

'Job security is gone. The driving force of a career must come from the individual.'
 Dr Homa Bahrami, Senior Lecturer at the Haas School of Business, California

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LISTENING AND DISCUSSION

The future of work




Ian Brinkley

A  CD2.1–2.8 Listen to eight speakers and decide which of the work patterns below (a–h) each person is talking about. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each for a) employers, and b) employees?

- a) seasonal work b) teleworking c) casual labour d) migrant work
 e) self-employment f) shift work g) fixed-term/temporary contract h) part-time work

B Discuss these questions.

- What are the employment trends in your region/country in terms of:
 - length of working week
 - types of contract
 - self-employment
 - unemployment?
- Do you think there is an acceptable work–life balance in your country, or is there a corporate ‘work-all-hours’ culture?
- What are the arguments for and against employment legislation to regulate working hours and practices?

C  CD2.9 Listen to Ian Brinkley, Director of the Knowledge Economy programme for the Work Foundation, talking about employment trends in the UK. Write a summary of what he says in 50–60 words.

D Relate each of these jobs to one of the five high-value service industries Ian Brinkley mentioned in Exercise C.

accountant architect biochemist financial analyst games designer
journalist lawyer lecturer radiologist software developer
technician telecommunications engineer

E  CD2.10 What do you think Ian Brinkley will say about the impact of technology on work? Listen to the next part of the interview and make a list of the points he mentions.

F What are the most important ways in which technology has changed the way you work or study? How do you think it might change the way you work in the future?

G  CD2.11 Listen to the final part of the interview about job skills and correct the five factual errors in this summary.

When starting out on a career, it's important to get the most specialist set of skills and experiences possible. Nowadays, most employers are not looking for specialist staff; they want people who can perform a wide variety of tasks within the company. Employers especially want people who have good organisational skills, who can manage other people, and who can work independently, as well as people with some intercultural competence.

H Read this blog and complete the gaps with the words in brackets in the correct form.

Skills for 21st-century jobs

Just what skills are needed to capture and retain the high-value jobs of tomorrow? While¹ (*know*) and strong analytical skills will be necessary, they may not be sufficient to keep these jobs. Those employees who hope to make themselves² (*dispensable*) must have much more. They must be capable of coming up with unique, breakthrough ideas and express these ideas in a way that will be³ (*compel*) and elicit the desired response from others. Easy to say, but very tough to do.

And how will we begin teaching another trait that may prove to be even more important in ensuring lifetime career⁴ (*succeed*) in an increasingly volatile,⁵ (*predict*) world? How will we teach the type of⁶ (*adapt*) that will be required to⁷ (*continue*) reinvent oneself to meet the demands of conditions we cannot even imagine, or jobs that we cannot yet define?

Although schools, family, peers and employers must all play some role in teaching these⁸ (*increase*) critical skills, there is no escaping the uncomfortable truth. Every individual must assume greater⁹ (*responsible*) for defining their own skills¹⁰ (*require*) and for ensuring that they develop these skills.

I Discuss these questions.

- 1 To what extent do you agree with the writer of the blog in Exercise H?
- 2 What skills are essential for your job, or the job you would like to do in the future?
- 3 Would you like to work in the same field or profession for the rest of your life?
- 4 Do you know of anyone who has successfully changed career?

Watch the interview on the DVD-ROM.



READING AND LANGUAGE

- A** How many people do you know that have a 'job for life'? How many do you know who do different jobs at the same time?
- B** Look at the photo in the article. What do you think *giganomics* might be? Read the first two paragraphs of the article to check your ideas.
- C** Discuss these questions.
- 1 In which fields or sectors would you tend to find portfolio workers?
 - 2 What are the benefits and disadvantages of being a portfolio worker? Discuss with a partner and report to the group.
- D** Read the complete article and check your answers.

Giganomics: And what don't you do for a living?

by Judith Woods

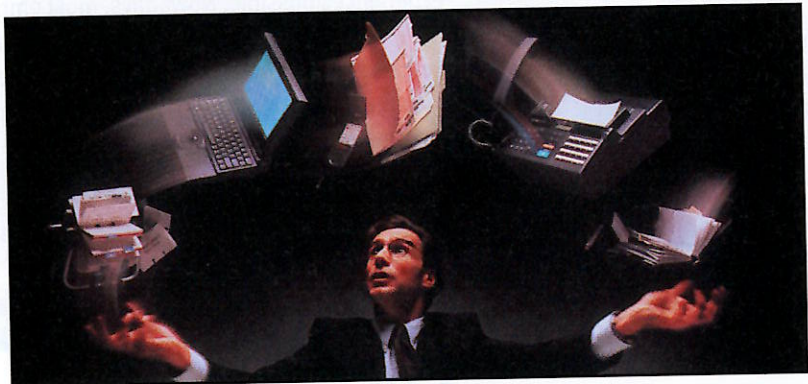
If you ever meet John Lees at a party, he might talk about being a career coach, mention that he writes books on business or drop in the fact that he's also a part-time Anglican priest. 'I've got a classic portfolio career,' says Lees, 50. 'The advantage is that by working for a variety of employers, no one has complete power over you to switch work on or off. The drawback is that I have an immensely complicated diary.'

These days, many of us are juggling one-off projects, short-term contracts and assorted consultancies in a bid to survive. Job security used to be a given. But growing numbers of professionals are reinventing themselves by setting up as portfolio workers in a new employment phenomenon dubbed *giganomics*. Instead of jobs for life, they rely on a series of 'gigs'.

Former *Vanity Fair* and *New Yorker* editor Tina Brown, who coined the term, writes: 'No one I know has a job any more. They've got gigs: a bunch of free-floating projects, consultancies and bits and pieces.'

Tina Brown paints a bleak picture of freelancers' lives, burdened with all the 'anxieties, uncertainties and indignities of gig work', grafting three times as hard for the same money as a salaried employee, without any of the benefits, such as sick and holiday pay or a pension.

Nick, 37, a graphic designer based in London, can attest to the stress felt by portfolio workers. 'I was made redundant two years ago and went freelance,' he says. 'I hated it, because I am terrible at selling myself and I'm not laid-back enough to live with the insecurity of not



knowing where I'll be in six months. I managed OK, and I earned as much as I had done previously, but there was a price to pay in terms of sleepless nights.'

Suzy Walton, a former senior civil servant and mother of four, with a background in central government, including the Ministry of Defence, has taken up a series of non-executive directorships. A portfolio career has proved a lucrative alternative to corporate life.

'I sit on the boards of a military organisation Combat Stress, which looks after veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, the Internet Watch Foundation and Birmingham Children's Hospital, and a few others,' says Walton, 45.

Walton admits that none of these roles generates a substantive salary on its own – a FTSE 250 company might pay about £30,000 a year to a non-executive board member – but when combined, her directorships provide a good income. Just as importantly, she enjoys the challenges. 'It's hard to keep up to speed with the issues in each, but I enjoy doing that. A portfolio career isn't for the fainthearted; there's a zero-

tolerance attitude to being late or missing a commitment. But it's a fantastic lifestyle.'

Anyone with this pick-and-mix approach to work needs to be excellent at time management. The upside is the freedom to pick and choose work, and to do it at a time that suits. Cary Cooper, Professor of Organisational Psychology and Health at Lancaster University, says it's a classic swings-and-roundabouts scenario. 'The good news is that you're supposed to have control over what work you do. The bad news is that you feel you can't say no to anything,' he says. 'You should also be able to have a better work-life balance. But the people who employ you expect you to be on call whenever they want you.'

The creative industries such as advertising, graphic design and the media already rely heavily on freelancers, as does IT. Many more companies will need portfolio workers in future. 'There's going to be much more multiple part-time working,' says Professor Cooper. 'Organisations are getting rid of staff, but they will buy back some of them on a portfolio basis.'

from the *Daily Telegraph*

E What do the words and expressions in *italic* mean? Correct the definitions, according to the context in the article.

- 1 'These days many of us are juggling *one-off* projects ...' (lines 13–14)
happening or done several times, not as part of a regular series
- 2 '... consultancies and *bits and pieces*.' (lines 29–30)
various kinds of big things
- 3 '... *paints a bleak picture* of freelancers' lives ...' (lines 31–32)
gives the impression that something is or will be good
- 4 'It's hard to *keep up to speed* with the issues ...' (lines 75–76)
continue to learn about a subject so that you know all the historical facts, etc.
- 5 'A portfolio career *isn't for the fainthearted* ...' (lines 77–78)
used humorously to say something is easy and doesn't need a lot of effort
- 6 '... it's a classic *swings-and-roundabouts* scenario.' (lines 89–91)
when two choices have more gains than losses so that there's little difference

F Choose the correct meaning of these words as they are used in the article.

- 1 drop in (line 4) a) mention something casually in conversation
b) visit someone without arranging a particular time
- 2 juggling (line 13) a) changing things or arranging them in the way that you want
b) trying to fit two or more jobs or activities into your life, especially with difficulty
- 3 bid (line 16) a) an attempt to achieve or obtain something
b) an offer to do work or provide services for a specific price
- 4 setting up (line 19) a) starting your own business
b) preparing the equipment that will be needed for something
- 5 gig (line 23) a) a job, especially one that does not last a long time (*AmE*)
b) a performance by some musicians or a comedian
- 6 coin (line 26) a) make pieces of money from metal
b) invent a new word or expression
- 7 grafting (line 34) a) working very hard (*informal*)
b) getting money by the dishonest use of influence (*AmE*)
- 8 commitment (line 80) a) hard work and loyalty that you give to a company
b) something you have promised you will do, or have to do

G Work in pairs. How would you feel about being a portfolio worker? Use information from the article and expressions like these.

I am pretty good at selling myself, so I ... I think there's a price to pay in terms of ...
I enjoy having the freedom to pick and choose, so I ... I'm a laid-back sort of person, so I ...

H How many examples of the *-ing* form or the infinitive (with or without *to*) can you find in the article? Which forms do we use in these cases?

- 1 after a preposition 5 to express purpose
- 2 after a modal verb 6 when we want to avoid repeating the subject + a relative + verb
- 3 as a noun 7 with certain verbs, e.g. *decide, expect, be able, afford*, etc.
- 4 after *It + is + adjective* 8 after certain expressions, e.g. *in a bid, be + adj. + enough, be supposed ...*

➡ Language reference: *-ing* forms and infinitives page 132

BUSINESS SKILLS

Resolving conflict



A Do you agree or disagree with these statements? Discuss your answers.

- 1 Conflict isn't necessarily a bad thing.
- 2 When there's a conflict, it's best to keep things rational rather than show your emotions.
- 3 The most common kind of workplace conflict is between colleagues of the same grade.

B Look at this checklist of techniques used to deal with conflict. Which do you most often use? Which get the best/worst results? What other techniques have you used or seen used?

- 1 Ignore the problem – it'll sort itself out.
- 2 Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes.
- 3 Use humour to defuse a tense situation.
- 4 Say loudly and clearly exactly what's on your mind.
- 5 Remain calm and don't get emotional.
- 6 Ask lots of open questions.
- 7 Speak more than you listen.
- 8 Try to reach a compromise.
- 9 Accept you're in the wrong – anything for a quiet life.
- 10 Summarise what the other person says in your own words.

C Do you consider yourself to be a good listener? How do you show other people you're listening to them? Read this description of communication problems. To what extent does it reflect your experience?

According to Roger Fisher and William Ury in their book *Getting to Yes*, there are three major problems in communication. Firstly, people may not be talking to each other. Frequently, each side has given up on the other and is no longer attempting any serious communication. Secondly,

people don't pay enough attention to what other people say. Then there are misunderstandings which are compounded when people speak different languages.

The solution they propose is to listen actively; acknowledge what is being

said and question your assumptions. Understanding is not agreeing, but unless you can show that you grasp how the other person sees things, you may be unable to explain your point of view to them. You therefore maximise the chance of having a constructive dialogue.

D CD2.12 Listen to a conversation between two work colleagues. What techniques does Carl use to show he's listening actively to Yolanda? How would you resolve the situation?

E Which of these expressions are used to a) paraphrase and summarise, b) show understanding, and c) encourage someone to keep talking?

- 1 So, your point is that the office is too noisy. Is that it?
- 2 Tell me more about what you were just saying.
- 3 You sound as if you're disappointed.
- 4 I sense you're feeling anxious about the meeting.
- 5 So, what you're saying is you have too much work.
- 6 If I understand you correctly, you're saying the plan isn't viable.
- 7 I'm not sure I understand. Could you explain what you mean?
- 8 I'm listening. Please go on.
- 9 OK, from your point of view, we should scrap this idea. Correct?
- 10 It sounds like you're not convinced by that argument.

- 11 I appreciate how you feel.
- 12 So, you're telling me that this is the wrong document. Is that right?
- 13 I can see why you feel that way.
- 14 What exactly do you mean when you say it can't be done?

F **Work in pairs. Read this information and try to resolve the conflict with your partner.**

You are both sales reps for a direct-banking organisation. The company rule is that if you get a first contact, then the client is yours and no other banker can approach that client. However, in this highly competitive environment, it's common practice for bankers to go after clients they know their colleagues are also following up. What's more, the company does nothing to stop this happening.

Student A: Turn to page 151.

Student B: Turn to page 159.

G **Does your company or organisation have a training programme on 'e-mail netiquette'? What would such a course deal with? Do you think it would be useful? Why? / Why not?**

H **CD2.13 How would you answer these questions? Listen to Rob Giardina, an intercultural communications consultant. Does he mention the same points as you?**

- 1 Why are there sometimes problems and misunderstandings when people write e-mails to each other?
- 2 What can you do to avoid these misunderstandings?
- 3 What can you do to solve the problem when there's obviously a conflict?

I **Work in pairs to rewrite these e-mails so that they sound more polite and neutral in tone. Student A, rewrite e-mails 1–3; Student B, rewrite e-mails 4–6. Then exchange your e-mails and write your replies.**

1

Hello everyone. I must have an update on all your projects for a departmental report ASAP.

2

Hi guys, Samira wants a meeting on Tuesday morning at 10.00. Plan on being there. This meeting is very important!

3

CAN YOU SEND ME THE MONTHLY FIGURES ASAP??? OR EVEN SOONER ;-)

4

I'm extremely busy and I just don't have time to deal with this right now!!!!

5

Hi, guys. What the *\$#@ is happening with that %*@& product presentation?

6

You don't understand. I was simply asking you to follow up with them and report back to me.

**Writing:
avoiding
conflict in
e-mails**



Rob Giardina