When we peer at the future of work, there are many lenses that we can use. Mine comes from my podcast, Curious Minds, on which I've interviewed over 100 authors about how work is changing in the next decade.[i] Many of these conversations have circled around three important themes that I'd like to discuss – our longevity, our machinery and our humanity.

Our Longevity
In *The 100-Year Life*, Lynda Gratton and Andrew Scott documented how each successive year of the 21st Century brings a longer life expectancy for more people. This longevity has startling implications for our current conception of life as three stages: (1) Education, (2) Work and (3) Retirement. Not only will we not have enough money to extend our retirement through age 100, but our knowledge base for our work will erode long before we stop working. Samuael Arbesman documents this trend regarding the facts that we know in his book the *Half-Life of Facts*. And The Future of Jobs report that was released by the World Economic forum in January of 2018, documents a similar erosion of skills at a faster and faster rate.[ii]

Several Curious Minds guests have addressed this change in insightful ways, including:
- *Stretch* by Karie Willyerd and Barbara Mistick
- *The Three Pillars of Modern Teaching* by Gayle Allen
- *A Mind for Numbers* and *Mindshift* by Barbara Oakley
- *The Episodic Career* by Farai Chideya

Our Machinery
This shift is also occurring at a time when work is changing in another way – through our automation. McKinsey released a report in December of 2017, Jobs lost, jobs gained: Workforce transitions in a time of automation,[iii] in which they looked at job trends for over 800 occupations in 46 countries. They found that in the United States, over 18% of work will be automated, forcing 33% of people to lose their jobs or find a new job. That's over 166 million people that will be affected.

But is this different than automation that has occurred in previous decades? In his book *Rise of the Robots*, Martin Ford discusses why this time is different than past false alarms about automation, focusing on the fact that past attempts at automation did not replace the thing that humans do best – thinking – and now they do. Tom Davenport echoes and expands on this theme in his book *Only Humans Need Apply*, and these authors each take a different angle on the problem:
- *Hooked* by Nir Eyal
- *The Attention Merchants* by Tim Wu
- *Deep Work* by Cal Newport
- *Singletasking* by Devora Zack
- *Whiplash* by Joi Ito
- *The Inevitable* by Kevin Kelly

Our Humanity

One answer to our predicament is that as we live longer, and as machines continue to take over certain types of tasks, we can focus on the things that make us most human. Both the McKinsey report and World Economic Forum report focus on the importance of skills such as communication, management, creativity and other areas not yet affected by automation.

And these recommendations are coming at a time when scientists, psychologists and other researchers are learning more about these human skills. This includes studies of topics such as motivation, happiness, adaptability, emotional intelligence, persistence, stress and creativity, just to name a few. Among the authors that have explore this recently are:

- *The Motivation Myth* by Jeff Haden
- *How Emotions are Made* by Lisa Feldman Barrett
- *The Net and the Butterfly* by Olivia Fox Cabane and Judah Pollack
- *Peak* by Anders Ericsson
- *The Power of Meaning* by Emily Esfahani Smith
- *The Upside of Stress* by Kelly McGonigal

Conclusion

If we look at the book Not Impossible, by Mick Ebeling, we can see an excellent example of these human skills working together with automation in ways that point to a possible future.

If you have any questions about the topics above, or you are interested in discussing a keynote presentation or leadership training, feel free to reach out via email at gayle@ticircle.com.

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[i] Curious Minds Podcast http://www.gayleallen.net/podcast-2/ and https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/curious-minds-innovation-in-life-and-work/id1049183266?mt=2

[ii] The Future of Jobs http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs.pdf

[iii] https://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/future-of-organizations-and-work/what-the-future-of-work-will-mean-for-jobs-skills-and-wages