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CONTINUING EDUCATION

Preparing for job disruption

LINDA WHITE

Special to Postmedia Network

In the coming decade, half of all jobs will be disrupted by technology and automation. Some will change dramatically. Others will disappear completely, replaced by jobs yet to be invented.

Those are among the predictions highlighted in RBC's Humans Wanted: How Canadian youth can thrive in the age of disruption. But adults should also be thinking about learning, and how to upgrade their own skills and advance their careers, says CERIC, a Toronto-based charitable organization focused on career development educa-

tion and research.

Today more than ever, lifelong learning is taking on a new urgency in the face of automation and artificial intelligence (AI), the emergence of jobs of the future, and the continued move toward careers characterized by part-time and temporary gigs.

"Decades ago, career-focused learning happened in your late teens to early 20s," says CERIC board chair John Horn. "You worked for a time and then you retired. Now, there are disruptive factors at play. The rate of change is spectacular. People are living longer and are expecting to work in different ways."

Advancements in AI and automation are transforming the way we work, even in unexpected fields such as law and customer service, RBC notes in its report. A portfolio of skills like critical thinking, social perceptiveness and complex problem-solving will help workers remain competitive and resilient.

SELF-REFLECTION

Whether you're a new grad, mid-career professional or mature worker, you can expect multiple career transitions, which means you'll need to reinvent your talents and redefine career success. Planning for

those transitions will vary from one sector to another and will be different for everyone, Horn says.

He recommends reflecting on your last five years of work. "What fed your soul and brought passion or strong interest and good feelings out? Ask yourself: 'What do I know I'm good at and what do people tell me I'm good at?' How do your spouse/partner, friends, colleagues and mentors in your network see you? How does that compare to how you see yourself?"

START SMALL

As you translate those obser-

vations into the world of work, develop your skills accordingly. "My best advice is to start small and start free or cheap," says Horn. Consider reading a book or an article that ignites your purpose, explore a massive open online course (MOOC) and check out TED speakers.

"If you find something and you don't like it or it's not what you thought it would be, it's easy to walk away from or take a step back," he says. "On the other hand, if you find yourself consuming the information and enjoying it, developing a skill and immediately applying it, that's going to give you a clue about investing more in terms of time, energy and finances."

PREPARE TO UNLEARN

As you embark on your learning journey, you'll need to let go of old habits, systems and tools in order to adopt new ways to manage career disruption. "Remember, the programming languages you're learning today will probably be written by AI a few years from now," says Horn.

"It's important to understand the landscape and context and the impact of AI as opposed to specific programming language at specific times. The meta skill people want to look at is learning – how to learn, how to relearn, how to unlearn."



Getting youth HYPed about school

LINDA WHITE

Special to Postmedia Network

For most of her life, Marie Joseph never imagined she'd one day earn a post-secondary diploma or degree. That all changed in just six weeks thanks to a free program for youth living in Toronto's underserved neighbourhoods that reduces barriers to education.

"When I was younger, I never thought college or university was for me because I'm a student with disabilities and school was really hard," says Joseph. She completed high school in the U.S. and came to Canada in 2008 as a Haitian refugee. "Communicating with teachers was never easy."

A tuition-free program offered each summer by Centennial College changed that. HYPE – Helping Youth Pursue Education – offers students ages 17 to 29 years to take career-oriented courses in business fundamentals, human development, automotive technology, esthetics, trades/computers/technology, digital media or culinary arts.

Joseph was among the one-third of HYPE graduates who go on to pursue full-time studies at college. After studying graphic arts at Centennial, she landed a job in the college's marketing and communication department. "It was a different path to college and my life changed from there," she says.

"The program is designed to reduce as many barriers as possible to an on-campus post-secondary learning



SUBMITTED IMAGE

Upon successful completion of Centennial College's HYPE program, students earn a certificate of recognition and take part in a graduation ceremony.

experience," says Anthony Bertin, manager of Centennial's Community Outreach Office. In addition to being tuition free, it provides students with tokens for transportation, breakfast, lunch and required learning materials, such as safety boots and goggles for automotive technology students.

"Many of our students don't have a high school diploma or if they do, they wouldn't be eligible for post-secondary education because their grades wouldn't promote it," he says. "Many had experiences in elementary and secondary school that left them

believing they weren't capable learners or that school is a horrible place to be and they'd rather not be there."

The program also offers motivational speakers and workshops on topics like financial literacy. Participants can take advantage of HYPE Works, which offers everything from mock interviews to Smart Serve and other credentialing workshops. A voluntary academic preparation course for students considering full-time studies covers essential soft skills like academic reading and writing.

Pedrae Cammock, 25, graduated from HYPE in August.

After studying human development, she decided to pursue health and fitness at Centennial. "It was very inspirational and the amount of help I received makes me want to cry," she says. "They helped me apply for school and even helped me fill out my (Ontario Student Assistance Program) application."

Centennial's community outreach coordinators focus on youth from underserved neighbourhoods, women in non-traditional careers – which includes women living in poverty who are sole support parents and view education as non-traditional – and



SUBMITTED IMAGE

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members of the Indigenous community.

"We talk about developing a culture of possibility," Bertin says. "Many don't see the possibility of post-secondary education for themselves and don't see what education can offer

them in terms of improved lifestyle, a sustainable lifestyle that can assist them in caring for their families. What we're really looking to do is not just provide an education but give our youth an opportunity to transform their view of who they can be."

EDUCATION LEAKS

Blockchain development

George Brown College reports launching the first comprehensive certificate program in blockchain technology offered by a Canadian college this fall,

helping address a serious shortage of developer talent in the growing field.

Blockchains are digital, decentralized ledgers that record transactions shared among many people. Once data is entered on a blockchain, it's secure, easy to track and permanent. This can help businesses improve efficiency of transactions while lowering the chance of data mishandling and fraud.

Program graduates will be prepared to work in banking, international finance, healthcare, government and more. Research by ICTC estimates that more than 100,000 blockchain jobs will be created in Canada by 2024.

Digital, content marketing

As the demand for digital and content marketing skills grows and top companies

are taking longer to fill these specialized roles than traditional marketing jobs, the York University School of Continuing Studies is launching three new certificates.

Its certificate in digital marketing, certificate in content marketing and post-graduate certificate in digital and content marketing were designed in collaboration with marketing industry influencers

from top brands. Students will build real-world experience by working on projects with actual companies.

New hub for tech startups

MaRS Discovery District and the University of Toronto are partnering to open a new hub for tech startups at Toronto's Waterfront Innovation Centre, set to open in 2021.

This is their second real

estate partnership. In 2015, U of T invested in the MaRS West Tower, taking a 20% equity share in the building. The 780,000-square-foot tower is more than 99.8% full and is currently home to more than 50 startups, as well as companies such as PayPal, Autodesk and the Vector Institute for Artificial Intelligence.

Linda White



CONTINUING EDUCATION

Giving credit where credit is due

LINDA WHITE

Special to Postmedia Network

When Melissa Brantford's career plateaued, she decided to return to school to earn a degree. But because she had valuable skills and education under her belt, she didn't have to start from scratch.

The Seneca College student applied to Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) for three credits. "Having the opportunity to pursue this avenue is important. It validated the prior education and skills I have acquired over my career," says Brantford (not her real name).

"It did make school less intimidating to know my previous education and life experiences were recognized as being valuable to them as well. It's also great to save time and money by receiving PLAR credits rather than having to take the courses. I can complete my



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degree faster, which is significant to me."

PLAR is ideal for those who've gained skills and experience outside of the classroom or in non-traditional educational setting but still have acquired the knowledge that would be equivalent and comparable to in-class/online study, says Danielle Mercier, chair of business studies in Seneca's faculty of continuing

education.

"Particularly, PLARs are beneficial for those who are interested in returning to school and have extensive work or volunteer experience in a particular area and are seeking to strengthen their expertise and skillset," she says. "Students taking part-time courses through the faculty of continuing education are ideally suited to apply for PLAR, as many bring

a variety of skills and experience from their employment."

If a course covers material you already know and is PLAR eligible, you can ask to 'challenge' your knowledge. You may be tested with written or oral exams, interviews or case studies to assess your knowledge and skills or asked to submit a portfolio of your work. It can help save students both time and money – though there is a charge to challenge a credit.

Your assessment will be graded and the grade will appear on your transcript and count towards your Grade Point Average. You can receive up to 75% of your credits through PLAR and transfer credits; the remainder must come from classes taken at the institution issuing the diploma, degree or certificate. Visit the Canadian Association for Prior Learning at www.capla.ca for helpful resources.

WHAT IS PLAR?

Students who can demonstrate knowledge and skills gained outside formal classroom learning through work, volunteer or other life experiences may apply for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) if that knowledge and skill corresponds to a specific course. Learning may be assessed through the submission of an academic portfolio, challenge exam and/or interview.

To get started, review the course outline to determine if your knowledge and skills match the course learning outcomes. Collect documents that support your application, such as your resumé, a description of experiences and learning that relate to the course being challenged, work samples and letters of verification. Complete your PLAR application.

Source: Humber College

Online content free for post-secondary students

LINDA WHITE

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In a move that promises to better prepare post-secondary students for the jobs of the future, more than one million students at all 44 universities and community colleges in Ontario can now benefit from online learning content from Lynda.com.

The content, all available on LinkedIn Learning, is designed to help anyone learn business, technology and creative skills to achieve personal and professional goals. Learning content is updated constantly based on in-demand skills data from LinkedIn's Economic Graph, which includes more than 560 million professionals, 14 million jobs, and 50,000 skills.

The content is available to all Ontario students for the first time thanks to a collaboration between

LinkedIn, eCampusOntario and the ministry of advanced education and skills development that was announced this past spring. The collaboration will help fulfill the need to continually upskill, says Tanya Staples, vice president of LinkedIn Learning.

"There's a constant need for individuals in the workforce to be very self-motivated and proactive about evolving their skillsets so they stay current and relevant," she says. The collaboration will help students practise self-paced and self-motivated learning. "It's a skill that will help carry them through their entire working career."

Students across Ontario have access to Lynda.com's English and French library, which is comprised of about 10,000 courses. "It gives them access to real world job skills," Staples says. Students can take advantage of learn-



ing paths that lead to trending jobs, such as data scientist, online marketing manager and customer service specialist.

"It can also ignite passion and help students understand what jobs even exist." This collaboration also promises to:

Support faculty development: Provide engaging career development and keep faculty up-to-date with training on the latest IT topics, including networking and software development.

Enable a more engaging flipped classroom: Faculty

can supplement their curriculum with a mapped set of courses and videos that align with learning objectives. By assigning video tutorials and tools training as a prerequisite to classwork or as homework, they can reserve class time for concept mastery.

"With expanded access to Lynda.com, our McMaster students will have the ability to develop in-demand professional and technical skills that can be a valuable complement to their academic learning," says Gayleen Gray, assistant vice-president and chief technology officer at McMaster University in Hamilton. "We expect that our students will benefit tremendously from this rich online educational resource and we hope they take full advantage of this opportunity."

Centennial College was among the post-secondary schools that offered its stu-

dents access to Lynda.com even before the collaboration "because we believe the benefits to students as well as faculty are pretty significant," says Marilyn Herie, vice president of academic and chief learning officer.

Lynda.com courses can help students develop the skills needed to be successful in their studies and beyond. "If we think about the changing nature of work and the future of work, the key value of these Lynda.com courses is that they're perfectly positioned to provide that just-in-time learning experience for all of us."

The strength is in its diversity. "Centennial offers more than 200 programs. Lynda.com provides high quality digital content in every imaginable thing you want to know," Herie says. "It has insights into emerging skills so it can help us anticipate and access cutting-edge skills and content."