

Trends shaping the labour space in 2023 and beyond



By [Natashia Barnabas](#)

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The world of work has changed dramatically over the past three years and continues to be shaped by a number of overarching trends, from societal influences, to technology, economic and political factors, and even environmental concerns. From the pandemic to digitalisation, the rise of the gig economy to climate change, here are some of the factors shaping the labour market today and into the future.



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Rise of e-commerce and the digital economy

The Covid-19 pandemic caused far-reaching consequences across the world and in all sectors. Most businesses were affected negatively, but certain sectors such as those in the digital space as well as e-commerce, saw business skyrocket. This effect has continued as many people have come to prefer online shopping, and the growth in this sector continues, creating additional job opportunities nationally. We have noticed that this trend has brought more employment to the warehousing industry, and we expect this growth to continue.

From great resignation to gig economy

In the post-Covid era, we are experiencing a rapid trend called “the great resignation”, a phenomenon that has been noticed worldwide. Instead of staying in permanent full-time positions where they may not have had much work-life balance since the pandemic, many people are opting for different ‘gigs’ because this offers more flexibility and the freedom to negotiate their own terms and conditions. The rise of the gig economy has drained businesses of talent, but at the same time, it opens up these opportunities for others who seek permanent employment.

While the gig economy is being touted as something new and innovative, the reality is that it is just an iteration of temporary fixed-term employment, which has existed for a long time. Those seeking it voluntarily are doing so to enable them to be more flexible in terms of time and commitments. For others, it has become the only way to make ends meet in a strained economic climate. This trend is seeing significant growth and is one of the major macro trends impacting the labour space for the foreseeable future.



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4IR, the rise of automation and need for new skills

Advancing technology along with increased digitalisation and automation are part and parcel of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR). While these trends threaten job loss for low-skilled employees whose tasks can easily be replaced by machines, this also makes way for new, higher skilled positions with subsequently higher wages. There is an opportunity to upskill workers to enable them to move up the value chain, but the challenge that remains is that employees lack technology skills and knowledge. New skill sets are needed to leverage next-generation technologies effectively.

4IR will bring about significant disruption, including the evolution of jobs and careers paths that currently do not exist. We need to focus on the skills that will enable this, and training institutions need to adapt to the latest trends. Soft skills are an emerging trend in this aspect. Temporary employment gives job candidates the opportunity to grow their skill and experience, and flexible staffing models allow businesses to restructure their businesses to accommodate technological advances.

Globalisation, urbanisation, mobility, and demographics

Increasing globalisation creates additional employment opportunities throughout the supply chain and exposes employees to cross-border and international opportunities, helping to grow their skill and experience.

As the workforce becomes more digital, less permanent and more flexible, there is also a growing trend of remote workers moving away from cities and main centres. This is an opportunity to grow areas of the country that have previously seen outflows of people moving to cities in order to seek work. There is also a growing trend of the multigenerational workforce, with younger people seeking temporary employment and older people working past retirement age.



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Resource scarcity and climate change

Dealing with the climate crisis means that alternative energy is in demand locally and globally, creating huge business and employment opportunities within the green energy space. These project-based initiatives can benefit significantly from the Temporary Employment Services (TES) industry because flexible labour is key in meeting seasonal, volume and production fluctuations. Moving forward, a reputable TES provider can supply the compliant and practical staffing solutions to allow energy producers to focus on growing their core business.

Increased focus on wellness

The combination of Covid-19, the gig economy, and generational attitudes toward employment, resulted in a growing focus on balance and wellness as part of the working environment. "Employee wellness" can take many forms, from counselling to relaxation areas, ergonomics, bringing pets to work, and more, and navigating this landscape is something businesses will have to take on board today and in the future.

The only constant is change

While many areas of the labour sector remain unchanged, others have seen dramatic shifts and changes deriving from the widespread impact of the pandemic and the increase in digital technologies. Skills required are changing, jobs available are changing, and the demands of employees from their employers are changing. Businesses need to prepare themselves to meet these changes to remain relevant and competitive in future.

ABOUT NATASHIA BARNABAS

Natashia Barnabas, LLB (Wits) - Industrial Relations (IR) Manager, at Workforce Staffing As an admitted attorney of the High Court of South Africa, Employment Law specialist and media spokeswoman, Natashia is skilled in negotiation, arbitration, and dispute resolution. She is a formidable operation professional with further qualifications in Labour Dispute Resolution Practice, Compliance Management, POPI, Occupational Health and Safety Compliance, Strategic Leadership, Forms of Business Enterprises and Corporate Law .

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