

The jobs of the future – and two skills you need to get them



Could a robot do your job?

Image: REUTERS/Tony Gentile

02 Sep 2016

Simon Torkington

Formative Content

The future of work is a key topic at this year's World Economic Forum Annual Meeting. For more information, watch the [Promise or Peril: Decoding the Future of Work](#) session [here](#).

Could a robot do your job? Millions of people who didn't see automation coming will soon find out the painful way. The answer is a resounding yes.

The World Economic Forum's [Future of Jobs](#) study predicts that 5 million jobs will be lost before 2020 as artificial intelligence, robotics, nanotechnology and other socio-economic factors replace the need for human workers.

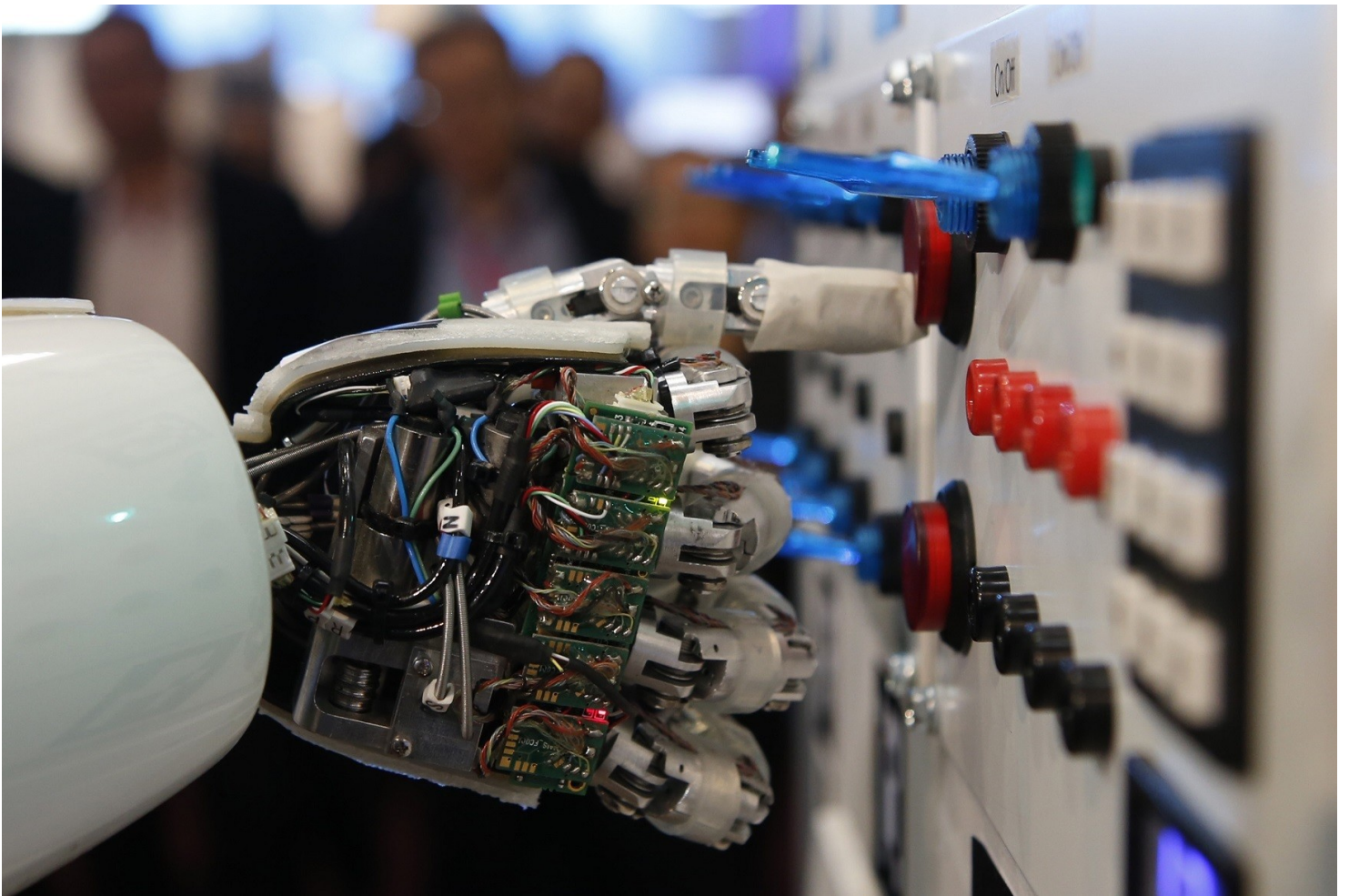


Image: Reuters

The good news is that those same technological advances will also create 2.1 million new jobs. But the manual and clerical workers who find themselves out of work are unlikely to have the required skills to compete for the new roles. Most new jobs will be in more specialized areas such as computing, mathematics, architecture and engineering.

Governments and employers in every sector are being urged to retrain and re-skill workers to avoid a crisis.

“Without urgent and targeted action today, to manage the near-term transition and build a workforce with future-proof skills, governments will have to cope with ever-growing unemployment and inequality, and businesses with a shrinking consumer base,” said Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum.

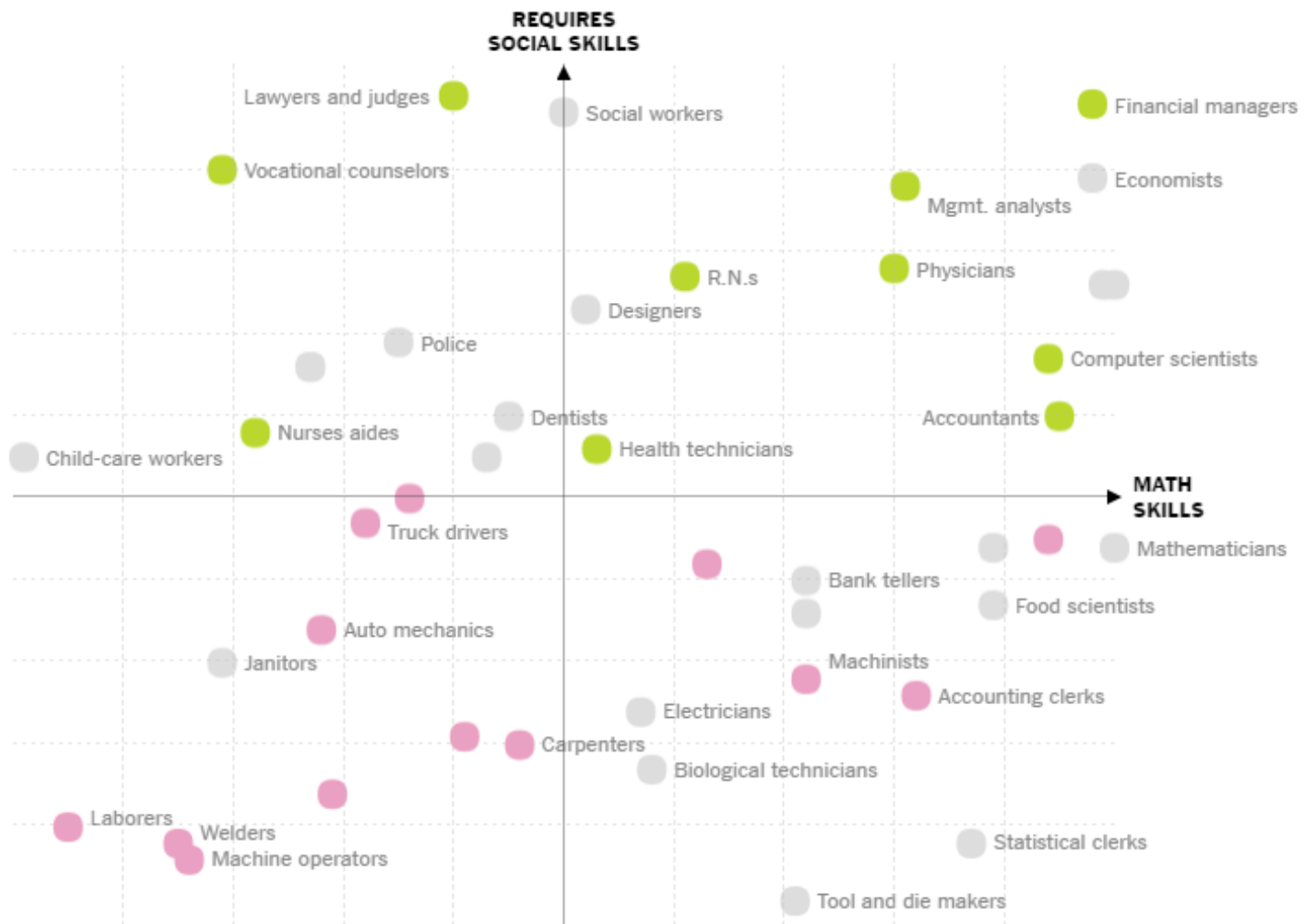
New skills for new economies

So what skills should workers be acquiring to make sure they have value as the [Fourth Industrial Revolution](#) gathers pace? Some may be surprised to learn that skills we develop in pre-school will be valued highly.

[David Deming](#), associate professor of education and economics at Harvard University, argues that soft skills like sharing and negotiating will be crucial. He says the modern workplace, where people move between different roles and projects, closely resembles pre-school classrooms, where we learn social skills such as empathy and cooperation.

Deming has mapped the changing needs of employers and identified key skills that will be required to thrive in the job market of the near future. Along with those soft skills, mathematical ability will be enormously beneficial.

KEY: **Change in share of jobs, 1980 to 2012** ● Fell ● About the same ● Grew



Source: David Deming, Harvard University

Single-skillset jobs in decline

Deming shows that in recent years, many jobs requiring only mathematical skills have been automated. Bank tellers and statistical clerks have suffered. Roles which require predominantly social skills (childcare workers, for example) tend to be poorly paid as the supply of potential workers is very large.

The study shows that workers who successfully combine mathematical and interpersonal skills in the knowledge-based economies of the future should find many rewarding and lucrative opportunities.

Refocusing skills education

The challenge now, says Deming, is for educators to complement their teaching of technical skills like mathematics and computer science, with a focus on making sure the workers of the future have the soft skills to compete in the new jobs market.

Have you read?

[This skill could save your job - and your company](#)

[7 science-backed skills that will make you love your job](#)

[How do you get a job that doesn't exist yet?](#)

You can find more blogs in the [Skills for Your Future series](#) here

Further reading

[The Future of Jobs report 2016](#)

[The Human Capital report 2016](#)

Written by

[Simon Torkington](#), Formative Content

The views expressed in this article are those of the author alone and not the World Economic Forum.

Subscribe for updates

A weekly update of what's on the Global Agenda

Email	Subscribe
-------	-----------
