

Careers in a Changing World

A A hundred years ago in most of the world, people didn't have much choice about the work that they would do, where they would do it, or how they would do it. If their parents were farmers, they became farmers. The society – and tradition – determined their profession. Fifty years ago in many countries, people could choose their livelihood. They also had the certainty of a job for life, but they usually couldn't choose to change from one employer to another or from one profession to another. Today, this is not always the case. Career counselors tell us that the world of work is changing at great speed and will change dramatically in the next 25 years.

Job Security

B The situation varies from country to country, but in today's economy, there is generally less job security worldwide. Even in Japan, where people traditionally had a very secure job for life, there is now no promise of a lifetime job with the same company. One reason for the lack of job security is the worldwide decrease in manufacturing jobs.



Another reason is employers' need to hold down costs. This has resulted in two enormous changes for the workforce. First, employers are creating more and more temporary jobs because they don't need to pay health insurance or other benefits to employees in these positions, as they would to people in permanent posts. Second, more and more companies are outsourcing. In other words, they are closing offices and factories and sending work to other areas of the country or to other countries where labor is cheaper. This happens with factory work and computer programming. Also, the call center industry is on the move – mostly to India where there is a well-educated workforce, salaries are much lower than in other countries, and educated people are already fluent in English.

The Effect of Insecurity

C On the surface, it may seem that lack of job security is something undesirable. Indeed, pessimists point out that it is certainly a cause of stress. Many people find an identity – a sense of self – through their work. When they lose their job (or are afraid of losing it), they



also lose their self-confidence, or belief in their own ability which can cause anxiety and depression. However, this decrease in job security may not necessarily be something bad. It is true that these days, workers must be more flexible – able to change to fit new situations. But optimists claim that flexible people are essentially happier, more creative, and more energetic than people who are rigid.

Job Hopping

D Jumping from job to job (or “job hopping”) has always been more common in some professions, such as building construction, and not very common in other professions like medicine and teaching. Today, job hopping is increasingly common in many fields because of globalization, technology, and a movement from manufacturing to services in developed countries. For example, people with factory jobs in industrial nations lose their jobs when factories move to countries where the pay is lower. The workers then need to upgrade their skills to find a new job. This is stressful, but the new job is usually better than the old one. Because technology changes fast, workers need continuing education if they want to keep up with the field. Clearly, technology provides both challenges and opportunities.



Telecommuting

E In many ways, technology and in particular the Internet has changed the way people work. There are advantages and disadvantages to this. In some professions, for instance, telecommuting is now possible. People can work at home for some – or all – of the week and communicate by email, cell phone, and video chat. An advantage of this is that it saves them



from the stress of commuting to the workplace. It also allows them to plan their own time. On the other hand, it is difficult for some people to focus on work when they are at home as there are lots of things that can distract them. Telecommuters must have enormous discipline and organizational skills. Technology is changing the way people work in another way – in the use of cell phones. There is an advantage: customers and clients have access to business people at anytime, anywhere. However, there is also a drawback: many businesspeople don't want to be available day and night. They prefer to have a break from their work life.

Work, Work, Work

F In the 21st century, workaholism continues to be a fact of life for many workers. Workaholics are addicted to their work and although this may sound like a problem, it isn't always. Some people overwork but don't enjoy their work. They don't have time for

their family, friends, or leisure activities such as hobbies, sports, and movies. These people become

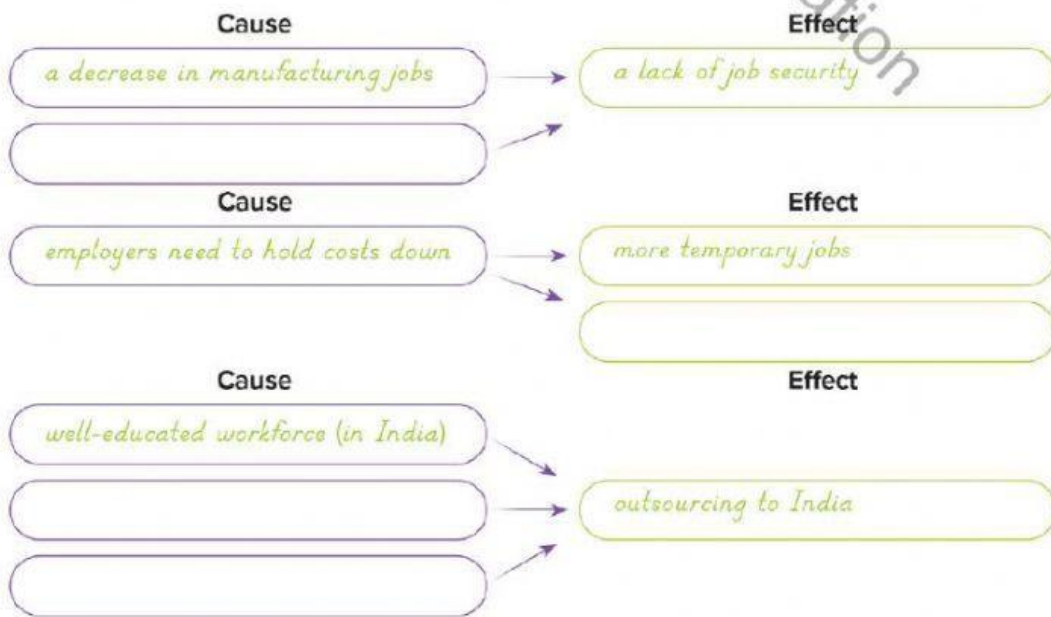
tired, angry, and depressed. The tension and stress often cause physical symptoms such as headaches. However, other people love their work and receive great pleasure from it. These people appear to be overworking but are actually very happy. Psychologists tell us that the most successful people in the changing world of work are flexible, creative, disciplined, and passionate about their work. But they are also people who make time for relaxing activities and for other people. They enjoy their work and enjoy time away from it, too.



Identifying the main idea Read the following sentences and select the one main idea of the whole reading text.

1. Working too hard can lead to serious problems, but it can also create a happy life.
2. Job hopping is a new trend that causes stress but can also lead people into good work experiences if they learn new job skills.
3. It is important for people to be flexible in this changing world of work and to continue their education because they may need to change jobs several times in their lifetime.
4. The world economy, globalization, and technology are causing many changes in the way people work today.
5. In the workplace today, new technology is making it possible for people to work in different locations, even from home.

Thinking critically Paragraph B of the reading text presents several causes and effects. Look back at paragraph B and find information to complete this graphic organizer.



Are the following statements true or false?

1. people have more choice about the work they do today than in the past. _____
2. There will be more changes in the world of work in the near future. _____
3. Employers prefer to hire workers on a temporary basis. _____
4. For most people, losing their job doesn't cause them much stress. _____
5. Continuing education can help people jump from job to job. _____
6. Being available any time through technology is always a good thing. _____
7. It is important to find a balance between work and one's personal life. _____

What do the following words mean?

1. Lifetime (para B) _____
2. Worldwide (para B) _____
3. Workforce (para B) _____
4. What is the antonym/opposite of 'flexible' in Para C? _____
5. What is the antonym/opposite of 'optimist' in Para C? _____
6. What does 'Job Hopping' mean? _____
7. What does the word 'Workaholics' mean in Para F? _____