the labour market.

**“Skills will replace professions!”**



### New fields of activity

“Digitalisation will require us to assume more and more activities ourselves that were previously taken care of by specialists.”

Andreas Lechner,  
partner at CNT Management Consulting AG

**M**r Lechner, digitalisation is shaking up the labour market. Do you approve of this? If so, to what extent?

Digitalisation is necessitating fundamental processes of change in companies. As a result, new job profiles are being created and existing job profiles are undergoing significant changes. These new, adapted job profiles need to be filled, and this is bringing a great sense of dynamism to the labour market.

**What effects is the digital transformation having on the field of education?**

Here, I see impacts in two areas. On the one hand, it requires solid digital competency, for which candidates need just as much confidence as they do in reading, writing and arithmetic. And on the other, it also requires a set of skills in order to be successful in the increasingly complex world of work – problem-solving competence, analytical thinking, the ability to change and resilience, to name just a few of the important ones. In addition to subject-specific knowledge, therefore, the education sector must also impart and develop these competences and skills.

**Do you think that Austrian training and development programmes are equipped to face the challenges presented by digitalisation? What works well, and where are we still lagging behind?**

A great need for adaptation can be observed in academic education, both in terms of content as well as the required skills. Social and digital competence, the ability to communicate effectively and to think in a networked way will be crucial for success, since an interdisciplinary way of working will become the norm in the workplace of the future. In addition, higher education institutions and companies should cooperate more closely so as to allow students to work on real-world problems. In terms of development, companies will also need to step up when it comes to motivating their employees, making use of existing offers, establishing a sustainable learning culture and making lifelong learning a major component of the job.

**According to industry insiders, many of the jobs that we will perform in future have not even been invented yet. Despite this, is it still possible to prepare oneself for such an uncertain future?**

The phrase “skills will replace professions” has existed for a while now. And reality has since caught up with this prediction. Those who display the right skills and have an attitude of lifelong learning will excel in the aforementioned challenges. After all, these jobs will not appear out of nowhere, but instead will be developed over a period of time, a period that can be used for learning. In this way, for example, the classic retail salesman has developed into the e-commerce salesman.

**In your experience, which skills and qualifications are currently particularly in demand? In which areas do you see the greatest need for improvement?**

In general, the above-mentioned future competences are the ones that are in demand in almost all professional profiles. This is where schools, colleges and universities all share equal responsibility. In terms of content, specifically in our environment of IT and data analysis, I see an incredible level of demand that today’s offering is already unable to cover. At the same time, the significance of data and their processing is also continuing to grow rapidly; the biggest global corporations





such as Amazon, Facebook and Google are all working with data-based business models. A further major development is the ageing of our society and the boom this has caused in nursing professions. Digitalisation will require us to assume more and more activities ourselves that were previously taken care of by specialists.

**How can companies and leaders contribute to ensuring that the competences of their existing and future employees correspond to the requirements of the future?**

Digitalisation is turning learning into a permanent task. This is why companies also need to provide a sustainable learning culture, sufficient advanced training offers and the time required for these pursuits. Time taken to learn is also working time, and it should not be outsourced to take place during free time. What matters is an environment of ongoing development, a culture of dealing with mistakes constructively (one can only learn by making mistakes) and an infrastructure where available knowledge within the organisation can be made use of quickly when necessary. The management staff must also set an example by their behaviour.

**Do you believe that the approach of dual or triple training represents a suitable weapon in the fight against the current prevailing shortage of skilled specialists?**

This is a move in the right direction and has, over the years, proven to work in the higher-level vocational schools. As a result, only consistent further steps are being taken to enable general secondary school graduates to receive well-rounded practical training within a reasonable amount of time. The enhancement of the dual offer by social and digital competences to become triple training increases its attractiveness and gets graduates into shape for their future tasks.

**Is the idea of the perfectly trained employee a utopian fantasy?**

As I see it, there is no such thing as the perfectly trained employee, since constant and lifelong learning will always be necessary. For me, the perfect employee is someone who has recognised this, who finds joy in learning and who takes on and masters this challenge each day.

**What course of education did you decide on? From today's point of view, would you do the same again?**

Having completed a classic course of training as a mechanical engineer at a higher technical institute, I rapidly switched to the IT industry, which at the time was still relatively new. That was when the learning truly began for me, and it has not stopped throughout my professional journey, which has been quite a long one. In fact, today this learning is more intensive than ever before.

Ultimately, however, it is the social skills I have acquired over the years that help me to navigate and overcome difficult situations. Which is why even today, I would still strongly emphasise the development of personal skills. **BO**



**PERSONAL DETAILS**

**Andreas Lechner**

Andreas Lechner is a partner at CNT Management Consulting AG and has 25 years of experience in IT consulting (with a focus on SAP/ERP). As a moderator and business coach, he holds seminars in management development as well as in self-management.

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