

Your Career after Covid

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Everything has changed after Covid, or has it?

As I write this article, our food industry exports are 1 billion dollars ahead of this time last year. Dairy, meat and horticulture are leading the charge, primarily because of demand from China.

Working in the food industry we could be excused for thinking everything is sort of OK, it is business as usual, almost. While many industries around us are struggling for survival, the old saying that “people must eat” still holds

When we consider the bigger picture however, business is changing significantly because of Covid. These changes will impact our jobs and careers in the future and although it is early days and Covid is not yet over, a few things are becoming clearer and we hope to share these with you over the coming months.

Businesses are transitioning from designing for efficiency to designing for resilience

A 2019 Gartner organisation design survey found that 55% of organisational redesigns were focused on streamlining roles, supply chains and workflows to increase efficiency.

Covid has now shown that while this approach captured efficiencies it also created fragility, with many systems being unable to respond to recent disruptions. Resilient organisations were better able to respond: to alter course quickly with change.

Post Covid, in order to respond quickly to change, organisations will increase their focus on designing roles and structures around outcomes. They will increase agility and flexibility and formalise how processes can flex. They will need to provide employees with varied, adaptive and flexible roles so they acquire cross-functional knowledge and training.

Separation of critical skills and roles

Before Covid, critical roles were viewed as roles with critical skills, or the capabilities an organisation needed to meet its strategic goals. Now, organisations are aware that there is another category of critical roles — roles that are critical to the success of essential workflows.

To build a post pandemic workforce, organisations will need to place less focus on roles and more on the skills needed to drive the organisation's competitive advantage and the workflows that fuel that advantage. They will encourage employees to develop critical skills that potentially open multiple opportunities for their career development, rather than preparing for a specific next role.

Investing in resilience for uncertain futures

COVID-19 has also reinforced organisations' awareness that it is more important to understand what workers can do than understand what



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they have done before. Through this crisis, companies have had the opportunity to see the resilience and adaptability of the workforce as workers quickly assumed new roles and ways of doing things.

Organisations will or should now encourage and offer opportunities for employees to continue to grow and adapt, based on their potential, rather than solely on their existing skills or certifications. They must build a resilient workforce that can adapt in the face of constant change.

So, what does this mean for you and your career?

The first obvious outcome of the changes occurring in business is that as organisations look to build resilience, they will place greater value on employees who are personally resilient.

You need to cultivate and increase your ability to flex and change, to understand your strengths and weaknesses and recognise how to play to your advantage. These things remain and have become more essential post Covid.

Secondly, more than ever, you must build resilience into your career – focus on your transferable skills as well as your specialist skills, ensure you don't end up on career paths that disappear, that leave you stranded or are less critical in times of change.

Do not “rust out” or allow yourself to become disengaged or demotivated with your career development and as a result remove options, only to limp towards the finish line.

John Lawson is founder of Lawson Williams Consulting Group. He initially studied Biotechnology at Massey and is a professional member of NZIFST. He now enjoys leading a team of recruitment consultants, helping people like you develop satisfying careers.

