

3 areas to focus on to boost your post-Covid career prospects

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The global pandemic has shaken up our lives and careers, but it has also created new opportunities. To thrive in a post-pandemic world, young leaders and managers will need to embrace operating in the global economy.

The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted business activity and workplace culture across the globe, with many forced to make the abrupt shift to working from home. Workplace stress has [spiked](#) as a result, with fears about income and job security and health paramount.

But amid the uncertainty, there is also opportunity; the pandemic could fuel a new wave of innovation across the globe and offers existing businesses an opportunity to restructure their operations for [global resilience](#). For individuals, there are also solid prospects for career advancement.

A [survey of 1,711 alumni and corporate partners of the CEMS network](#) conducted last year points to the reality that, as they plan an exit from the pandemic, organisations will need skilled people to help them navigate uncharted waters. Resilience, agility and the ability to manage change and take customers and workforces along on the journey will be key to success going forward - and those who are able to demonstrate these skills are likely to be in high demand. Managers who are already comfortable working in a global context with diverse cultures and challenges may find themselves with a natural advantage in the post-pandemic job market.

To prepare for this new reality, the CEMS research suggests three key areas that individuals can focus on to boost their career prospects in the months ahead.

1. Develop a multicultural and interconnected mindset

International experience has long been touted as a route to career success and this will be even more true in a post pandemic world. Working in a different context helps people expand their network of contacts and gain a new perspective on themselves and others. Crucially, international exposure means interacting with people from various backgrounds and cultures. This can improve cross-cultural competency, awareness or cultural intelligence, and life experience in general. With [diversity and inclusion](#) increasingly recognised as a vital factor in success, cultural intelligence is gaining prominence in most organisations as they look to build diverse and efficient enterprises.

Learning to work with people from diverse backgrounds can also help you improve your leadership and communication skills. And in an age of constant and rapid change, effective communication [could be career defining](#).

2. Take ownership of your learning and development

Historically, [times of radical evolution or crisis](#) have also ushered in a new appreciation for learning and widened participation to new student groups; for example, democratic and economic crises following World War I brought women into higher education in the West. We can expect the same to be true in a post-pandemic world. Rather than waiting for others to define their potential, young managers and leaders can seize opportunities for learning that come their way, whether through in-company training opportunities or by sourcing content from online courses, gaining access to innovative learning tools from traditional institutions or others, and maximising their networks by joining webinars, chats, conferences and social events to connect with people around the globe.

While the urgency of the day-to-day may push learning into second place, it is vital that individuals take steps to prioritise it.

Even before the pandemic shook the foundations of our world, lifelong learning and adopting a [growth mindset](#) had already been identified as an [economic imperative and a non-negotiable](#) for the modern career. The pace of change through digitisation and AI, increasing competition and vanishing industries are just some of the reasons why a traditional linear approach to skills development is no longer sufficient and all these factors will only increase in the future.

3. Work on yourself

The Covid-19 pandemic has elevated stress levels in workplaces and lecture halls around the world. Rather than turning away from the discomfort and fear that this has brought with it, individuals can [seize the opportunity to work on themselves](#). By making the effort to understand their strengths, appreciate their development areas, reflect on their purpose and articulate their personal and professional goals, individuals can put themselves on firmer ground as they look to reposition their careers going forward. Embarked on with honesty and integrity, such an inward journey can also help people to develop greater empathy and resilience, both [highly desirable leadership characteristics in times of change and crisis](#).

As leadership experts have argued, resilient leaders are nimble and can pivot fast while empathetic leaders are sensitive to the needs of their employees and adjust to the moment. Leaders that can do both will give their companies a fighting chance to flourish in the middle of a global pandemic. Audrey Clegg, group talent director at Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company, a CEMS corporate partner and participant in the survey [sums it up saying](#). “To be effective leaders, we need to be real people, not superheroes: we share similar issues to the people we serve, we have the same ups and downs... showing vulnerability and sharing our tough times can make us more effective leaders - as does careful listening.”

The world has changed irrevocably and we must all change with it. With the jury still out as to whether the crisis will bring more positive changes than negative to the world, every individual holds the power to make sure that, for them, the change is for the better.

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