Why we need Generation Agile

The Agile Business Consortium is calling for the inclusion of agility and agile skills in the education of everyone from primary school children, to working professionals.

Current education curricula are not equipping the workers of today or tomorrow to be flexible and adaptable, so businesses will not have access to the employees they need to compete and thrive. It is our collective duty to bring about Generation Agile.

The Generation Agile campaign

We believe not just in the value of agile thinking, but its necessity for the challenges that the future will bring our businesses and societies. However, agile skills are not currently taught in our schools or workplace training as a standard practice.

The Agile Business Consortium is certain that soon:

- Individuals will need agile skills to compete in the job market
- Organisations will require agile-minded employees to compete in the world of business
- Educational institutions and teachers will be obliged to focus on teaching agile skills and mindsets to prepare our young people for life and work in a constantly shifting world
The employment landscape is changing

The concept of a job for life is already a thing of the past. This is partly because individual roles are evolving, requiring different skills, and sometimes disappearing completely.

Now, the whole employment environment is changing, due primarily to three key factors:

1. **The changing nature of work** - as distributed teams and asynchronous working become commonplace, contracting is on the rise, and there is an increased need for specialist experts.

2. **Faster technological change** - technical education in schools is likely to become obsolete by the time the students of that subject enter the workforce, and today’s technical professionals must be continually learning to keep up.

3. **Disrupted industries** - including communications (particularly due to the mainstreaming of AI technologies), finance (with crypto-currencies being just one example), and manufacturing (which is ever-more reliant on robotics), as well as many other examples.

With this massive and ongoing adjustment in employment, individuals need new skills in order to keep up.

Future skills requirements

A much-debated statistic tells us that 60% of today’s 11 year olds will have jobs that haven’t been invented yet. If so, we cannot equip them for their future careers with our current approach to education.

Whether or not the statistic of 60% is accurate, the warning applies. In 2018 The World Economic Forum looked at the top ten skills for jobs in that year and compared them with those that would be required by 2022. The 2022 skills include a large proportion of specifically agile skills:

1. Analytical thinking and innovation
2. Active learning and learning strategies
3. Creativity, originality and initiative
4. Technology design and programming
5. Critical thinking and analysis
6. Complex problem solving
7. Leadership and social influence
8. Emotional intelligence
9. Reasoning, problem solving and ideation
10. Systems analysis and ideation

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2 Ray Kurzweil, The Singularity is Near (2006)
These are all skills that we hope to see in our agile teams, and in the very near future the skills that we will need to see in almost all our employed talent – including those already in the workforce. However, that’s not going to happen by itself, which is why educators and education policy makers are such an important part of this conversation.

The three factors influencing the employment landscape today [changing nature of work; disrupted industries; faster technological change], require these new agile skills. Skills like complex problem solving, creativity and innovation are what enable the changes that we are seeing, and are also the skills that will allow employees to succeed in that changed landscape.

Those who do not gain at least some of these skills will fall by the wayside.

### Comparing skills demand, 2018 vs. 2022, top ten

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Today, 2018</th>
<th>Trending, 2022</th>
<th>Declining, 2022</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analytical thinking and innovation</td>
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<td>Manual dexterity, endurance and precision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complex problem solving</td>
<td>Active learning and learning strategies</td>
<td>Memory, verbal, auditory and spatial abilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical thinking and analysis</td>
<td>Creativity, originality and initiative</td>
<td>Management of financial, material resources</td>
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<td>Active learning and learning strategies</td>
<td>Technology design and programming</td>
<td>Technology installation and maintenance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creativity, originality and initiative</td>
<td>Critical thinking and analysis</td>
<td>Reading, writing, maths and active listening</td>
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<td>Attention to detail, trustworthiness</td>
<td>Complex problem solving</td>
<td>Management of personnel</td>
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<td>Emotional intelligence</td>
<td>Leadership and social influence</td>
<td>Quality control and safety awareness</td>
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<td>Reasoning, problem solving and ideation</td>
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<td>Systems analysis and evaluation</td>
<td>Technology use, monitoring and control</td>
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*Source: Future of Jobs Survey 2018, World Economic Forum*

### A global issue

There is no geographic limitation on the need for Generation Agile. Policy makers and industry leaders from varied locations are commenting on the need for change.

America Succeeds stated in their Age of Agility report that ‘without profound and rapid changes to how we educate our children, this nation faces the real possibility of falling behind countries with more nimble and more innovative education systems’.

Chinese billionaire entrepreneur, Jack Ma of Alibaba, who is also an ex-teacher, emphasised the importance of skills-based education over knowledge-based education at the 2018 Davos summit, also adding that ‘if we do not change the way we teach, 30 years from now we will be in trouble’.

In the foreword to ‘Thriving in the New Work Order’, Jan Owen, CEO of the Foundation for Young Australian’s states: ‘By 2030, Australia’s current primary school students will be close to finishing their school education and our high schoolers will be entering the workforce. To prepare them we must urgently invest in immersive, enterprise education and careers management strategies where the new ‘work smart’ skills are core to teaching, learning and assessment across all school and higher education systems’.

These studies and comments are reinforced by similar insights from all over the world.

### No time to waste

We have to start now in order to benefit young people currently in secondary or further/higher education, as change will not happen overnight and many of them will be entering the workplace within the next three to five years.

We need to take an agile approach and make changes incrementally, and embed them quickly. This will allow the rapid trialling of new practices, and for their benefits to be seen and shared straight away.
What action now?
What do we collectively need to do to create Generation Agile?

Firstly, we must build awareness of the need for Generation Agile amongst business leaders, politicians, educators and education policy makers, parents, teachers, today’s employees and young people.

We also need research into how to create Generation Agile, answering questions such as:

- what skills should be taught?
- when should we teach them?
- how should they be taught?
- how does that fit into our school curricula?
- how should they be taught through workplace learning?

Then we can start changing the way that we, as a society, deliver education, through supporting educators, working with curriculum planners to discover future needs, and ensuring that those needs are acted upon quickly and effectively.

We must build awareness of the need for Generation Agile amongst business leaders, politicians, educators and education policy makers.

You can help

- **Become a supporter** of Generation Agile by joining the register of friends and sharing the supporters badge. Sign up at agilebusiness.org/generationagile
- **To share an example** of agility in education get in touch by email: genagile@agilebusiness.org
- **Stay up to date** by joining the Generation Agile mailing list at agilebusiness.org/generationagile and following us on Twitter at @Agile_Biz and #GenerationAgile

More at agilebusiness.org/generationagile

Agile Business Consortium:

Agile Business Consortium is the not-for-profit professional body for business agility, and we are now in our 25th year. Our mission is to lead, promote and enable business agility worldwide.

We are the brains behind AgilePM®, AgileBA®, AgilePgM® and AgileDS®. Through APMG International we have certified over 100,000 Agile Project Managers around the globe. We are the world’s oldest agile organisation and organisers of the world’s longest running Agile Business Conference.

Learn more at: www.agilebusiness.org