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AN INTERVIEW WITH BILL BONNSTETTER, CHAIRMAN AND FOUNDER, OF TTI SUCCESS INSIGHTS

Throughout my 30 years in the human behavioral assessment industry, I've spent countless hours researching soft skills and behavioral styles, motivators, and emotional intelligence—some of the things that make individuals unique.

It's become clear to me just how few of us in society are truly able to think into the future. From a neurological standpoint, this is not surprising, as the brain is wired to store past experiences and use them as a library to understand and react to life as we move forward. It is not wired particularly well for projecting future events.

The ability to see past the immediate circumstances of life and envision the future in rich detail is quite rare.

In fact, as a skill, futuristic thinking is exceptional. According to research by TTI Success Insights, less than 3% of the people in the U.S. have some mastery or mastery of this skill. On a 10-point scale, the mean of people who possess futuristic thinking as a developed skill is only 2.8.

And yet, you do not have to be a completely futuristic thinker to spend time considering the future of work. Why is this important? Because the workforce is dynamic, constantly changing due to market pressures, demographics, and the move to a more tech-based economy. Staying abreast of potential changes will put you into a stronger, more lithe position to adjust quickly. I see three trends here:

1. THE RISE OF INTANGIBLE WORK

The future of work will entail the continued migration from tangible work, like manufacturing, to more intangible work throughout the world. In the U.S., for instance, a lot of our manufacturing has gone away and become more automated. We are going to see developing countries follow the U.S. in this trend.

As a result, more soft skills are going to be required in the world of work in the future. Therefore, work is going to become more service-related, more relationship-based. For workers, they are going to have to develop more of these skills to continue to perform at work.

These skills are not curriculum-based; they are not learned in a classroom. They are learned on the job and in life, through activities. So as companies, we are going to have to begin providing more activities as part of work that are going to help us build these skills, like building a team and influencing others.

2. ALWAYS BE LEARNING

Jobs of the future are also going to require continuous learning. Workers must therefore have a positive attitude toward continuous learning and be willing to embrace consistent advancements in the skills they must possess.

For large corporations, the real bottom line of the future of work is that they will have stronger teams, those built on a solid foundation of skill-based learning and have much closer relationships to their customers.

Also, I really believe as work continues to evolve, companies that find success will be those that know how to service their customers. Their customers are the true beneficiaries of this new relationship

with the people. Given the rise of technology and social media as the domain of the people-and customer-if companies don't have those highly developed soft skills, both internally and externally, then one negative brand interaction can go worldwide in a minute, causing severe damage to the brand.

3. STABILIZING THE STRESS FACTOR

The other future trend is in regards to handling stress on the job. Stress management, as part of talent management, is going to be part of the future workforce. As we develop, jobs will be re-engineered to eliminate as much of the negative stress as possible.

While a certain degree of stress adds to workplace efficiency and goal accomplishment, when stress amounts to a negative level and induces feels of being overwhelmed, frustrated and unappreciated, it becomes destructive. That level of stress can lead to burnout.

Those who see the value in fostering their futuristic thinking ability might benefit from these strategies. Find a mentor who is an innovator or thought leader in your industry. Study how they go about making decisions and listen to their thoughts on the future of your industry. Read books, articles and blogs of thought leaders and innovators regularly. Engage in conversations with them. Finally, push yourself to come up with a theory about a future-thinking trend in your industry that may become reality several years from now. Write your theory down. Spend time and energy developing it. Regardless of if it becomes true, this practice will open up new neural pathways that can help to foster future thinking in your mind.

Exercising your futuristic thinking skills and taking time to ponder the future of work may put you in a stronger position to make the most of new opportunities-even those far in front of you.