Chapter 21
Staying Employable
Certifications of Competences
in the Era of Real-Time
Career Management:
Degreification to “Certification”

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ABSTRACT

This chapter attempts to focus on the topic of career management and its growing importance for students and professionals globally mainly due to the fast pace of change requiring agility and the ability to adapt to changing pressures from the market. It attempts to first provide the current status quo at Universities and Businesses and the challenges they are facing in preparing students for work (Universities) and during work (Businesses). It also attempts to provide possible solutions that relate to making career management a real-time, continuous task to stay employable rather than a ‘one off’ or ad-hoc issue. The chapter stresses the importance of certifications and professional titles as a ‘must’ in a number of industries and the important role of the career counselor in staying employable and why “employability” is a never-ending process in the twenty-first century.

INTRODUCTION: THE NEW WORKPLACE

The employment arena has changed dramatically in the 21st century. This is a fact. The fast pace of change, the virtual settings along with the 24/7 connectivity with the office has transformed the workplace. In 2010, Tony Hsieh of Zappos, one of the most successful CEOs on the planet argued that there is no ‘work – life balance’ anymore, but ‘work-life integration’. He is probably right. His company is being benchmarked in the area of corporate culture in the past decade and many corporate environments have been using his story as a case of successful corporate culture and inspiration. This changing workplace

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3053-4.ch021
has its seeds planted when the internet became ‘mainstream’. Friedman (2017) argues that the most important year that marked the changes that brought – as he calls it – accelerated growth is 2007. This year was when smart phones and apps started to become popular as well.

Such technologies became an enabler that brought with it a number of positive changes to the way we worked and the tools we had to execute our work. The main change however, was, according to Malone and Laubaucher (2011) cheap communication. This fact, assisted by smart phones, applications and increased connectivity also made globalization spread faster and created a different kind of workplace to prepare for.

As a consequence, the new workplace has created a new context with new requirements and – as with every change – one needs to adapt and use, arguably, a different set of skills. In schools, educators have been calling these “21st century competencies” (SoFIA, 2017). Educators globally have realized there are different requirements to succeed in such an environment. Soft skills have become paramount and in many cases more important than hard skills. Conferences, talks, debates have been addressing the issue, but it seems that change in education is taking more time than anticipated. One of the greatest TED talks of all time was Sir Ken Robinson’s “Why schools kill creativity” (2007), which argued that schools need to change considerably as they are still organized as they were in the industrial era. A decade has gone by since then and I feel we have not seen any considerable progress. Schools – apart from minor exceptions – continue to be stuck in the industrial era while Universities have become more commercial than ever and are stuck in theory and less in practice (especially in business disciplines).

THE NEW SKILL SET

One needs to comprehend the changes in the workplace to actually attempt to find possible solutions. Here is a simple list:

- The new workplace does not operate within a 9.00 to 17.00 time frame; it is actually 24/7. This implies that students and professionals need time management skills, prioritization skills as well as the skill of ‘multi-tasking’.
- The new workplace does not necessarily require a physical premises / location; We now can work virtually. This requires the skill of self-management, communication within a virtual setting, while companies need to find ways of evaluating individuals that are not present physically in the office, not only in terms of results. Studies have indicated that professionals have a higher degree of stress when working alone (Glazer et al., 2012).
- The new workplace requires employees to move from one job role to another or from one project to another. This is reinforced by the fact that employees move faster from one organization to another; Job changes (i.e. in the USA suggest that the average worker currently holds 10 different jobs by age 40) is expected to grow according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015). This fact suggests that employees need to be adaptable, agile, flexible and quick in learning.
- The new workplace, due to the constant changes arising from inside or outside the organization require employees to be up-to-date. In some organizations and even some certifications (awarded by professional associations) this is becoming a formal requirement through the concept of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credits; This implies that whatever degree or qualification we hold, it is logical to assume that ‘upgrading’ and ‘updating’ is required. Students

431

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