

Take a leap in your career with Wits Business School

What you need to future-proof your career, as you prepare to take the next step

The emergence of the coronavirus in 2019 started as a health crisis. This soon changed after the number of infected persons spiralled out of control and governments around the world began to implement various restrictions. This had a massive impact on people's movement and the production capabilities of different industries.

It became clear early on in 2020 that the Covid-19 pandemic was more than a healthcare crisis – it was now a jobs crisis, a trade crisis, a crisis of organisational function and adaptability, and so much more.

As expected, global economies – both developed and developing – faced many challenges. The evolution of the workplace, coupled with the needs of the employer and the employee, was one of the issues that took centre stage.

One of the world's largest economies, the US, found itself undergoing mass withdrawal from the workforce, a phenomenon that Professor Anthony Klotz first coined as the "Great Resignation" in 2021.

According to the US Bureau of Labour Statistics' Job Opening and Labour Turnover report, 4.5 million Americans resigned from their jobs in March 2022, citing burnout and Covid-19-related concerns, among others.

At home, South Africa faced a similar problem in that, while in the US workers were leaving the labour market voluntarily, South African workers were being forced out of the labour market as industries struggled to retain employees due to the tough economic conditions, spurring record unemployment numbers. In the fourth quarter of 2021, the unemployment rate rose to 35.3% – a record high.

Faced with the reality of a labour market that hangs in the balance, understanding how to future-proof your career and remain in touch with and attractive to the changing jobs market is paramount, especially if you are looking to take up a new role.

Equipping yourself first

According to Charisse Drobis, the head of career management services at Wits Business School (WBS), the Covid-19 pandemic has not only changed the skills employees need to embody in the workplace, but it has also effected a change in the traits employees need to adopt. In the current labour environment, employees are expected to be resilient, persevering and agile.

Wits Business School graduates are highly sought after by top employers, and the fact that the school boasts over 200 employer partners means that graduates have access to opportunities across a wide variety of sectors.

According to Drobis, the somewhat bruised labour environment is now in desperate need of employees who can address the complex difficulties that employers are facing. These employees need to have a growth mindset that will help industries move out of the Covid-19 slump and on to the next level. They need to see challenges as learning opportunities and be eager to solve them.

"I think companies are also looking for people with an optimistic, entrepreneurial attitude and that goes with a growth mindset. They are looking for people who want to make things happen," she says.

"They need people who look at the country



Charisse Drobis, head of career management services at Wits Business School, says the labour environment is in need of employees who can address the complex difficulties that employers are facing, and leaders who can come up with innovative solutions

as an opportunity landscape rather than one of shrinking options, because there are huge opportunities still to be had in this country and on this continent. It just requires somebody who is more entrepreneurial, receptive, open-minded, curious – and who wants to learn, understand and grow," she says.

Drobis says employees looking to stay ahead of the curve and protect their careers against future unknowns need to be willing to let go of what they know and learn afresh. She adds that this pursuit of fresh knowledge needs to be done while placing a core focus on modernisation and digitalisation in efforts to improve efficiency.

Purpose-led growth

As a leading research institution that is part of one of the highest-ranked universities on the

continent, WBS is committed to offering its students high-quality academic curricula and management programmes to help future-proof the careers of tomorrow's leaders.

Boasting 16 accredited generalist and specialist postgraduate programmes, the school offers a wide range of academic programmes, at both postgraduate diploma and degree level that are designed to help students progress to the next level of their careers.

The MBA is still relevant

The relevancy of the MBA qualification cannot be overstated, according to Drobis. In a post-Covid-19 world, companies require a different type of leader – one who thinks critically and who comes up with innovative solutions, in anticipation of future challenges that are yet to arise.

"The MBA programme provides multiple lenses that one can view any problems through and what that does is present a fully rounded individual," Drobis says.

The WBS MBA programme, offering its distinctive "Leadership Quest", gives students a multidisciplinary view on solving problems from different perspectives.

Students who take on the programme are required to interrogate the type of leader they want to become. Therefore, Drobis recommends that aspirant MBA students acquire experience in the workplace first before taking that leap in order to see a good return on investment. It is tailored for people who have solid, on-the-job experience but wish to take the leap to a more strategic position.

"Experience shows us not just what we know, but it helps us to understand the gaps in our knowledge, to understand what it is we need to learn and what it is we want to do with that knowledge," she says.

Staying ahead

To remain competitive in the evolving labour market, Drobis advises people to remind themselves that nothing is certain. If the past two years of the Covid-19 pandemic have taught us anything, it is that, she comments.

"It is about being willing to move out of one's comfort zone and embrace the unknown. It's that willingness to put oneself "out there" and learn. If one has the willingness to engage, and fosters an open-minded receptiveness to learning, then one will be able to engage in continuous cycles of change in work," she says.

With sustainability taking centre stage in the business environment, companies are being forced to shift away from a profit-chasing mentality toward an environmentally sustainable way of working.

At the same time, workers are developing more awareness about why they do the work they do and the impacts of their work on society.

The importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance, anchored in purpose, is why Drobis recommends not losing sight of your "why", to practice self-care and remain grounded so as to avoid a sense of overwhelm.

"Part of future-proofing is taking care of oneself, being healthy and practising mindfulness. Because in this unbelievably complex, fraught, changeable, and disrupting world, at the end of the day, if one can keep oneself healthy – and I'm talking about emotional, spiritual, psychological and physical wellbeing – that will enable one to not only navigate disruption but to embrace opportunity."



Scripting global leaders