

# THE FUTURE OF WORKING: 2036

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## The changing workplace

### A monumental shift in working patterns spells end of colleague interaction

It's expected that by 2036, millions of employees will work from home or remote locations - dealing with co-workers, customers and suppliers via computers and video phones. In support of this, 60% of the respondents in our survey believe that technology will drive everything in the future, meaning that jobs could also be under threat.

A quarter (25%) of people are convinced that retail will move entirely online - negating the need for the millions of sales staff, merchandisers and managers currently employed by this ever-adapting industry - and 55% predict that manufacturing jobs will be cut, as machines fulfil more tasks than ever before.

### The morning commute: a pest of the past

A third of employees (33%) agree that commuting will be unheard of, as people will work from home rather than a central office; almost a third (32%) also feel that the cost of travel will simply be too high to warrant a daily commute. This will of course result in significant cost savings for businesses - after the initial outlay - as it will no longer be necessary to fund travel for meetings, courses or conferences.

Office affairs will be a thing of the past as the office environment will, according to 24% of respondents, no longer exist. Work events such as Christmas parties are also unlikely to happen - or will be virtual - and all social interaction will need to be planned; meaning that coffee machine chats will only take place in virtual cafes, if 33% of the employees that we surveyed are right in their predictions. As a result, 39% of people think that work will be less enjoyable.

### IT skills to become more important than literacy

By 2036, major advances in technology will make work easier, faster and more accessible; but while 46% of the people that we surveyed think that employees will become more efficient and effective as a result, 36% believe that new technologies will make work more stressful, due to increased demands and tighter deadlines.

Unsurprisingly then, 89% of employees believe that IT skills will be essential to working life - more important than even such basic skills as numeracy and literacy. The risk here is that technology will hinder people's oral communication skills, as face-to-face interaction becomes a thing of the past.

69% of workers also think that people will interact more with technology than they will with each other, due to the predicted dominance of remote working on a global scale - with 39% worrying that this will remove any opportunity for colleagues to learn from one another. The technology needed to realise this vision will however carry with it the capacity to counter this deficit by facilitating knowledge sharing through teleconferencing, online chat rooms and video phones. Detailed planning for meetings and

conferences will however be required, as time differences are likely to impact companies that recruit workers from across the globe.

Language skills are also in the spotlight as, despite 49% of employees predicting that English will remain the universal language for business, 46% believe that in the next 25 years, workers will have to speak another language; and it's likely to be Mandarin Chinese.

## Communication is key

A future that's set to be dominated by technology doesn't have to mean the erosion of our ability to share ideas, build relationships and converse freely - savvy employers are working to address these issues now. If you're worried about the effect that the changing sphere of work could have on your employees' ability to interact with management, colleagues or clients, follow Office Angels' five point plan for effective communication:

1. Clarity is essential: important messages - such as an email informing employees that everyone needs to work harder to meet a monthly target - should be proofed by more than one person to ensure the message is both clear and accurate.
2. Read receipts are a good way to ensure your emails are being read - particularly if you're waiting for something important to be actioned.
3. When communicating with your workforce via email, it's vital to give employees the opportunity to ask questions. Messages can easily be missed - or misunderstood - by something as simple as an out of place comma, so check regularly to make sure that employees are on track and not missing any critical information.
4. Encourage employees to follow their emails with a phone call where appropriate. Even if it's not possible to speak to colleagues in person, discussing work, planning strategies and sharing ideas over the phone can help to break down barriers and keep communication skills fresh.
5. Know when it should be avoided: for truly difficult conversations - such as performance reviews - you can't be as empathetic over the phone or via video conference as you are in person. Try to conduct such meetings in person where possible.

A heavy reliance on new technology will always carry with it unique challenges; but with focus and forward planning, you can take the new dawn of working practices in your stride. With Office Angels' free Education Zone, you can easily equip your employees with the technical skills needed to carry your business forward. Offering training on everything from Microsoft Word to customer services, we can help you to implement a programme that's specifically tailored to the needs of your business.

## 7000 training courses at your fingertips

The Education Zone is Office Angels' online training tool - providing clients and candidates with an opportunity to build on the sort of skills that will be highly prized in a competitive future market. With over 7,000 training modules at all levels and across all specialisms, there's something to fill every skills gap, and to build on every talent.

It's flexible, comprehensive, and easy to use, and is available for anyone in your company to access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

For more details, contact your local Office Angels consultant, or visit [www.office-angels.com](http://www.office-angels.com)