

# The march for talent 4.0

By [Stijn Smolders](#)

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We're currently functioning in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, or Industry 4.0, characterised by digital, physical and biological technologies including: the internet of things, cloud computing, genetics, artificial intelligence, robotics, nanotechnology, 3D printing and biotechnology - all of which have a significant impact on business and economic models, as well as shaping employees of the future.



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And 2017 presents an opportunity to strategically address essential talent requirements to survive 2020 and beyond.

Operating in a digital business environment as CEO of Sprout Performance Partners, I've seen an overwhelming shift in how digital marketing has evolved in recent years, and how it demands a whole new skills set. Unfortunately, South Africa is already hamstrung by its digital skills shortage, and what's more, globally, "65% of children entering primary school today will ultimately end up working in completely new job types that don't yet exist," according to Scott McLeod and Karl Fisch in 'Shift Happens'.

## Jobs of the future

In January 2016, LinkedIn published, "[The 25 Skills That Can Get You Hired in 2016](#)", which for South Africa, already included the following as the top 10;

1. Statistical Analysis and Data Mining
2. Java Development
3. Middleware and Integration Software
4. Mobile Development

5. Network and Information Security
6. Storage Systems and Management
7. Perl/Python/Ruby
8. Web Architecture and Development Frameworks
9. Mac, Linux and Unix Systems
10. User Interface Design

It's clear that the jobs of the future will be influenced in some shape or form by technology, and based on this trend, the most sought-after talent of the future will have expertise in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The World Economic Forum highlights in its "Jobs of the Future Report 2016", that data analysts are one of the new, and emerging roles of the future who can work across almost all industries and geographies. Simply, for those who don't know, data analysts 'de-code' or interpret, and then draw insights from data captured.

Sprout is a digital media buying agency that employs data analysts over marketers, and mathematicians instead of media planners. The agency also considers web developers and programmers as the new media strategists. Accurate data interpretation is, or at least should be, the modern business's new strategy.

## **Technology for humans**

While Industry 4.0 is focused on technology and robotics, etc., there's an underlying philosophy to use these advancements to better serve people. Innovations that launch today intend to provide greater convenience for humans in the form of time-saving efficiencies, self-driving cars or intuitive apps and tools, or it's designed to help generate cleaner energies, or even lead to cures and drugs for chronic diseases, amongst many other progressions.

Stewart Wallis of the New Economics Foundation, UK, was quoted saying, "We need a shift that will allow us to meet the basic needs of every human on the planet... one that will be fairer, and focused on maximising human well-being."

## **Wellbeing plugs into employee experience**

The trend to offer employee wellness programmes is growing specifically in ICT where staff are under tremendous and constant pressure and stress. There's no real opportunity to 'switch-off' in this business and so nurturing this talent is critical to maximise their potential and the sustainability of their contribution to the organisation. It's well-known that the better the employee experience, the more productive they are, which leads to higher profitability and greater service levels.

Google has become renowned for prioritising employee well-being, and has been named America's favourite company as a result. Employee benefits include relaxation services such as massage rooms, video games, billiards, table football; and practical services such as a washing machine, dryer and mini bar snacks.

Sprout has a similar approach to 'give back' to its people and offers a 'take-what-you-need leave policy', personal trainer

fitness sessions, monthly team outings, 'manager-owner approach', and catered lunches in the office. Providing leading technologies and continuous training to upskilling staff is also high on the agenda.

## **A new world of learning and work**

Talent 4.0 is a work in progress. While millennials are the first generation to have grown up immersed in technology in a digital world, they've not been afforded the education to prepare them for the jobs of the future.

In my view, businesses have a responsibility to upskill their current workforces, and individuals need to play their part by investing in their own continuous learning. Sprout hires attitude over skills and so the need for this training is critical to build up the talent it seeks out; pragmatic individuals who have an ability to learn and adapt and fit into the team/agency culture. There are some independent digital institutions popping up locally, but we need existing educational institutions to update their curriculums to prepare the talent of the future.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Stijn Smolders is CEO of Sprout Performance Partners. Before joining Sprout Performance, Stijn held the position of MD Benelux at DQ&A Media Group in The Netherlands (2011-2013). He came to South Africa first in 2008 where he headed up Habari Media as a GM Media Sales until 2010.

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