



WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF THE WORKING WORLD OF TOMORROW?

For as long as there is the concept of work, people will be thinking about how it will be shaped in the future. This is based on the correct notion that stagnation is first impossible, and second the death of any company. Whilst our attention might previously have been turned to technical issues, the focus has now shifted to radical social and structural factors. All are challenges, some are even fundamental risks. What is feasible and what is just hysteria? Time for a reality check.

DIGITALISATION: HOW MUCH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CAN WORK SUPPORT?

After the storm called digitalisation, which has swept over us and created a new world of work, our attention has now turned to the extent to which digital structures and artificial intelligence can (will) undertake complex tasks - and thus perhaps make people superfluous.

The joke of it is that the issue of automation really hasn't changed since the start of the 20th century, when mechanical engineering was first truly thought to be realistic: Mass unemployment, loss of control and insurgency of machines are still the focus of our concerns.

Our concerns have even increased, because now we are not only talking about autonomously working mechanical limbs, but the fact they have now been bestowed with their own intelligence. The alpha human is scared of its own creation.

Whether or not this fear is justified at control level is, of course, impossible to say. Yet it is possible to answer the question of dehumanisation of work: For as long as there are robots, there must also be people to design, develop, maintain and issue commands to them. Seen in this light, artificial intelligence is simply the next logical step in automation, which has not yet managed to eliminate work.

FLEXIBILITY: WHO DETERMINES (WORKING) LIFE?

Employees have fought hard for flexible working time models and also for flexible workplace models. After all, work has separated itself from fixed structures and is transportable, project-based and

repeatedly reshuffled. And it paid off. But unfortunately with a bad omen.

For when positions become jobs and tasks become projects, there is no reason for companies to assign fixed planned, financially pre-calculated and work-independent positions. Already, many employees are despairing about fixed-term contracts or project-based remuneration, lamenting the pressure exerted by companies to work here today and there tomorrow. Planning certainty? A dead loss!

There is a considerable potential conflict here - and not between employers and employees, but among the employees themselves. For whilst young, well trained employees have the luxury of choice, less-qualified employees have to dance to the tune of the company. In future perhaps even more than now. Is there a solution? So far not one that isn't bordering on a romantic utopia.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE OR WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION?

What work means for a person will increasingly be at issue in the future. Ultimately, careers with a significant potential for self-realisation are increasing just as much as society is becoming alienated due to a lack of private life.

However, there might be an error in reasoning behind the hunt for balance between these poles: The old contradiction between living to work and working to live is perhaps not a contradiction at all. Digitalisation is bringing the two areas closer together in any case. Increasingly, people are defining themselves by their dream job - without feeling any sense of deprivation. At the same time, for example, integrated childcare facilities in companies are bringing employees' private lives into the workplace.

When it comes to a work-life balance, the image of the scales could become the image of a medal in future: One is not a counterweight to the other, but a different side of the same person. And anyone who follows this line of thought will no longer look for ways to separate the two worlds, but ways to combine them. And that is a much more organic approach.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE: RETIREMENT AT 107?

Ageing population = shortage of skilled workers = increasingly late retirement. Economists have been preoccupied with this calculation for years and it has attracted the attention of doomsayers. The fact is, however, that the birth rate is continuing to rise. And even if we end up with a gap in the pool of skilled workers, this could be an opportunity for the future - if you handle it correctly.

Because fixating on the younger generation causes us to disregard the vast potential lying dormant in the best aged generation. In many cases, retirement is a constraint that people don't want to submit to. Especially since it doesn't leave them on a particularly lucrative financial footing.

So we should think hard about whether, in future, companies shouldn't focus more on qualifications and enthusiasm during job interviews rather than concentrating on age. And, since we as a society will not only become older, but will also increasingly live for longer, we will only be able to eliminate the shortage of skilled workers if we completely rethink the old model of working life. And in doing so, we must ask the question of whether the concept of retirement in its current form should also come up for debate.

GLOBALISATION: CLOSER TOGETHER OR EACH TO THEIR OWN?

This point is the final enemy of all futurologists, as all other questions are dependent on it, as well as all other mental games associated with work: Is the world moving closer together or are old boundaries being drawn more vehemently? Will work remain mobile and global or will it become stationary and local again? And: What would be better? There are trends in both directions. But there is not yet a solution. For the interdependence of the world is so profound that every future vision falls down at the sheer complexity of this construct. Anyone who tries nonetheless, lands at revolutionary ideas - for better or for worse.